



Commission on Disabilities
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 3, 2024
City Hall Room 430

Commissioners: *indicate present (P) or absent (A)*

Laurie Berner - P

Ashlie Castaldo, Chair - A

Allison Fochs - P

Christina Johnson, Secretary - P

Brooke Marinan, Vice Chair - P

Also present:

Mark Bauer, Duluth Police Department

Laura Laaksonen, City of Duluth

Amanda Paszak, Guest

Andy Paszak, Guest

Vice Chair Marinan called the **4/3/24** Commission on Disabilities meeting to order at 3:31pm.

Approval of April 2024 agenda (Johnson, Fochs)

Approval of the March 2024 minutes (Fochs, Johnson)

Current Disability Issues and Announcements

- The Great Duluth Sweat Together April 27 - Community sauna party to raise funds for youth with ASD by donating a portion of the net proceeds to Bots of Another Color. \$10 entry.
- Amanda sent out an email with Self-Advocate Leadership Initiative - Meetings on the 4th Wednesdays in April, May, and June for individuals with a disability to grow skills in advocacy and leadership. Held at the library.
- Commissioner Fochs requested to talk to City about public sidewalks and parking lots vs private sidewalks and parking lots. Ace Hardware - sidewalk was not plowed but the parking lot was. Anything that borders a business is their property. What does enforcement look like? Only enforced if a complaint comes through?
- State Human Services reached out to City to host an event with youth with hearing loss and law enforcement. Group reached out to Police Chief and Sheriff but was interested in the COD partnering in planning collaboration and assisting in community relationship building for this event. Exec team to discuss how to partner.

Accessible Parking Update

- Duluth Parking Commission meeting March 1, Approved parking requests:
 - 3008 Vernon St

- 2717 W. 9th St
- To be discussed at upcoming April meeting:
 - 1711 E. 6th St - no off street parking, recommending for approval
- To be discussed May meeting, pending review:
 - 625 N. 11th Ave E - one stall off-street parking; need is primarily for services coming and going, deliveries, STRIDE program
 - 517 N. 58th Ave W - awaiting site visit
- Question about accessible parking - What about a provider of services for individuals with a disability, but the service provider themselves does not have a disability? Somebody coming to do onsite work as an aide, for a person with a disability, would not be able to park in an accessible parking spot..

Parks and Rec Report

- Who will serve as Parks and Rec liaison? The Charter allows us to nominate an individual in the community to represent us with our approval, in the case where a commissioner is unable to serve on the Parks Commission.
- Laura made Administration aware of the open spot for liaison. She is waiting to hear back on direction how to bridge COD and Parks & Rec.
- Officer Bauer suggestion: Does it make sense for the Parks Manager (City employee) to attend the COD meetings in a similar arrangement as Officer Bauer?

Annual Goals - Updates

- Library Event “Disability Visibility” Saturday, April 27 12-4:00pm - We have confirmed a table at the Library event. Ashlie and Allison are planning on being there and with the brochures we currently have. Laura will print for Ashlie and Allison.
- We discussed potentially using some of our budget for table freebies, but we need to find out how to access that budget and put an order in for what to get. - Chris to reach out to Amanda to ask about that budget.

New Business

- New COD members - 3 new members waiting for Council approval this month. Amanda Paszak, Jill Johnson - background in design and ADA compliance. Michelle McDonald. Michelle is returning to the COD after consecutive terms off. Agenda for April 8th, will be designated as April 1, 2024 term start through March 31, 2027. Applications will continue to be open, as after the three new members are appointed, two vacancies will remain.
- Consideration of orientation for new members - Laura and Chris to collect a folder with bylaws, meeting minutes, contact emails of members, COD annual goals, meeting location time and room number, brochure, “what to expect” document. Offer opportunity for Zoom or meeting in person. Commissioner Fochs and Berner suggest occasional updates with member contact info, terms dates and organization for which they work. Can attach member info with agenda each month.
- Changes in City Hall / Commission Plan implementation - Laura staying at the City until a new Human Rights Officer is brought on. City is updating job description; projected timeline for hire is a few months. Commissioner Berner stressed the importance of these roles and need for more support (and employees in this division).

Old Business

“R” word resolution update: Expanding commission partnerships - Ashlie will be reaching out to the Human Rights Commission for their support in joining our statement to the district. Human Rights Commission has John Magas attending May 8 meeting; great opportunity to speak to HR Commission before that meeting and possibly attend.

Public Comment

Amanda (guest) - Lighthouse student went to Marcus Theatre downtown. She took skywalk to the theater. From the skywalk if you enter the building to the front there is no sidewalk. The Theatre was rude to this person for using the skywalk entrance/exit and asked for this not to be a recurring issue. Laura suggested the new Human Rights Officer can discuss the issue with Marcus Theater - this is within the Human Rights office purview to help find a solution with the theater leadership. Education is needed as an ADA concern.

Peace United Church for Christ - Stepping on Up youth support for housing is making progress. Currently demolishing the wing that will be residences. Space for 12 individuals 18-24 years age. The longer an individual has home insecurity, the more difficult it is to secure housing later. This initiative aims to step in and help youth secure housing before it becomes more difficult the longer they remain unsheltered.

Chair Marinan - knows a couple moving back to MN - both have disabilities. Alzheimer's Association has resources for all types of dementia. Connect to their County for services. Arc Northland also suggested for variety of services including housing support.

Commissioner Berner offered to help during COD member transition - if we have any questions don't hesitate to ask. This is her final meeting as a commissioner.

Adjourn (Fochs, Berner)

Meeting adjourned at 4:43pm.

Next meeting:

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

3:30pm - 4:30pm

City Hall Room 430