

Commission on Disabilities
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
February 3, 2021

This Commission on Disabilities meeting was held by electronic means due to the COVID-19 Emergency.

Commissioners present: Tom Furman, Dianne Naus, Laurie Berner,
Roberta Cich,

Commissioners absent:, Meghan Terella

Also present: Amanda Crosby, Carl Crawford, Mark Bauer

Rod Fournier (DTA), Elena Foshay (City of Duluth Work Force Development),
Emily Edison (Soar Careers)

Approval of current agenda: MS/C – (Berner/Furman)

Approval of December minutes: MS/C - (Furman/Berner)

Public Comment/Information: None

Work Force Development:

- Elena Foshay is the City of Duluth's Workforce Development Director. Ms. Foshey provided information to the Commission about current initiatives, people served and collaborations. Programs and services co-located in the Workforce Center include: Vocational Rehabilitation, Veterans Services, Older Worker Services, pre-employment services and services to those who receive MFIB.
- About 4,000 people per year receive pre-employment and/or employment assistance. 1/3rd of those are people with disabilities. Ms. Foshay asked what kinds of collaborations and support should they be looking at to provide the best possible services to people with disabilities.
- Commissioner Berner offered the support of Arc Northland and spoke about Person Centered Planning related to exploring employment options and opportunities.
- Ms. Crosby also offered support from Access North and stressed the importance of Independent Living Skills along with other pre-employment skills. Centers for Independent living have a long standing collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

- Commissioner Cich mentioned the importance of providing education to employers about reasonable accommodations and modifications to ensure successful employment.

Duluth Transit Authority:

- Rod Fournier introduced himself as the interim General Manager at the DTA. Mr. Fournier also reported that Stride is now operated in house, which is new for the DTA. However, customers should not notice a difference in service.
- Mr. Fournier reported that they are still down about 40% ridership on the fixed route buses and 50% on Stride due to COVID. DTA has stepped up cleanliness and safety protocol and have hired additional staff to help with this.
- Snow removal continues to be a challenge at bus stops. There are 1,500 bus stops and 100 shelters. DTA tries to respond to concerns as quickly as possible.
- Commissioner Berner asked about PCAs accompanying people with disabilities. Mr. Fournier reported that the DTA is currently charging PCAs full fare, but they can ride on Stride with no fare.
- Mr. Crawford asked about reduced and eliminated routes. Mr. Fournier said decisions are made based on number of riders and duplicate routes. There is currently some on demand service in areas where service has been eliminated.

Accessible Parking update:

- Mr. Bauer reported that there will be 2 requests going before the Parking Commission this month. Mr. Bauer will recommend approval of both.
- The Essentia parking ramp continues to move forward with plans for accessible parking spots to far exceed ADA requirements.

Parks and Rec report:

- Ms. Crosby discussed concerns that were raised around the accessibility of the Lincoln Park improvements. The State Council on Disabilities has also reviewed the plans and provided feedback.

Old Business:

- The Commission needs to come up with a slate of officers for the next meeting. An email will be sent to Commissioners to ask for volunteers
- Motion to approve updates to the Commission on Disabilities Bylaws MS/C (Berner/Naus)

New Business: None

Current Disability Issues:

- Snow Removal Taskforce has not met
- The Commission discussed the roll out of the COVID-19 vaccines. There is concern that some people with disabilities are being missed – specifically those in group homes. There seems to be progress for getting vaccines for those in nursing homes and those over age 65.

Announcements:

- ADA Minnesota and the State Council on Disabilities are planning a virtual ADA Celebration this summer. Commissioner Cich will attend their planning meeting next week to see if this is something that will be statewide.

Adjourn: 4:15 MS/C (Berner/Naus)