



Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes  
September 1, 2021

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

**Commissioners:**

Roberta Cich – E  
Laurie Berner - P  
Amanda Crosby - P  
Ashlie Castaldo - P  
Tom Furman - P  
Heath Maki - A  
Dianne Naus - P  
Samantha Smingler – P  
Allison Fochs - A

**Also present:** Carl Crawford, Mark Bauer, Laura Laaksonen.

Vice President Berner called the October 6, 2021 Commission on Disabilities to order at 3:00 pm. There was a quorum.

**Approval of current agenda:** MS/C – (Crosby, Naus)

**Approval of May minutes:** MS/C – (Castaldo/Smingler)

**Public Comment/Information:** No public comment.

**Presentations:**

The commission was joined by City of Duluth's Planning and Economic Development Staff, Adam Fulton and Wendy Rannenberg, to discuss city code around VRBOs and other vacation rentals and home share. An overview was given on how the city evaluates vacation rentals as well as an overview of building codes. The city of Duluth regulations a long with the State Building Code, which complies with accessibility codes, are complex and each case looks very different. When changes are being made to a unit or dwelling accessibility upgrades are complex on their own and applicants are only obligated to make accessible upgrades to 20% of the overall project cost.

Commissioner Crosby noted that the City's rules for vacation rentals state that they will not approve a dwelling over 4 units. The VRBO and AirBnB regulations require accessibility upgrades for 5 bedrooms or more. Commissioner Smingler also noted that since this regulation is in place, how we, as a commission could help incentivize accessibility upgrades for home owners. Addressing VRBO and other major corporations is more of a systemic problem that is out of the control of this particular commission but there must be a way for educational opportunities and incentives. Commissioner Furman noted that Joel Sipress has been working on this issue as well as the Duluth City Council. There is some exploration around minimizing the amount of taxes paid by the owner of a vacation rental. Adam and Wendy noted the application fees for vacation rentals is increasing and reducing fees for accessible units may be something we can do locally.

The commission just wanted to let the city know we are willing to assist in anyway that we can and educate our community on the desire for more accessible vacation rental opportunities.

#### **Accessible Parking Update:**

Officer Bauer was unable to stay to provide parking updates.

Commissioner Smingler announced the Medical District Parking ramp that includes Essentia Health, Greysolon and the Duluth Play House has now been upgraded with accessible parking side on every level and each end of the parking lot. Prior to Commissioner Smingler's advocacy with the parking commission and city of Duluth staff there was only accessible parking spots available near Essentia.

#### **Parks and Rec Report:**

Commissioner Crosby noted the commissioner comments about accessible parking close to the new Seawall/Baywalk project have been passed on to the Parks and Recreation Department. An update on this project is on the October 13<sup>th</sup> Parks and Recreation Commission agenda.

Commissioner Crosby shared an update on the Lincoln Park project. Right now, it is moving slowly through the paperwork/application process. Due to the nature of the project many different entities are involved. The park has completed the historical review and it was determined the crumbling retaining wall will be removed and an accessible route will be added from upper to lower Lincoln Park.

#### **Old Business:**

Racial Bias Audit- Commissioner Castaldo let the commission know that the group has completed the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the RFP and will be sending out to the commission for feedback.

Commissioner Smigler proposed a motion to approve the Duluth's Commission on Disabilities Mission, Vision and Goals for 2021-2022. Commissioner Naus seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Motions carries.

The conversation around the brochure has been tabled.

**New Business:** Vacation rentals. See Presentations.

#### **Current Disability Issues:**

Vice President Berner was facing a concern she wanted to bring to the commission. It involves an apartment complex in Grand Marais and their struggle with the new management. Commissioner Naus was helpful in providing information on Legal Aid. Carl Crawford suggested calling the state of Minnesota and would connect with further details.

**Other Business/Announcements:**

Commissioner Smingler announced the Duluth Playhouse will be holding sensory friendly performances open to all ages and have ASL interpreted shows at both the Norshor's main stage and the Family Theater. She will be sending the information out to commissioners in the hopes they would help spread the word.

**Correspondence/Public Comment:**

None

**Adjourn:** MS/C (Naus/Furman)

Next meeting is Wednesday November 3, 2021 3:00 PM  
Location to be determined.