



Commission on Disabilities
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes
June 2, 2021

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

Commissioners:

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

President Cich called the June 2, 2021 Commission on Disabilities to order. We do have a quorum.

Also present: Carl Crawford, Mark Bauer, Laura Laaksonen.
Guest: Rod Fournier from the DTA.

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

Approval of May minutes: MS/C – (Maki, Smigler)
Correction from May minutes: Tom Fuhrman to Tom Furman.

Rod Fournier joined the commission this afternoon to give updates on the DTA. At this time the DTA is working towards several different projects. He updated us on a current collaboration with St. Louis County on transportation to vaccine clinics. This partnership helps reach individuals with transportation barriers have free fare to vaccination clinics. This program has become successful and will continue on as needed. Mr. Fournier also discussed all of the areas under Duluth's Better Bus umbrella including updating infrastructure and providing a safe riding experience across the city. 35 bus shelters were replaced and 18 more are planned to be added in 2021, 10 of which have solar lighting. They will be adding bench seating to 25 bus stops and spending about \$160,000.00 on ADA improvements and upgrades. Mr. Fournier noted the DTA is also working closely with the City of Duluth on snow removal and access to bus stops as well as Essentia Health as they go through their renovation. Mr. Fournier announced the new MyDTA app that is now available, which is different from the Transit App

some may be using currently. He is hoping that all individuals can move to the MyDTA app. This will assist with mobile payments, trip planning and tracking.

Currently the DTA under their Better Bus Blueprint is doing COA internally and should be ready for public engagement in about six weeks. The COA is looking at areas of the city where access, such as food access and education, are most important.

Commissioner Smingler brought up a couple of disability awareness concerns. One was to provide awareness and accessibility around vision loss. Commissioner Smingler noted how helpful it would be to have large print copies of the bus schedule available and recommended font size 24 as preferred. Also, announcing bus stops is something that would not only be helpful but necessary in certain situations. At this time busses do not list all the stops or announce them as they are approaching. Commissioner Smingler noted unless you were listening to GPS on phone, you might not get off on the correct stop or miss your stop completely. Mr. Fournier responded that they are working towards accessibility around signage at this time and appreciates the feedback. The DTA is currently putting finishing touches on their written materials and signage. Mr. Fournier also updated the commission that electronic signage will be added to each bus. This electric sign will have continuous updates on upcoming stops, routes and transfers. Mr. Fournier reminded us that we can ask the driver to announce a specific bus stop and reiterated it is the driver's responsibility to announce this if requested. Mr. Fournier will make this reminder internally. In addition, Commissioner Smigler noted that Epilepsy may look a lot like a person is intoxicated and is hoping the DTA drivers can have awareness around this topic.

Commissioner Fochs had a complaint that bus drivers do not always stop at all bus stops and she has been passed over many times, causing her to need to run to the next bus stop. Mr. Fournier suggested that she call the DTA customer service line with any complaints of this nature.

President Cich inquired if the STRIDE Advisory Board could be reinstated. Mr. Fournier responded that the DTA will be moving STRIDE in house and will have a DTA employee assigned to take oversight to an "Accessibility Advisory Board". The commission is hoping to have individuals from the community and the DTA involved. The commission discussed the accessibility of DTA fixed routes as a whole would allow more access for STRIDE services and would increase flexibility. Commissioner Berner asked if there was a process to apply for the advisory council. At this time, they have not got that far in the planning process but are currently looking how to best approach this issue.

Mr. Crawford questioned if there will be expanded services from the DTA as more concerts and events are happening in the Bayfront and DECC area. At this time the DTA is stretched with their man power but will be utilizing the trolley for events in this area.

Mr. Fournier also noted that they are looking to expand hours and services in the City of Superior.

Public Comment/Information: Introductions from the commission to our new for new Commissioner Allison Fochs.

Accessible Parking Update:

Officer Bauer noted he was looking for additional commissioners on the Parking Commission and to spread the word throughout our networks. They recently had vocal advocate for accessibility issues term out.

The Parking Commission met last on 5/7/2021. At this meeting they reviewed two requests: 2724 W 4th Street-- presented and approved unanimously.

113 W House street-- presented and approved unanimously.

This signage has not yet been installed. Officer Bauer was able to explain the use of accessible parking and what this signage means for our new commissioner. The Parking Commission has received two new requests that will be reviewed at July's meeting.

Next Parking Commission meeting is this Friday 6/4/2021.

Parks and Rec Report:

Commissioner Crosby provided information on the Parks and Recreation departments upcoming Master Planning process. The Parks and Recreation Department is bringing a proposal to city council this coming Monday 6/7/2021 to approve a contract for a consulting firm that will help kick off the creative process. This will include an internal as well as public engagement, also aligning with Imagine Duluth 2035. Accessibility across our community in our parks and recreation system will be a part of the planning process.

Commissioner Berner noted Mayor Larson speaking with Senator Amy Klobuchar by the Lake today about recreation in Duluth.

President Cich noted Mayor Larson will be a part of the ADA31 Celebration highlighting accessible parks and trails throughout the city.

Commissioner Fochs questioned if the bathrooms at Enger that burned are being replaced? (Crosby will follow up)

Commissioner Smingler is still wondering who helped fund the Hawk Ridge Accessibility project. (Crosby will follow up).

Old Business:

Commissioner Castaldo stressed interest in being a part of the Police Departments Racial Bias Audit via email to President Cich and Mr. Crawford. A motion was put forward: MS/C (Smingler, Fochs) and approved unanimously. Mr. Crawford will reach out to Deputy Chief Marquart on the commission's decision.

Mr. Crawford walked a part of the sidewalk and did note the process was challenging.

Commissioner Smingler will join Mr. Crawford Monday 6/7 for a thorough walk through.

Commissioner Maki brought up the large bump outside the doorway at the Depot causing accessibility concerns. Commissioner Berner noted she would take a look and report back to the commission.

New Business:

No new business.

Current Disability Issues:

We continued the discussion around accessibility audits and ADA walkthroughs for local businesses. Some ideas are to provide an accessibility checklist and encourage them to have an ADA walkthrough from a trusted and trained community member such as a non-profit or an architectural firm knowledgeable on the ADA and MN Business Code. Commissioner Smingler also brought up there may be a lack of this expertise in the community and she would be willing

to take on extra training to be a person who can assist knowledgeably. The commission decided to create a task force to work towards this goal to include; Mr. Crawford and Commissioners Cich, Crosby, Maki and Smingler.

Next Steps are to look at what available resources are out there before our July meeting

We briefly discussed the Air B&B/VRBO inaccessibility concerns and questioned if there is anything we can do to raise awareness? Mr. Crawford noted that this is something that should be brought before the city council and in the least we could pass out information to make easy and affordable accessibility improvements as new licenses are granted.

Commissioner Fochs noted that a business near her was not clearing sidewalks because the doorway was facing the side parking lot. Mr. Crawford noted that there will be a larger focus on enforcing business and property owners clearing sidewalks next winter. This will also be discussed at the snow removal task force meeting time and date TBD.

Commissioner Berner had heard about a relationship with Lyft and will research and forward to the commission.

Other Business/Announcements:

Commissioner Berner asked if we will be able to meet in person soon. Mr. Crawford replied that we will be following the lead of the City Council. Commissioner Crosby questioned if a virtual option will still be available for those who are unable to attend in person? At this time that is a challenge but there is always the option to phone in.

Commissioner Berner is hoping the commission can help spread the word on upcoming ADA31 celebration. She will send out information to the commission.

Correspondence/Public Comment:

None

Adjourn: MS/C (Berner/Maki)

Next meeting is July 7, 2021 3:00 PM