



Commission on Disabilities  
Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes  
May 4th, 2022

This Commission on Disabilities meeting was held in person at City Hall room 330.

**Commissioners:**

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

**Also present:** Laura Laaksonen, Mark Bauer

**Guests:**

Arc Northland Housing team- Karel Hedstrom, Michaela Mullin, Seth Borovsky  
CHUM Housing Outreach/LSS/HDC – Deb Holman, John Stetson, Matt Benson  
Access North Center for Independent Living – Olivia Satterlee  
Community members- Juan Romero, Michael Rosa, Josh Rethro IV

Chair Berner called the May,2022 Commission on Disabilities meeting to order at 3:05 PM.

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

**Approval of February minutes: MS/C – (Castaldo, Crosby)**

**Public Comment/Information:**

Juan Romero joined our meeting today to talk about the accessibility concerns the Duluth community faces. He noted some examples such as a lack of accessible bathrooms, automatic door openers and stop light safety. Juan noted that he wanted to help the community become more accessible. President Berner explained the charge of the Commission on Disabilities and noted his concerns. Mr. Romero was invited back to a future meeting.

**Current Disability Issues:**

Deb Holman, John Stetson and Matt Benson gave a presentation on homeless outreach and housing initiatives for unhoused individuals in our community. They discussed the process and the barriers associated with assisting individuals in a community with a lack of housing options. They shared the “Stepping on Up” five-year plan that addresses the shortage of housing

causing long-term and chronic homelessness in our community. The three phases of this plan include:

- Phase 1-Immediate Response-Authorized Outdoor Living Zones with Street Outreach
- Phase 2- Shelter Next Response-Indoor Villages or Tiny Home Park
- Phase 3- Transforming Response Towards Long Term Housing

This team is currently searching for public or private lands for individuals to be able to keep a camper. Also, a new 501C3 is being developed for individuals experiencing homelessness to keep their pets safe and housed while they are seeking stable housing. Giving up pets is a large barrier for individuals.

The Arc Northland Housing Team presented the Arc mission and vision for helping individuals access housing and housing support through our collaboration with state Medicaid dollars. The team shared on successes and challenges in the programs provided:

- Housing Stabilization Services (HSS) is a person-centered housing service for Medical Assistance (MA) recipients who have a disability and are experiencing housing instability. The HSS program assists with finding independent housing and provides ongoing support to help sustain housing.
- Housing Access Services (HAS) provides housing assistance to people who have a disability and are receiving Medical Assistance (MA) benefits. HAS can assist with the housing search and can assist with financial needs related to the move when applicable.
- Relocation Services Coordination (RSC) Is a form of Targeted Case Management that provides coordination of activities to help a person who resides in an eligible institution gain access to medical, social, educational, financial, housing and other services and supports that are necessary to move to the community.

### **Accessible Parking Update:**

Officer Bauer provided an update on the Parking Commission. The Commission did not meet in April due to a lack of quorum and the commission does not intend to meet in May. The next meeting is June, and they will be discussing a request for a mirrored zone accessible parking slot at 2 E 8<sup>th</sup> Street. This will be recommended for approval.

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

Commissioner Crosby provided an update on the Parks and Recreations decision to vote on the Lake Superior Zoo's Master Plan. Part of the Master Plan objective is to improve accessibility across the zoo for an enhanced guest experience. Accessibility is mentioned throughout the updated Master Plan. This plan was presented and approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Commissioner Crosby also shared the city of Duluth's Essential Spaces survey is still live and we are looking for as much community input as possible. Crosby overviewed the in-person event that occurred 4/13/2022 at City Hall. The Essential Spaces survey can be found on the city of Duluth Parks and Recreation website under "Planning in the Parks" or here: <https://duluthmn.gov/parks/parks-planning/progress-in-the-park/essential-spaces/>

**Old Business:**

Snow Removal Task Force- The Commission noted a meeting to review the Snow Removal Task Force needs to be scheduled.

The DTA task force meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday 5/25/2022.

Commissioner Castaldo shared a document with information on Service and Emotional Support Animals in Housing. The MN Department of Human Rights document describes how to request a reasonable accommodation request under Fair Housing and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

**New Business:**

No new business.

**Other Business/Announcements:**

Commissioner Smingler shared the option of audio describers available for live theater and to connect with her for further details.

President Berner noted that she was continuing to explore the option for hybrid meetings to increase access and participation as we transition back to the “in person” format. This guidance comes from the state level and Laura Laaksonen has further details on these procedures.

Commissioner Crosby noted an email that had come to the commission regarding concerns with Essentia Health. Her son, a person with a disability, has continued to see his pediatrician into young adulthood and was recently told this was no longer a possibility without a transition plan. Not having a transition plan has caused stress upon her son. This is noted for the agenda and Carl Crawford will follow up. Discussions on providing education to Essentia Health have come up and will be addressed at a future meeting.

**Adjourn: 4:30 pm MS/C – (Furman, Smingler)**

Next meeting is Wednesday June 1, 2022, 3:00 PM  
City Hall Room 330