

## Commission on Disabilities

### City Of Easthampton

8/2/22

**Call to Order:** 10:04

**Present:** Angelique Baker, Chairperson; Mary Morris; Jeff Bagg, ADA Coordinator/City Planner; Molly Goodwin; Bryce LaPlante; Jeffrey Brown; Robert Wilde

**Absent:** Stan Diamond; Eli Damon (on vacation)

**Guest Speakers:** Mollie Burns, Mass Commission of the Blind (MCB); Michael Kennedy, Center for Living & Working, Inc and James Mazik, AICP-Consulting Services, for the Self Evaluation and Transition 2022.

#### Mollie Burns (MCB)

- State Rehabilitation Agency
  - Six offices:
    - 3 in the Boston Area
    - 1 in the New Bedford/Cape Cod areas
    - 1 in Worcester
    - 1 in Springfield
  - Goal of the agency is to support legally blind individuals maximize their independence.
  - Services individuals from birth to death
  - Individuals must be found legally blind by a doctor.
    - Doctor is mandated by law to refer all legally blind individuals to MCB within 30 days of diagnosis.
    - Individuals can only be referred to MCB by a doctor
- Programs:
  - 14 & under
    - Receives family supports
    - Offers support in finding help and resources within the community
    - All children are entitled to an education through an IPE
  - Vocational Rehabilitation:
    - 15 and over
    - Offers supports in High School, College and the Workplace
  - Social Support
    - Offered to individuals who are no longer in school or working or 65 and over
- Services:
  - Once referred, a counselor will reach out to the referral and conduct a home visit for
    - Orientation
    - Will evaluate referrals mobility in the home and area
    - Will discuss best practices for getting around

- Will also help referral navigate the bus system
- Assistive Technology:
  - Canes:
    - White with red tip
    - Sweeper cane
  - Will meet with client to help with technology adaptations
    - iPhone
    - iPad
    - Computers
    - Software
    - Vocal software
- Rehabilitation:
  - Counselor will evaluate client's home so that they can maximize their independence:
    - Talking clock/alarm clock
    - Teach Braille
    - Writing guides
- Offer assistance with the following services:
  - Light/magnifier for computer
  - Handicapped placard
  - Audio Books and Player (through Perkins School for the Blind)
    - Books will be sent via US Mail with a return envelope
    - No time limit on borrowing
- Large print/accessible phone with 10 number memory
  - Phone will repeat phone number, which decreased wrong numbers
- MCB ID card:
  - Allows client to ride public buses and MBTA for free
  - Berkshire transportation is half price.
- Tax Abatements for homeowners
  - Must have certificate from MCB to apply for abatement
  - Abatement is approx. \$500
- Excise Tax:
  - Client can own a car, but not have a driver's license
  - Excise tax will be abated.
- Federal and State Taxes:
  - Legally blind individuals who are registered with MCD, will receive specific deductions.

### **Michael Kennedy and James Mazik -Self Evaluation and Transition Plan 2022**

- Jim and Mike were hired to conduct the ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan 2022.
  - Easthampton was one of the first cities/towns to conduct a self-evaluation and transition.

- Self-evaluation and transition plans in Easthampton were conducted in 1990, 2009 and 2022
- The City obtained a grant to conduct this year's evaluation
- The ADA Law enacted in 1990 is considered a Civil Rights Law
- There are five titles under the federal law:
  - I Employment
  - II State and local government self-evaluation and transition
  - III private spaces open to the public
  - IV Telecommunications
  - V updates
- 521CMR:
  - State law covering the accessibility of buildings to the public
    - Building having renovations under \$100,000 or 30% of the value of property only needs the addition/renovation ADA accessible
    - Renovations/additions over \$100,000 or greater than 30% of the property value must make the ENTIRE building accessible
- Cities/Towns are required to appoint an ADA coordinator
  - Policies and grievance procedures must be kept up to date
  - Must provide reasonable accommodation
  - Each City/Town must create a Commission on Disability (COD)
- 2022 Self Evaluation and Transition:
  - There is a long list of ADA needs that need to be addressed (full report can be accessed on the Easthampton City home page)
    - Needs will be prioritized
    - City must prove that they are making plans to address issues.
    - Stavros can help with adaptive devices
  - When buildings are being built/renovated they must adhere to the highest standard, either the Title or 521CMR.
- Questions:
  - Automatic doors
    - Not mandated by the ADA or 521CMR
      - Exterior door cannot weigh more than 15 pounds
      - Interior doors cannot exceed 5 pounds
      - Door must have a 6 second close time
  - Crossing/Lights
    - ADA regulates that stop lights have a Chirper to assist blind individuals with crossing.

**Due to lengthy presentations by the guest speakers:**

- **Mary made a motion to end meeting and address agenda items not discussed at next meeting**
- **Molly seconded**
- **Next meeting Scheduled for September 6,202**
- **Meeting adjourned 11:34am**

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### **John Mason**

- An ADA playground is in the early stages of being designed for Nonotuck Park
  - Funding will come from a state sponsored grant and city funds
- Playground will connect to the already existing playground and also be connected to the ADA bathrooms.
- Phase II of the plan is to make the pool ADA accessible.
- John is requesting a letter of support from the COD
  - Mary made motion that we provide a letter of support
  - Molly seconded
  - Motion passed

### **Recruitment**

- There are four openings on the Commission
  - Marty's resignation was negated by Robert's appointment

### **Hybrid Meetings:**

- Angelique and Stan Diamon met with the mayor to see if Hybrid meetings are feasible for us.
  - We are still required to meet in person
- If the Hybrid meetings get extended beyond June 30<sup>th</sup>, then we can reassess

#### **New Business:**

- **Dementia training**
  - Jeff Brown and Bryce spoke about the Dementia training recently held at Riverside
    - They felt it might be a training the COD would be interested in putting on for City residents, possible in conjunction with the Council on Aging
- **New Hiking Trail**
  - Jeff Bagg expressed his desire to offer the COD a tour of the trail prior to opening
  - This will be done once the parking lot is paved
  - The grand opening is scheduled for the end of July 2022
- **ADA report**
  - Jeff Bagg suggested that we ask the consultant to come to our July meeting to discuss the ADA found in city buildings.
    - Jeff will ask the consultant
- **New School**
  - Angelique will again request that the COD be given a tour of the new building.

#### **Next Meeting Scheduled**

- Will either July 5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Date will be determined by how many Commissioners can attend for voting purposes.

**Adjourned: 11:03 am**

**Respectively Submitted**

***Mary Louise Morris***

**Mary Louise Morris**

**MLM/mtf**