

**TOWN OF AMHERST
COMMITTEE on DISABILITIES MINUTES
September 11, 2023**

Present Officers:

Erica Rodman – Chair
Rachel Martin – Secretary

Present Members:

Deborah (Debbie) Bucki – Town Liaison/Councilwoman
Luci Miranda – Member
Susan (Sue) Zummo – Member
Tom Roetzer – Member
Chong Cheng – Member
Barbara Robertson – Member
David (Dave) Whalen – Member (joined halfway through meeting)

Interpreter:

Not present at this meeting

ADA Coordinators:

Robert McCarthy – ADA Coordinator/Director of Human Resources
Mark Berke – Commissioner on Buildings

Visitors:

Marty Polowy - Amherst Town Attorney

Excused:

David Wantuck – Vice Chair

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 pm.

- I. Moment of Silence held in honor of September 11th and the lives lost and affected 22 years ago today.
- II. **Minutes**
 - a. August minutes amended to reflect the Town Board meeting and not the Planning Board meeting. With that correction, all other minutes approved as read
 - i. Erica Rodman – first
 - ii. Tom Roetzer - second
 - iii. All in favor
- III. **Old Business**

- a. Social Media Page
 - i. Barbara had asked at the last meeting about the NextDoor App. Erica reached out to the IT department. That would be a separate account and would need additional permission and approval. Erica recommended to stick with the Facebook page for now since we are working for it to gain traction.
 - ii. Need all Committee members to like and share things. Engage!
 - iii. Erica also cross-shares with other Town and community pages to get traction.
- b. Amherst Central Park
 - i. The Ice Ring/Ribbon – Erica reached out to the Town Architect (Anne Dafchik). Anne forwarded the preliminary plans for the park which are going to be shared. She said it does include an ice ribbon which may also be a roller skating ribbon in the warmer months. Wanted feedback on making it more accessible. In terms of a timeline, tentatively, the design process is now through December. And winter of 2024, they go through construction documents, design situations. Summer 2024 is when they plan order for ice equipment, and construction in Summer 2025, completing fall of 2025.
 - ii. Rachel shared that SABAH may be interested in helping to consult on this to make sure the ice ribbon is accessible.
 - iii. Sue shared that tree leaves may be a hazard and require more cleanup, so recommended pine trees as a preference.
 - 1. Asked if there would be a family bathroom (non-gender specific)
 - iv. Barb asked about lighting as well as protective barriers so that people would not fall into the ice or the fire (fire ring)
 - 1. We're not clear on what a fire ring is or what it's purpose is or what it would look like and would like to know more.
 - v. Erica – asked about accessible items including things like reflective vests
 - vi. Rachel – asked that they consider that different people have different needs, i.e. ability to push or pull a device on the ice so everyone can experience it.
 - vii. Luci – asked about places for people to sit and rest through the ribbon if needed, when they may need a rest.
 - 1. Erica – added entrances and exits along the path so they can leave if needed.
 - viii. There were general questions about parking and proximity to streets.
 - ix. Marty Polowy said these designs are early-stage and that there will be much more done through engineers and project managers and in compliance with ADA.
 - x. Questions about if there will be indoor areas.
 - xi. Rachel asked about emergency phone/also cell signal – we asked about this at the August meeting but want to make sure it does not fall off the radar.
 - 1. Mark Polowy – working on this with Town and local fire department.
 - 2. Making sure there is first aid at the ice ribbon
 - xii. Erica said Anne (Town Architect) wants an email with all points from Committee, and Erica said she can do this with David Wantuck and send it.

Wanted to know if the Committee is okay to have Erica and David do that or if we want to review the draft email as a Committee.

1. Motion for Erica and David to draft the email and send to Anne regarding Amherst Central Park Project.
 - a. Rachel Martin– First
 - b. Luci Miranda– Second
 - c. All in Favor
- xiii. Additional comments
 1. Want to go beyond ADA and do more
 - a. David Whalen mentioned “Universal Accessibility.”
- c. 1350 Eggert Road Rezoning
 - i. Marty Polowy wanted to explain the town process for projects such as this and explain this Committee’s role
 1. Purpose of enhancing compliance with the ADA with Town Facilities by Town Residents
 2. Wanted to explain the difference between town buildings and private projects and litigation risks.
 3. Erica asked if the purpose is not also to listen to town residents with disabilities who have concerns with their ability to access their communities.
 - a. Committee is allowed to hear and listen to concerns and then to redirect them to the appropriate groups within the Town.
 - b. Marty reported that the Committee is not acting in the legislative intent of the Committee which was meant to advise the town on access to town facilities and things the town itself can fix.
 - i. Erica expressed that some residents who have come to this Committee and expressed that they did not feel their voices were being heard and is disappointed to hear this.
 - ii. Erica asked if there were any consequences as a result of the Committee’s actions in the last 6 months. And Marty said not to his knowledge.
 - c. Dave Whalen wanted to explain the history and purpose of disability advocacy – that this Committee should be helping to speak up on behalf of people with disabilities. Dave also shared the Committee’s mission which includes “any other concerns”
 - d. Barbara shared her experience of being at the Health Fair and felt that people within the town had been grateful for this Committee and their ability to bring their concerns to someone.
 - i. Erica noted that not everyone with a disability has the same ability to access the town’s resources and

structures – making it inaccessible to them – and felt this is the Committee’s place to help those residents.

- e. Luci said residents are asking questions about the ADA
- f. Mark Berke added that all minimum requirements of the ADA will be met as it is the law, and the town assures that it will be met.
- g. Marty wanted to remind the group that there is legislation for how the public is supposed to give comments and to present their case for and against projects, and they should follow those processes. Dave mentioned that at times people with disabilities cannot access those same modalities as others.
- h. Barbara wanted to know how we can help residents and let them know that someone will in fact get back to them, so we as the Committee are not “dropping the ball”.
 - i. Bob said he personally makes sure to reach out to each person with resolution.
- i. Debbie wanted to remind us that this Committee is an advisory board, not able to make binding decisions. Bob took on explaining what that means. Committee cannot change laws or town code or building/zoning codes. It is here to be an ear to those who are concerned and a way to bounce concerns back to the Town Board/Attorney/ADA Coordinators
- j. Erica asked what we can do when residents come to this Committee. Marty said to direct those residents to the appropriate Committee. She asked if we can forward those concerns to the appropriate Committee on behalf of the resident. He said we should direct the resident to reach out instead. Bob said the Committee could be a resource to residents to help them navigate the proper channels to reach out to.

IV. New Business

- a. **No new business**

V. Next Meeting

- a. October 16, 2023 – 6:30 pm
 - i. Erica Rodman – first
 - ii. Luci Miranda – second
 - iii. All in favor

VI. Closing

- a. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm
 - i. Motion to adjourn
 - 1. Erica Rodman – first
 - 2. Rachel Martin – second
 - 3. All in favor