

TOWN OF AMHERST
COMMITTEE on DISABILITIES MINUTES
November 4, 2024

Member Name	Present/ Excused	Member Name	Present/ Excused
Erica Rodman, Chair	Present	Barbara Robertson, Member	Present
David Wantuck, Vice Chair	Present	Susan Zummo, Member	Present
Rachel Martin, Secretary	Present	Dave Whalen, Member	Excused
Luci Miranda, Member	Present	Tom Roetzer, Member	Present
Chong Cheng, Member	Present	Jamie Mobberly, Member	Excused

Other Participant Name	Present/ Excused	Address if applicable
Town of Amherst Liaison – Angela Marinucci	Present	N/A
ADA Coordinator – Bob McCarthy	Present	N/A
Building Department – Bill Prenevau	Present	N/A
Interpreter – Staci	Present	N/A
Interpreter – Ruann	Present	N/A
Secretary to the Council Members – Martha Taggart	Present	N/A

Guests:

1. Steven Floss, Amherst Highway Superintendent

Zoom Guests:

1. Sharon Davis
2. “Lindsey”
3. Andrea Morgante
4. Jeffery Zeplowitz

5. "Nick"
6. "Meaty McSausage"
7. Fran Knab
8. Lindsey Cassick
9. Jamie Sheldon
10. "Mr. Snuffleupagus"
11. Amherst Concerned Citizens
12. 917-484-2336
13. "LOL"
14. Anna "The Slanderer" Kay
15. "Andrea for Amherst Supervisor"

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 pm.

I.Minutes

- a. October minutes reviewed.
- b. October minutes approved as read
 1. Erica Rodman – first
 2. Luci Miranda – second
 3. All in favor

II.Accessibility Reminder – reviewed at the beginning of the meeting

- a. Please use the hand button on Zoom
- b. Please share your name before speaking each time.
- c. When passing a motion, please state your name before saying first or second.
- d. If you are sharing your screen, please read what is on your screen for those who are not able to visually experience what is on the screen.

III.Guest Speaker

1. **Steven Floss, Amherst Highway Superintendent**

1. Mr. Floss summarized the role of the Highway Department – to monitor and enforce rules for roads, signs, and signals. This includes but is not limited to fixing roads, clearing roads of snow, road drainage, refuse/garbage
2. Asked if there are any current projects related to accessibility. He talked about sidewalks and reminded the Committee that sidewalks in front of residences are the resident's responsibility with the exception of transitions to the street (such as on corners), which are the highway department's responsibility. These transitions are updated with every road paving. They do 50-60 road pavings per year, approximately. He also reminded the group that the Town is only responsible for Town roads, not county or state roads.
3. For sidewalks, he explained the procedure for reporting an issue with a sidewalk's accessibility. This is the responsibility of the Building Department. A call or form can be submitted to the Building Department to report an issue. An agent will then go out to inspect the issue and determine if a notice to fix the issue needs to be given to the homeowner. If they receive a notice, the homeowner is expected to fix it in a reasonable time or make reasonable plans to have it fixed. The Town tries to work with homeowners understanding financial constraints and wait times for tradespeople.
 1. Bill Prenevau oversees the Building Department and provided further explanation. Complaints can be submitted online or via phone call which is voicemail only (no live person will answer the call). The person leaving the complaint must leave details of the issue and specifically where the issue is in order for an agent to be able to inspect it.
 1. Erica suggested adding this information and links on the Committee Website so people can easily find this.
 2. Complaints can be called in to 716-631-7002 or submitted using the online form on the Town website.
 2. Any issues found by an agent will initially be sprayed with high visibility orange paint to both mark the issue and to alert pedestrians that that piece of sidewalk could be treacherous and to take caution. The Town initially gives the homeowner 30 days to make the improvement (or reasonably try to address it per the above).
 3. He explained an option the Town can provide which is a "Lift" of a sidewalk block which may be a cost savings to the homeowner and can sometimes be done more quickly than a removal and re-pour of concrete. At this time, this costs \$297/block of sidewalk. Residents are able to reach out to the Town via the complaint system for their own property to access this option if they know their sidewalk is in need of this repair. Bill noted that this option will not work for all cases, such as

cracked or broken blocks of sidewalk, but it is a good option most of the time.

4. Mr. Floss answered a question about signs such as “Child with Autism” signs in the town. He explained that the Traffic and Safety Board is in charge of approving or denying requests, and the Highway Department installs signs where they are told based on those approvals. He did mention that “sign pollution” is a consideration: if there are too many signs, there is concern that people will ignore them or not see the most important ones.
5. Mr. Floss listened to concerns about “salt buckets” that are left tied to some signs at intersections in the winter months, specifically the corner of Main and Harlem was mentioned. Mr. Floss explained this is a county road and not a Town one, but understood the issue of the salt buckets potentially being in the way of residents with disabilities being able to properly access the “walk” buttons on poles and said he would take this to his county contacts to look into.
6. Mr. Floss answered questions about snow removal from sidewalks and clarified a few things: Residents should be shoveling the full width of the sidewalk and not just one shovel width to accommodate wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, people needing to walk with another person beside them, etc. Homeowners have 24 hours to clear the snow on their sidewalks after the stop of the snowfall. If the Town has to clear the snow because a homeowner fails to, the Town charges the resident. Snow removal issues follow the same process as sidewalk issues of call-in or online form as above.

IV. Old Business

1. VRI for Town Facilities Update – David Wantuck

1. David has shared the information needed with Marty and this agenda item is completed.

2. Disability Awareness Training – Erica Rodman

1. Erica and David Wantuck worked with the training lieutenant for the Amherst Police Department and will be training officers in early 2025 including topics such as using VRI, supporting residents with disabilities, and how to work with people with service animals and laws surrounding service animals.

3. Bike Path Phones – Erica Rodman and Angela Marinucci

1. Erica shared the original proposal and recommendations with Angela who did review them. At this time only one phone on the bike path is in working order. Angela will take the information to the Town Board for further discussion.

4. Committee Webpage on the Town Website – Erica Rodman

1. Erica worked with Dave Willer on the recommendations from last month's meeting.
 1. The accessibility widget has been updated to be more intuitive and changed to a more recognizable icon. In addition, an accessibility statement was added to the bottom of each page to explain that people can use the widget to help them navigate the website as needed.
 1. Erica suggested the Committee make an info page to explain what these accessibility features are for and how to use them as a resource for residents.
 2. Adding the Facebook feed to the webpage is not possible at this time, so this suggestion will not move forward.
 3. Removal of some old items was completed per the Committee's recommendations during the October meeting.
 4. A direct link was added to the emergency management department which includes the form to self-identify that someone in a home has a disability in case of emergency.
 5. The suggestions to put items into folders was not able to be done as originally suggested, however Dave Willer suggested an alternative to set up a second page with links on it that can redirect people to other pages.

5. Disability Awareness Training – Bob McCarthy

1. Bob will be working with Dave Whalen to get this scheduled.

V. New Business

1. Liaison Report – Angela Marinucci

1. Angela shared that it is currently budget season for the Town Board. The meeting will be held on November 12th, and the budget is due to the state on November 20th.
2. Angela shared that she has received some emails from a resident regarding the Committee with a suggestion about the meeting schedule (the website states that meetings will be held the 2nd Monday of each month, but requested that the word "generally" be added to that since some meetings are moved from this schedule). This resident has interest in joining the Committee and Angela informed them of the process to submit a letter of intent. This resident also asked for information regarding what this Committee has accomplished for the I/DD community. Angela did recommend reading the annual reports which have

a list of accomplishments of the Committee. Erica pointed out that training that is completed such as emergency management training does include support for people with I/DD.

2. Committee Membership – Erica Rodman

1. There are 5 Committee members whose terms expire in December 2024. 3 are not seeking re-appointment and 2 are seeking reappointment.
 1. Not seeking reappointment – the Committee thanked these members for their years of service:
 1. David Wantuck
 2. Susan Zummo
 3. Rachel Martin
 2. Seeking reappointment:
 1. Erica Rodman
 2. Chong Cheng
2. There are 4 residents who are seeking appointment to the Committee. These residents submitted letters of intent which were reviewed by the Committee and each was given a chance to speak at this meeting to express their desire to be on the Committee:
 1. Jeffery Zeplowitz
 2. Frances Knab
 3. Lindsey Cassick
 4. Jamie Sheldon
3. The process was explained in the meeting – the voting Committee members would go into executive session (with voting members and Town representatives in attendance only) to discuss the candidates and make a recommendation to Angela Marinucci who will then take the recommended names to the Town Board in January asking them to be appointed.
4. *Executive Session began at 8:17 and concluded at 8:27 pm. All four residents seeking appointment were approved by the voting members of the Committee to seek appointment and will be forwarded to Angela to present to the Town Board.*
 1. *Motion to recommend the four residents listed above to join as Committee members:*
 1. Erica Rodman – First
 2. David Wantuck – Second

3. *All in Favor*

2. *Executive session ended and non-voting members re-entered the meeting and were informed of these recommendations.*

VI. Next Meeting

1. No meeting in December
2. January 2025, date TBD, presumed time is 6:30 pm on Zoom

VII. Closing

1. Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm
 1. Motion to adjourn
 1. David Wantuck – first
 2. Luci Miranda – second
 3. All in favor