

## MINUTES OF THE MAY 23, 2022 MEETING OF THE COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Members who participated: Brian Gallagher, chairman, Ray Phenix, Martin Costa , Sue Sherman, Rick Grundy.

The meeting was opened after a brief delay caused by technical difficulties.

Remote participation: Ray Phenix participated via telephone.

Guest speaker: Ed Walsh participated via Google meets. After being paralyzed due to an accident Mr. Walsh created an organization with the purpose of providing handicapped accessible housing, transportation and employment for disabled residents of Massachusetts. In the years 2010-2017 every HUD (Housing and Urban Development) program for the disabled experienced a 50% cut in funding. He felt we needed a different approach, so he started charitable organization. The idea is to build apartment buildings with at least 25 handicapped accessible units. The units will be rented to people in need with a significant portion of the rent being paid by the town housing authority. It is projected that everyone who rents one of the units will be responsible for \$200.00 to \$400.00 per month in rent. Each unit will be designed with the needs of disabled people in mind. Since individuals are not allowed to operate a business from a rent subsidized apartment there will be a space in the lower level of each building dedicated to business related pursuits so anyone who wants to run or create a business may do so in that space. In addition, each apartment building will have a wheelchair accessible van that will be able to accommodate several wheelchairs, not just one or two. The hope is that buildings like the ones envisioned by Mr. Walsh will create a sense of community among the residents and reduce or eliminate the sense of isolation and loneliness so often felt by disabled individuals. The purchase of a parcel of property in the Boston area nears completion. Mr. Walsh's organization may be found at [www.access4opp.org](http://www.access4opp.org).

Approval of minutes of the April 25, 2022 meeting: The minutes were approved without change.

Water Access: North Beach AKA Baby Beach or Children's Beach. Work by the Highway Department to grade the area and fill in holes and trenches has been completed. The mobility mats have been put in place. Martin will follow up with the Beach Committee about the placement of a wheelchair accessible picnic table. As for Beach Avenue, the GeoGrids have been received but we are now well into Piping Plover season. The existence of nesting plovers is being monitored and if it is determined that there is no nesting activity in the area the Highway Department will have a 48-hour window within which to place the GeoGrids in the handicapped parking area.

Thoughts/Concerns: The swings we purchased for the two town playgrounds have been received. Martin reported that the price is less than originally quoted. Martin has delivered the invoice to the town accountant so the swings can be paid for with the funds we and the Select Board approved. Dana Stewart, the town recreation director has arranged to have volunteers install the swings.

Next meeting: June 27, 2022 in the Select Board meeting room.

The meeting was adjourned.

