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BELMONT DISABILITY ACCESS COMMISSION

Minutes, Meeting of February 14, 2024 (Held via Zoom)

Disability Access Commission Members in Attendance: Andrew Poulsen (chair), Aurora Sanfeliz, Karen Bauerle, and Nan Donald.

The meeting was called to order at 7:12 p.m., and ended at 8:10 p.m.

The meeting minutes for the last meeting on January 10, 2024, were approved.

Further discussion and updates were provided concerning issues previously raised about the lack of accessibility of the garden path at the town library. Disability Access Commission members have spoken to recent Library Building Committee members about the importance of having this space fully accessible for all Belmont residents. The Library Building Committee has recently put making the path accessible to persons with disabilities as the first “add on” to the library bid. However, it will only be funded if the overall construction bid comes in under budget.

The lack of inclusion of disability-informed input continues to be an issue and the DAC is seeking ways to increase the Commission’s profile and to be included in earlier planning stages for future projects. Karen Bauerle volunteered to write a letter to town management regarding the DAC’s availability and the importance of town representation at DAC meetings, as per the Town bylaws.

In other business, a conversation was held with the owner of Wheelworks regarding his blocking of the sidewalk outside his business with a tent and bikes for sale. The DAC member involved reported that he was not open to hearing about the impact this was having for persons with visual disabilities, and that he was planning to put the tent up again in March. The DAC plans to contact Glenn Clancy about this issue, as this practice is not only a potential hazard for some persons with disabilities, but also appears to be out of compliance with town bylaws.

The importance of having affordable housing, which has come up in other town commission meetings, was briefly discussed. Karen will continue her efforts to connect with the Beech Street Center’s SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) counselor who is trained to provide free health insurance information and counseling to all Massachusetts residents with Medicare and their caregivers.

The Disability Access Commission will continue to meet remotely until further notice. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month, starting at 7 p.m. Upcoming meeting dates for 2024 include:

March 13, April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10, August 14, September 11, October 9, November 13, and December 1