

COMMISSION ON DISABILITY MINUTES

January 8, 2026

ATTENDEES: Angelique Baker, Eli Damon, Leslie Tane, Cyril Slemaker, Louise Jacob, Jennifer Sokolowski, Bryce LaPlant, Jeff Brown, Dillon Maxfield, Allyson Manuel

ABSENT: Bruce Homstead

- The meeting was called to order by Angelique Baker (AB) at 11:03 a.m.
- AB did a roll call of attendees and asked everyone to say a little bit about themselves.
- Allyson Manuel (AM) gave a Planning Department update:
 - The Main Street redesign is moving forward, we're at the 25% design phase. Expect next public hearing to be late winter/early spring.
 - The Safe Routes to School Project is at the 25% design phase as well.
 - The Planning Department has submitted two grant applications. One for improvements to the park at the corner of Parson and Federal Streets, and the second for the replacement of all Valley Bikes.
 - The Planning Department is also working on a municipal vulnerability preparedness application for the sidewalk on Emerald Place.
 - Work is being done on the crosswalks at Nini's and at Maple Street School on Chapel Street.
- AB asked that the Commission be notified of new projects. AM said it's a reasonable request.
- We should be able to get access to the Mayor's calendar with our .gov email address.
- AB made a motion to accept the December minutes. Eli Damon (ED) had two corrections. AB made the motion to accept, seconded by Cyril Slemaker (CS). Approved with corrections.
- Website, email and Facebook updates. Leslie Tane (LT) said there were no updates.
- Current events update by Louise Jacob (LJ).
 - HUD policy changes will drastically cut funding to supportive housing in Massachusetts.
- ED gave background about the 2020 Disability Survey in Easthampton. The major finding was that people were really unhappy about the state of the sidewalks. The Commission wants to do another survey. AB asked that anyone who wants to be on

that committee let her know. She's hoping to get it started in the next couple of months. CS and LT expressed that they want to be on the committee.

- Mayor Salem Derby joined the meeting. Questions for the mayor:
 - **What's the appointment process for committees?**
 1. Apply online
 2. Information goes through Mayor's office
 3. Sent to appointment subcommittee
 4. Subcommittee votes
 - Contact the mayor if there are questions about a submission in progress
 - The process usually takes less than a month

In the future, the chair of the committee will be notified when applications are submitted.
 - **Why might someone not be accepted?**

Certain committees have specific requirements. In the past, people have not been approved because of social media activity--appointees are supposed to represent the city.
 - **Why did you (Mayor Derby) want to become Mayor?**

Mayor Derby wanted to become Mayor because when he became interim mayor he realized that he could be successful at the job and that after 22 years of responsibility in the city he needed to step up.
 - **How can the COD be involved with the Mayor's office going forward?**

Bring accessibility issues to him by asking him to attend meetings or call him.
 - **How do the Mayor, City Council and Police Department work together on the issue of snow removal on sidewalks?**

The Mayor said that snow removal is "front and center". He helped write the snow removal ordinance. He's now working on a "Snow Angels" program with the High School Principal to have students shovel in common areas and for individuals who need help. The city is developing an app to report areas of snow concern. He may also connect with Williston to see if they'd be willing to help.
 - **Other discussion items**
 - AB gave a summary of the Accessibility Ordinance the COD has been working on. She clarified that it's not to have businesses **add** accommodations but to **disclose** what accommodations they already have.
 - A pedestrian and biking bridge from New City to the Mills is on the wish list, as is another bridge from Water Street to the High School.

- AB wants the COD members to think about what we want to accomplish in the next year. What are our individual strengths? Do we have any future speaker ideas?
- LT made the motion to adjourn at 12:06 p.m. AB seconded.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the Commission on Disability is scheduled for Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 11:00 a.m. **This meeting will be held in person at City Hall, with remote access available via Google Meet.**

Respectfully submitted, *Leslie Tane*