

COMMISSION ON DISABILITY MINUTES

March 12, 2026

ATTENDEES: Angelique Baker, Eli Damon, Leslie Tane, Cyril Stemaker, Jennifer Sokolowski, Bryce LaPlant, Jeff Brown, Bruce Homstead

ABSENT: Louise Jacob, Dillon Maxfield

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jason Montgomery, Stavros Center for Independent Living; Sam, program head, Stavros Wheelchair Operations Program

- The meeting was called to order by Angelique Baker (AB) at 11:00 a.m.
- Jason Montgomery shared a presentation about Stavros Center for Independent Living
 - The mission at Stavros is to help persons with disabilities and Deaf people develop the tools and skills they need to take charge of their own lives. They accomplish this through programs and services designed to meet the needs of persons of any age or disability as they work to achieve the life goals that are important to them.
 - Stavros serves all of Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin counties
 - They help individuals with disabilities to live independently through advocacy, Independent Living programs (IL), and Personal Care Assistance services (PCA).
 - More than 50% of Stavros employees are people with disabilities.
 - 10,000 consumers are served every month.
 - Sam spoke about the Wheelchair Operations Program, which is available for all Mass Health members in Hampshire, Hampden, Franklin, Berkshire and Worcester counties.
 - They can provide loaner wheelchairs and simple repairs at home.
 - They will connect you with a Durable Medical Equipment Provider to repair your chair if you don't qualify for their program.
 - Other Stavros programs include:
 - Take Charge Program: Peer to peer stress management and mental health services
 - Home Sweet Home Program: For individuals who are looking for home modifications (ex: stair lifts, bathroom modifications, ramps) so that they can stay in their homes.

- Durable Medical Equipment Program: Gives out needed equipment and accept donations. The biggest need is electric wheelchair batteries.
- Jason also shared about some of his personal work and projects. He is the founder and operator of 50 Arrow Gallery, a BIPOC-focused gallery in Easthampton that focuses on social equity and inclusion. He also leads a business accelerator program and Attack Bear Press.
- Angelique shared that Maddie Palmer can no longer attend COD meetings. There is some confusion about who from City Hall should be attending meetings in her absence.
- **Area Resource List:** Jeff Brown has been updating the list. He thinks he's contacted all of the businesses on the list and made the needed updates. He's emailing the list to Commission members.
- Angelique brought forward the idea that we should set up meetings with other Easthampton chairs and co-chairs, possibly having a social gathering in the spring/summer.
- **Community Access Monitor** Training is available through the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-office-on-disability> This free online training teaches about state and federal regulations regarding disability access.
- Northampton Disability Commission has invited us to participate in their **Story Hour** initiative to celebrate Disability Pride month in July. If we are going to participate, we need to supply/decide on the following:
 - Accessible location
 - Date (coordinate with Northampton and Amherst)
 - Choose books
 - Find reader (preferably someone with a disability who can describe the picture books)
 - Find ASL interpreter (<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-captioner>)
 - Determine age group(s)
- **Survey.** We need to schedule the next subcommittee meeting. The first goal is to create survey questions to present to the COD. Jeff Brown thinks we should broaden the questions that were on the previous survey and use them as a launchpad.
- Bruce Homstead made a motion to accept the February minutes, seconded by Eli Damon. Approved.
- Angelique asked the members of the COD to self-identify skills and interests:

- Bruce Homstead: Jack-of-all-trades, research, nutrition and wellness.
- Leslie Tane: Graphic design and marketing, can speak to groups and table.
- Jeff Brown: Brainstorming, tabling, disability advocacy and research.
- Eli Damon: Emotional support
- Angelique Baker: Talking to people, leading community events, team management.
- Angelique asked Bruce to present for 5-10 minutes at our next meeting about new ideas in nutrition and wellness.
- **Farmer's Markets:** Can we recruit new members there?
- Leslie Tane made the motion to adjourn at 12:24 p.m. Angelique seconded.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the Commission on Disability is scheduled for Thursday, April 9, 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*