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Gary Christenson, Mayor

Disability Commission Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2026

Attendance:

✓	Marilyn Andrews
✓	Shanti Chilukuri
✓	Kate Doyle (in person)
✓	Chukwuka Ezewuzie, Chair (in person)
✓	Kathleen Higgins
✓	Ralph Long
✓	Lisa Picardi
✓	Maria Luise (ADA Compliance Officer) (in person)

This meeting took place at 215 Pleasant Street, City Hall, in Room 113 and included remote participation. Some members of the Disability Commission participated in the meeting remotely per the Governor's legislation of March 28, 2025, suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law. A Microsoft Teams link was also provided for members of the public who wished to attend remotely.

This meeting was also recorded through Microsoft Teams and called to order at 6:05PM.

1. Roll call of Committee Members

Chuks started the meeting and mentioned that it would be recorded via Microsoft Teams. He then called attendance as indicated in the chart above and a quorum was present to conduct business.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

The March and April Minutes had been tabled from the previous meeting. The March 2026 minutes were discussed. Upon motion of Kate D. to approve the minutes, seconded by Lisa, the Commission voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the minutes.

The April 2026 minutes were discussed. Upon motion of Lisa to approve the minutes, seconded by Shanti, the Commission voted unanimously by roll call vote to approve the minutes.

3. Updates or action items that need to be addressed re: Current Projects

- **Lions Club collaboration update:** Chuks provided an update on the ongoing collaboration with the Lions Club. He attended one of their meetings and reported that Debbie Wayne, the President of Lions, is available to coordinate with the library director for accessibility improvements, including plans for an optical scanner and a dedicated room.

The scanner would allow visually impaired users to have books read aloud and take notes using the braille writer previously donated by the Lions Club. Due to space constraints, the Library Director suggested moving equipment in and out, but concern was expressed about potential damage. The hope is to advocate for a dedicated room to house accessibility equipment permanently.

Next Steps are to contact the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind to gather information on equipment specifications and costs, with plans to revisit the topic in the next Lions Club meeting and notify interested commission members once a date is confirmed.

- **MOD Grant:** Maria reported that the accessible sinks were installed at the high school during April vacation, funded by a Mass Office of Disability grant, and are now in use. The Commission discussed organizing a press event or visit to highlight the project, with the Superintendent. It was suggested to schedule the event for June when school is out for easier access.
- **Vision 2026:** Commission members provided updates on their respective Vision 2026 focus areas:
 - **Transportation and Infrastructure:** Lisa reported that she continues working on tracking infrastructure issues, including the ongoing street-by-street audit that she is working on with Malden Safe Streets. The audit will identify issues such as broken sidewalks and missing crosswalk paint, etc. The next meeting is June 29th. Lisa also reported that she had been made aware that the special access doors at the high school, including those on the ramp, are not functioning, which affects accessibility. She mentioned the doors at the Ferryway as well. Maria stated that she would investigate and contact relevant school and Public Facilities staff. Maria will report back to Lisa.
 - **Education Initiatives:** Marilyn reported that with the support of Lisa, Kate D. and Ralph, the Bright Minds Quiet Spaces event was a success. The event featured sensory rooms, resource tables, and participation from police and fire. It was well attended and supported by a great group of volunteers. Marilyn also reported on her ongoing advisory work with Malden SEPAC which meets regularly with the superintendent and SPED director to discuss district issues and maintain open dialogue. She also announced that there were new Department of Elementary and Secondary Education regulations limiting restraints and seclusion in schools, with an

informational event scheduled for June 12th involving educators, parents, and legal experts.

- **Social Activities and Health:** Kate D. reported that the All Abilities Bird Walk and Resource Fair is scheduled for July 11th, with Nature Man Mike booked as a guest. The Commission discussed the need for accessible restroom stations and improved food and water options. Maria would check in with DPW.

- **Employment Activities:** Maria reported that she connected with Rachel Kaprielian, Executive Director of Project Triangle, who expressed interest in presenting at the June meeting about their day program, residences, workforce development, and city partnerships. She also reported on the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program. The Director of the program works with Kelli Collomb, Transition Coordinator at Malden High School, to ensure that students with disabilities can participate in the program.

- **Religious Institution Accessibility Assessment:** Ralph discussed accessibility challenges at religious institutions in Malden, including entrance ramps and second-floor access. He reported that sidewalk and corner repairs are ongoing at religious centers, but the main concern is entrance accessibility, such as ramps and chairlifts, especially for sanctuaries with stairs. The Commission discussed checking ADA accessibility information on institution websites and Google Maps and contacting institutions directly to inquire about accessibility practices and infrastructure. Ralph agreed to begin assessing different locations, with plans to report findings.

- **Policy Updates:** Kate H. explained that due to actions on the federal level many programs around special education had been dismantled including Offices for Civil Rights across the nation. There were (13) thirteen offices and with lay-offs they were reduced to (5) five. However, most recently, the Boston Office for Civil Rights (OCR), previously reduced in staff, is now functional again. This allows for enforcement of Section 504 and other civil rights laws and regulations for families and schools in Malden. Families experiencing disability discrimination, such as denial of access to a program/activity or failure to implement accommodations, can now file complaints with the Boston OCR, which will conduct investigations and enforce remedies.

4. New Business

- **Route 60 Redesign Input:** Maria reported that the Route 60 Redesign project, led by Transportation Planner James Tarr, is seeking input from the Disability Commission at the June meeting. Maria will resend the information about the redesign to Commission members prior to the June meeting to ensure everyone is informed before the presentation.

- **Meeting Logistics:** The Commission agreed to allocate 15 minutes each for Project Triangle and for the Route 60 presentations, with additional time for questions.
- Chuks discussed the MOD Newsletter and an upcoming meeting on May 20th for which he encouraged attendance. There was also discussion about new grant opportunities, and the possibility of reapplying for grant. Maria stated that she would review the ADA evaluation for new project ideas and speak with Eric Rubin.
- Chuks also informed the Board of a potential partnership with Malden Access Television, Urban Media Arts (UMA). He connected with Tina LeGarde, the Executive Director about partnership opportunities to broadcast meetings, create podcasts, and nominate a member to the UMA board. All Commission members have free access to create programming related to commission activities, with the option for individual or group projects once approved by the commission. On a motion by Kate D., seconded by Shanti, the Commission voted unanimously by roll call vote to invite the Executive Director to the June meeting for a 15-minute presentation and Q&A, adding her to the agenda alongside Project Triangle and the Route 60 design representative.
- **Quarterly Report Proposal:** Chuks suggested that each Commission member submit a one-page summary of their activities and achievements for compilation into a quarterly report for the Mayor and a newsletter. The reports will serve as a foundation for the annual report, streamlining the process and ensuring comprehensive documentation of Commission activities. Marilyn also recommended sharing the report with City Council, School Committee, and making a public version available at City Hall to increase visibility and inform the community.

No further business discussed.

5. **Public Comment**

No one spoke for public comment.

6. **Scheduling of next meeting and adjournment**

The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, June 11, 2026 at 6:00PM. Upon the motion of Maria to adjourn, which was seconded by Ralph, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting.