



TOWN HALL  
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DISABILITY ACCESS  
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**DISABILITY ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**Minutes of December 10, 2019**  
**Stavros—Main Conference Room**  
**210 Old Farm Road, Amherst, MA 01002**

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 a.m. with the following members:

**PRESENT:** Gerald Weiss - Chair, Victoria Dixon, Seren Derin, Ruth Smith, Myra Ross, and Elysse Link

**ALSO PRESENT:** Maureen Pollock, Associate Planner; Senior Architect Jim Morrissey, Design & Construction Management: A Division of Facilities & Campus Services, UMass Amherst; and Jones Library Director Sharon Sharry

**1. Announcements -**

**2. New Business -**

**a. Review AAB variance request – UMass Amherst- Thatcher Way**

Senior Architect Jim Morrissey, Design & Construction Management: A Division of Facilities & Campus Services, UMass Amherst was present to explain the variance request.

UMass Amherst would like to reconstruct the existing sidewalk running parallel to Thatcher Way from the Accessible Parking Area exiting on Thatcher Way at Lewis House and to reconstruct Stair (#1) and Utility Stair #2 Accessing Thatcher Way.

Because of the existing contours, the sidewalk is at a lower elevation and separated from the road by a landscaped area. The first phase of the project is to reconstruct two sets of stairs that are connected to the sidewalk. The second phase is to reconstruct the sidewalk which is cracked and broken surfaces which make traversing difficult.

Here are the list of variance requests:

### CMR 22.00 Walkways, Section 22.4 Level Changes

Sidewalk Variance Request – Reconstruct existing Stair #1: The sidewalk/stairs connect the main sidewalk and lead directly into traffic on Thatcher Way. The sidewalk and stairs are for the convenience of the UMass Staff parked in the immediate area, which includes person and maintenance vehicles. There is no sidewalk at the road side. Providing a ramp access to Thatcher Way in this location could prove to be dangerous, due to the hazardous condition of entering directly into the road. There is limited area to construct a 24± foot ramp. Because of the location and use there is no benefit for a person with disabilities to use the walk.

North Sidewalk Variance Request – Grade Change: The sidewalk between Thatcher and Lewis has a grade change in elevation of 4 feet 5 inches in 24± linear feet resulting in a 10.38 degree pitch. The change is dictated by the existing contours. The sidewalk at this point is not part of either dorms' egress path, and is primarily used by UMass Staff. The reconstructed walk terminates, like Stair #1 above directly into traffic on Thatcher Way. If a ramp was constructed to address the grade change it would require a ramp over feet long which would be expensive and difficult because of the existing contours, underground utilities and limited space. Because the route to the accessible parking lot and the center of the campus is to the south, there is no benefit for a person with a disability.

Included within the sidewalk reconstruction project is the re-building of Utility Stair #2. The stair is not part of the sidewalk. It is used by the UMass

Building Custodial Staff to bring trash receptors up to the street elevation for pick up by the UMass Waste Management Department. The stair is secure at the lower level.

Ms. Derin asked where the PVRTA van drop-off would be located. Mr. Morrissey stated the drop-off would be located at the ADA accessible parking spaces adjacent to Thatcher Dorm.

Board Recommendations: The Commission is satisfied with the variance requests, as submitted for Thatcher Way.

### **a. Jones Library Accessibility Subcommittee**

Jones Library Director Sharon Sharry attended the meeting to discuss the newly formed Jones Library Accessibility Subcommittee and to ask if any DAAC member would be interested in joining.

The Jones Library Board of Trustees seek dedicated volunteers with knowledge and expertise in accessibility and all this term encompasses to serve on the Library's newly established Jones Library Accessibility Subcommittee.

Under the direction of the Library's Facilities Supervisor and Library Director, this Committee will create an updated Accessibility Plan applicable to the physical building of the Jones Library and the operations and services of the Jones, Munson and North Amherst libraries. The draft Plan will include the solicitation of community feedback and be completed within one year from the date of the formation of the Committee.

The Jones Library is receiving grant money in July 2020 for the proposed library expansion.

All present DAAC members stated would be interested in joining the Subcommittee. Members discussed whether a Starvos van could provide transportation to/from the Subcommittee meetings. Ms. Dixon stated she will

ask Starvos staff if this could be accommodated. Ms. Pollock asked Ms. Dixon to also ask if a Starvos van could provide transportation for members to attend DAAC meetings, each month.

### **b. Other**

Ms. Ross suggested that the Town Clerk's Office should better promote that every polling location in Amherst has an ADA voting booth.

Ms. Smith stated that the voting booth room has changed for Precinct 6. Suggested that more wayfinding signage be placed at this location to indicate the room change. Ms. Smith stated the DPW added a lip to the entranceway into the gym and stated the DPW will need to keep adding more as time goes on.

Ms. Ross stated she will not be available to attend the January 14, 2020 DAAC meeting but she will be available to attend the February 11, 2020 meeting.

Ms. Ross suggested the DAAC consider preparing an ADA Handbook specific to Amherst.

The Commission suggested that Town Council liaison be in attendance of the DAAC meetings.

Ms. Pollock stated the Town is in beginning stages of updating the Town's ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. The Self-Evaluation Plan will evaluate all Town-owned facilities for ADA compliancy. The Transition Plan will prioritize the findings/projects from the Self-Evaluation Plan for the Town to consider pursuing over the next 5-10 years. Ms. Pollock stated she is currently preparing the scope of work and will be soliciting quotes from consultants. Ms. Pollock stated the Town hopes to start working on this project in early 2020.

### **3. Old Business**

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

**3. Public Comment Period**

**4. Next meeting(s)**

- a. January 14, 2020

**5. Adjournment**

The Board adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted, Maureen Pollock, Associate Planner