

<http://Town.Saugus.MA.us/COD/>



# The Town of Saugus Commission on Disabilities

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## General

The Saugus Commission on Disabilities meets each month on the fourth Monday at 5:30 PM in the First Floor Conference Room of the Town Hall. We perform site surveys for accessibility at various times and days around the community. Watch the [Community Event Calendar](#) for details.

Our current members are:

Kathy Forbes	Chair Person	781-233-1164 (home)
Joseph Dennis Gould	Secretary	781-233-3942 (home) 781-594-1544 (work)
Dennis DeMatteo	ADA Co-Ordinator / Member	781-231-4119 (work)
Geraldine Roach	Member	781-233-5292 (home)
Hugh Doherty	Member	781-231-3451 (home)
Kevin Currie	Member	781-233-5671 (home)
David J. Nelson	Member	781-233-7793 (home)

The prime contact for any Commission on Disability questions or concerns is Chair Person Kathy Forbes.

We have two videos (one fifteen minutes and one half an hour) that are great for Handicap Accessibility Awareness training (both with and without closed captioning) that can be loaned to schools and organizations, and additionally members are happy to give presentations or hold question / answer meetings. Anyone who is interested should call the Chair Person.

Likewise, we can provide information and training on the [Community Access Monitor Program](#).

We're also starting a volunteer handicapped parking enforcement program working with the Saugus Police Department in which Commission on Disabilities members will be taking pictures of illegally

parked vehicles in handicapped spaces or blocking handicapped ramps, resulting in a \$100 ticket from the Saugus Police.

## Authority And Purpose

The Commission on Disability was established by a vote of Town Meeting to promote the inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities in the activities, services, and employment opportunities of the community.

The Commission works to:

- Advise and assist municipal officials in ensuring compliance with federal and state disability laws;
- Review policies and activities of municipal departments and boards as they affect persons with disabilities;
- Provide information, referral, advocacy and technical assistance to individuals, businesses and organizations in all matters pertaining to disability;
- Coordinate the activities of other local groups organized to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.
- Per state requirement, the Commission consist of no less than five, no more than nine members chosen by the Board of Selectmen or Town Manager. The majority must be persons with disabilities and one may be a member of the immediate family of a person with a disability. One must be an elected or appointed municipal official.

## Goals

The Commission on Disability has many goals. In general we strive to:

### **1. Ensure Municipal services, programs, meetings, and employment opportunities are available and accessible to persons with disabilities.**

Meet with appropriate Staff: the Americans with Disabilities Act coordinator, Selectmen, Town Manager, Town Meeting, Planning Board, Building Inspector, Building Committee, Department of Public Works to review regulations, priorities, make a plan and set timelines.

Survey all municipal buildings, facilities, and sidewalks for access.

Assess each service, program and activity for physical and communication accessibility and to make sure policies aren't discriminatory.

Review grievance procedures and notification of rights.

Prioritize what needs to be done (especially the expensive building renovations).

Be aware of new programs, services or construction. Work with those involved to make sure they meet the needs of people with disabilities, e.g. be a member of the school building committee.

**Some examples:**

All public meetings should be held in accessible locations.

Emergency services such as police and fire departments should have telecommunication devices for the deaf (TDDs, a device which enables a deaf person to communicate by telephone).

Written material, such as town reports and newsletters, should be available on tape and in Braille upon a request for people who are visually impaired.

Announcements about municipal activities such as recreational programs, meetings, public health programs, and employment opportunities should be publicized on the radio and cable TV as well as in print.

Sign language interpreters should be available at meetings and activities upon request.

Libraries should have books on tape and in large print plus mail or home delivery for people who are shut-in.

**2. Ensure businesses, agencies, and organizations are accessible to persons with disabilities.**

Survey businesses, agencies, and organizations for communication and architectural access. Work with owners and managers to encourage compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Architectural Access Board's regulations and other disability laws.

Educate owners and managers about the needs of persons with mobility, hearing, visual, cognitive and other disabilities. Introduce them to the federal IRS \$15,000 tax deduction for barrier removal and \$5,000 tax credit for ADA compliance.

**3. Encourage Mobility**

Survey all parking lots that are open to the public for hp designated spaces. Work with owners and the building inspector to bring the lots into compliance with AAB and ADA regulations and municipal by-laws.

Review on-street hp designated parking and curb cuts. Work with local officials to increase both if necessary.

Propose an ordinance/by-law that allows police to ticket cars in privately owned, publicly used parking lots and that increases fines for violations of hp parking.

Evaluate transportation needs. Work with Regional Transit Authority, Council on Aging, municipal officials to increase (or to provide!) accessible transportation.

**Some examples:**

Offer a program that gives discounts on taxi rides.

Contract with a local van company to provide rides.

Council on Aging and other transportation providers must also provide accessible transportation.

**4. Increase Accessible Affordable Housing**

Work with the Housing Authority to increase adaptable and accessible housing.

Meet with local builders / developers to encourage development of accessible and adaptable housing.

**5. All Students With Disabilities Should Receive An Education Comparable To That Given To Non-Disabled Students In The Least Restrictive, Most Integrated Setting.**

Evaluate programs for students with disabilities for mainstreaming and integration.

Evaluate schools for architectural accessibility.

Introduce a disability awareness program in the schools.

**6. Be A Resource: Provide Information And Make Referrals On A Broad Range Of Disability Issues.**

Advertise the commission's existence. Post the community with flyers or brochures, put articles in the newspaper, use the web, cable TV, and radio.

Establish a way for people to contact the commission. Either set-up an office and phone answering machine or assign one commission member to be the contact person.

Develop a file of information.

**7. Work To Pass Federal And State Legislation That Will Increase The Quality Of Life For People With Disabilities (Lobby).**

Write, call, meet with legislatures.

Testify at public hearings.

## **8. Advocate For The Rights Of Individuals With Disabilities And Disability Groups.**

Set up and publicize A mechanism for people to contact the commission with their individual concerns.

Work with appropriate officials and organizations to resolve situations.

Work with the Massachusetts Office on Disability Client Services Program.

## **9. Educate The Public About Disability Issues.**

Develop good relationships with newspapers, TV, and radio stations (start a column or regular show, write press releases about your work).

Initiate awareness program in the schools.

Speak to civic organizations such as Lions, Girl Scouts, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary.

Hold disability awareness workshops.

## **Other Considerations**

Determine how many people in your community have a disability (Mass. census indicates around 17%, but the figure might be higher).

Find out what people's needs are. Conduct a needs survey or hold a public hearing.

Work together with local organizations with similar concerns: Veterans' Office, the Council on Aging, the Special Needs Parents Advisory Committee, etc. on common issues.

Establish an advisory committee, friends of the commission or associate membership to increase support.

Get organized. Adopt operating procedures, establish long and short range goals, break into subcommittees or assign tasks to individuals to accomplish between meetings.

## **Applicable Laws**

- Massachusetts General Laws, chapter 40 section 8J gives municipalities the authority to establish commissions.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities in the programs, services and employment opportunities. of organizations and agencies that receive federal money;

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires the same non-discrimination of disabilities whether or not they receive federal money;
- Amendment Article 114 of the Massachusetts Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability under any service or program within the Commonwealth;
- The regulations of the Architectural Access Board require access in newly built and renovated buildings.



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