

City of Lowell Disability Commission
Meeting December 11 th 6:00 – 8:00

Members present

Ron Lassman (remote), Bill Mellen (remote), Erica Harvey, Joanna Turcotte, Sebastian, Lloyd De Jesus, Sebastian Nash (remote)

Members absent

Dave Ellington, Mike Desrosers, Chris Green, Councilor Corey Belanger

Meeting opened 6:05 PM

Motion to approve minutes from November 9, 2025

Motion by Ron Lassman, 2nd Sebastian Nash: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: Guest Benji Kemper of Massachusetts Accessible and Affordable Housing Coalition (MAAHC).

Mr. Kemper opened by describing his role and what MAAHC has done across the Commonwealth to help address the need for affordable, accessible housing. A big win was the affordable housing trust fund which gives developers benefits to make affordable, accessible housing. Required 10% accessible units. There's 800 million over 5 years towards trust fund, huge opportunity

Mr. Kemper has two asks; email a sign on letter to Secretary Edward Augustus in support of the coalition and members attend 1st quarterly meeting Jan 28th, can send link to RSVP. He will send to Ron for approval for meeting

Comment from Assistant City Manager Sean Machado: Arbor money to create Lowell affordable trust fund (Arbor money) infant stages

Mr. Kemper will email Ron to connect with everyone in regards to Asst. City Manager's comments

Motion made to approve reviewing letter and follow up on meeting attendance

Motion by Joanna Turcotte, 2nd Erica Harvey: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: Guests Elizabeth Oltman, Jennifer Conners, John Gleason and Assistant City Manager Sean Machado

Ms. Conners works at city engineering with Mr. Gleason and Ms. Oltman in traffic

Ms. Conners opens by explaining the additional funds for wheelchair ramp and sidewalk improvement based on a pedestrian volume map. Group explains target areas include schools, parks, public buildings. There is 1 million to repair and construct new wheelchair ramps in Downtown, the Acre, and Belvedere neighborhoods in 2025. In the new year, the plan is to shift to residential with higher pedestrian traffic. Some areas have already received grants.

Refer to the package with 7 locations to target (Email from Lloyd and printed copies). Packet includes approx users and conditions. Estimates includes 104 wheelchair ramps. Current cost estimates are \$725,000 - \$872,000.

Comment from Ron Lassman that the packet looked good, especially for ramps and wheelchair access areas

Question from Sebastian Nash: What about general sidewalks in back central?

A: They typically target an intersection and work outward

Ms. Oltman explains they are meeting neighborhoods about areas to set up a bigger project, especially on Central St.

Follow up comment from Sebastian Nash: Some of the sidewalks in area are not ADA compliant

A: The group is working with community and commission can make recommendations

Ms. Oltman explains Tyler Park, Beacon Park and others would have signs with lights for better visibility, ramps will be improved (Same as Andover and Douglas). Grant to add 5 more of the same. Grant has been received to raise crosswalk at LCHEALTH - repair along garage (next summer). There is a \$250,000 grant for ADA accessible assessment of schools and further grants can be procured after hopefully. Every single school will be reviewed.

The group is seeking a letter of support / comments, questions, feedback. Each project, we can receive a heads up on for input.

The Commission can write the letter and email.

Motion to approve writing a letter of support.

Motion made by Bill Mellen, 2nd Ron Lassman: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: Lowell Housing Authority - Bill Mellen

Commission member Mr. Mellen requests Lowell Senior Center and make education more available for the importance of including interpreters since events have forgotten about interpreters. We haven't heard back just yet, Lloyd De Jesus will follow up

Motion made to follow up on lack of interpreters.

Motion made by Sebastian Nash, 2nd Erica Harvey: Motion Passes

Agenda Item: Old Business

- LRTA - 7.2 million grant / 6 new buses to replace 1016 diesel buses, will be accessible. Now wheelchair users will be open to all buses, not just Roadrunner. There is a new communication system.
- Bartlett School - still no lifts. We'll have Chris make a call, but the grant is great news
- Funding and Transition Plan - January take a vote for Sorrenson. By March there might not be enough money
- LHS Building - no update
- Friends of the Commission Program - One was supposed to join but scheduling conflict for December

Open Discussion on Community Needs

Commission Member Joanna Turcotte brought up a letter from the City Manager's office regarding a bid to host Special Olympics Summer Games. Discussion over logistics, including sites to use and possible concerns like having the river cut through close to a lot of sites. Erica Harvey will reach out to Matt Ruxton from Special Olympics to join at next meeting. Melissa should also be invited if possible.

Motion to adjourn made at 7:08

Motion made by Erica Harvey, 2nd by Joanna Turcotte: Motion passes