



City of Portland
Portland Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
March 7, 2018

Bill Campbell, Jr., Chair of the Committee, convened the meeting of the Portland Disability Advisory Committee (PDAC).

- **Sign in**

- In attendance: James Devine, Michelle Ames, Lisette Belanger, Jessica Russell, Derek O'Brien, Ken Shapiro, William Campbell, Jr., Haley Pass, Steve Leighton, Bud Buzzell, Karen Perry, Sandra Bishop, Jill Johanning, Karen McPhee, Kayla Moore, Linda Weare
- Absent Committee members: John LeMieux, Hanna Aistrop

- **Minutes of the January 3, 2018 meeting.** Bud Buzzell moved to approve the minutes of the 1/3/2018 meeting and Michelle Ames seconded. The remaining committee members in attendance voted unanimously to accept the minutes. No corrections were noted.

Guest speaker, Christopher Branch, Director of Public Works Department

For properties that are not on a city sidewalk plow route, city ordinances require that adjacent property owners clear snow and ice from sidewalks. Business owners have 12 hours following a winter storm to do so and residential owners have 24 hours following a storm. <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/1422/Winter-Sidewalks>

- Chris clarified the different City departments responsible for clearing sidewalks after a snow storm:

- The Public Works and the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities departments are jointly responsible for plowing approximately 124 miles of sidewalks.
- The Public Works department is responsible for clearing an estimated 14 miles of sidewalk. The department has 4 sidewalk plows that clear the sidewalks in the Downtown District. Parks, Recreation and Facilities have 6 additional plows that clear an additional 110 miles of sidewalk.
- The remaining 200 miles of sidewalks are the responsibility of Portland residents.
- A storm is declared *completed* once the City has completed plowing the streets and sidewalks. From that point on, a commercial property owner has 12 additional hours to remove snow from the sidewalk and treat the sidewalk abutting their property, and residential property owners have 24 hours to remove snow from the sidewalk abutting their property. See <https://www.portlandmaine.gov/1422/Winter-Sidewalks>.
- **Complaint Process:**
 - If a complaint is lodged, an inspector will go to the site and issue a Notice of Violation (NOV), which entails leaving a sticker on the front door notifying the owner that they have violated the ordinance and have amount of time to comply with the ordinance, typically another 24 hours.
 - First violation of the season: Public Works provides the owner a warning. Once the owner has a second violation of the season, the owner receives the NOV, which can lead to fines and perhaps a court appearance. After 48 hours, if the sidewalk is not cleared, the City has a contractor go in and clear the property. The resident is then assessed the contractor's fee plus a fine.
 - When the plow trucks stop plowing, it's not the end of the clearing violation. Must wait for sidewalks to be done, which can take another 12 hours or so. Then another 12-24 hours, depending on who they are, to get the work done. They then respond to complaints.
- From December 1st through mid-January 2018, the City has issued over 400 notices of violation, with the department able to issue one NOV per season (not per storm), which has shortened the time needed to issue a NOV.

- Best way to issue a complaint is through See Click Fix or to call Public Works dispatch or administration number. The dispatch number is 874-8493 and the administrative office is 874-8801. The smaller issues that don't take a lot of money they can get to quickly after a concern is lodged through See Click Fix.
- Abandoned buildings are the responsibility of the Fire Department or the Permitting and Inspections Departments. If you have an issue, use See Click Fix or call one of these two departments.
- By city ordinance, certain abutting properties next to residential homes are the responsibility of the residential owner. Abutters are required to treat their sidewalk as often as possible to make it safe and passable. If Public Works gets a violation, they can go out and leave a notice. They don't have staffing to affirmatively review over 400 miles of sidewalks to find violations but instead relies on lodged complaints that the department then investigates.
- Chris expanded that if someone is away for a couple of weeks, the City would probably go in and clean the property, which would take 3-4 days. Sidewalk clearing reports all go to Public Works. They'd check the assessor's office to see the owner of the property and then would issue NOV to the particular property.
- Chris explained that a challenge of See Click Fix is keeping up with the number of issues lodged. Public Works goes out and checks that something has been done nearly every time. A lag can be created when individuals go back into See Click Fix to close it out or write down what happened.

Derek O'Brien inquired about the sidewalks on Danforth Street by Mercy Hospital, the condition of which forces him to riding his wheelchair on the street most of the time.

- Chris Branch shared that the City is also concerned about some individuals in wheelchairs preferring to go into the street rather than use the sidewalks. Sidewalk treatments are all approved through City Council vote. Historic preservation ordinances may set standards or requirements for the city based on the neighborhood's history. The sidewalk material map on the website shows this.

Jessica Russell asked if there are any policies about clearing snow next to handicapped parking spaces.

- Chris explained that there is no official policy. Most such spaces are on the peninsula on the downtown district, which is usually cleared completely

within 2-3 days of a storm unless there is a holiday or weekend involved. It's not generally down to pavement when it's done but the banks are gone. If you get outside the downtown area, India to High and from Commercial to Cumberland, it can take weeks before they can get to the snow removal. Their first priority is to provide access to emergency vehicles, fire and police. Loader crews can hit specific locations, based on phone calls that come in.

Spring clearing: sidewalks encumbered by restaurants

- The Permitting and Inspections department issues those permits.

• **Closed captioning educational campaign**

- Multiple individuals volunteered to help distribute the letters and palm cards (Lisette, Jessica, Steve, Bud, Karen, Haley, Bill)
- Michelle Ames provided an update on communication upgrades being undertaken at the Jetport for the deaf and hard of hearing. There will be a loop within the Airport and closed captions on the televisions, repeating the announcements displayed. The new system also allows gate information to be texted to you. They're also going to set up a video phone for public use if someone is stuck and needs assistance.

• **Brainstorming of next major initiative**

- Bill had a personal meeting with City Manager Jon Jennings. Discussed with him what the next big initiative could be. Be great to accomplish 1-2 major initiatives per year.
- Jon is happy to be our partner moving forward.
- **Simulation event discussed**
 - Ken Shapiro explained that Unum's event was broad and touched upon a wide range of disabilities. It can be a powerful experience for an able bodied individual to experience a disability even for a few minutes.
 - Mandy shared that it could be a staff event made available to the City staff.
 - Many PDAC Members expressed interest in participating.
- Certification for businesses that are disability friendly.
 - Ken Shapiro: can we tap into ratings apps like Yelp – create a partnership with apps like that to rate local businesses.

- **Listening sessions open to the public**
 - i. Many members expressed their interest in participate. We discussed hosting two meetings, once during an early evening work day and another on a weekend.

- Update on ADA Trainings for City departments
 - Mandy shared that the Barron Center and the Facilities division of the Parks, Recreation and Facilities department are planning trainings for their staff with Disability Rights Maine.

- Increasing public awareness of PDAC
 - Mandy shared that the draft press release regarding the members is being reviewed by the City's Communications Director and that she will share it with the members for their feedback once it is completed.

 - Mandy shared that we could create a Public Service Announcement (PSA) with Community Television Network, which was recently rebranded the Portland Media Center. Derek recommended that we connect with Tom Handel and review disability-related PSA's on You Tube for ideas, as well as the state Department of Transportation.

 - Derek suggested that we try to get the 207 television show.

- New business:
 - Jim Devine shared that he and the Homeless Voices for Justice are working with Rachel Talbot Ross to set up a homeless bill of rights, noting that there are people at the shelter with various disabilities.

- Next meeting 4/7/2018 from 11 am to 12 pm in Room 24 in the basement of City Hall

- Adjournment: the meeting concluded at 12:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mandy Levine

City of Portland Workforce Diversity and Inclusion Specialist