

Planning & Sustainability • City of Northampton

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Keith Benoit, AICP, Community Development Planner • (413) 587-1288 • kbenoit@northamptonma.gov

Disability Commission Draft Minutes Tuesday, January 13, 2026- 4:00 PM

COMMISSIONERS

Amy Sugihara, Chair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sydney Meininger <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Court Cline, Staff <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Emma Cornwell, Vice-Chair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jenna Perna-Elias <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Keith Benoit, ADA Coordinator
Kathy Murri <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Asher Henrichs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Councilor Jeremy Dubs <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amy Lawton <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Ben Kalish- Northampton

1. Notice that this meeting is being recorded & posted.

Chair Sugihara opened the meeting at 4:05 PM and announced that this meeting was being recorded and would be available at the Government archive on the Northampton Open Media's YouTube page.

2. Public Comment

Ben Kalish mentioned that he received the snow shoveling/sidewalk clearing reminder insert in his quarterly property tax bill. He also noted that the Accessibility Advisory Board for the Forbes Library is scheduled for January 14th at 4:00 PM if any of the commissioners are interested.

3. Approval of the minutes from the December 9, 2025 meeting

Commissioner Dubs moved to approve the minutes from the December 9th meeting. Commissioners Meininger & Murri both seconded. The motion carried with all commissioners voting in the affirmative with the exception of Commissioner Perna-Elias abstaining due to absence at that meeting.

4. Report from City Council by Commissioner/City Councilor Dubs about City Council

Commissioner Dubs reported his reappointment to the Disability Commission and his appointment to the Transportation and Parking Commission, expressing enthusiasm about both of these roles. The commissioner also reported that the first regular meeting of the new City Council would take place later this week, and there are many new members.



5. Check-in with Commissioner Lawton on the Human Rights Commission

Commissioner Lawton reported that the Human Rights Commission has not met since the last Disability Commission meeting and had nothing new to report.

6. Check-in with Commissioners about the Sidewalk Clearing PSA

Chair Sugihara reported that five commissioners have submitted recordings for the PSA. The chair also requested that anyone else interested in submitting a recording should do it by Thursday, January 15th. Commissioner Dubs offered to remind Zach from Northampton Open Media about the project on Thursday and provided his contact information. The group expressed excitement about potentially having the PSA completed and distributed by winter.

7. Planning for Disability Pride Month 2026:

-What do we want to do?

-Who else do we want to work with?

The group discussed past Disability Pride Month events, including Crip Camp, an online resource fair, and a movie showing coordinated with neighboring towns. They reviewed attendance numbers, with Crip Camp being the best attended event with around 20 people, while the online fair had about a dozen participants and the movie showings attracted 10-18 people each. Commissioner Lawton proposed a new idea for a fully-accessible, family story time event in libraries, which would include scent-free environments and books featuring disabled characters and authors.

The group discussed organizing a themed story time event at libraries to celebrate Disability Pride Month in July. Ben Kalish confirmed that Forbes Library would be interested and supportive, with their new dedicated children's programming space expected to be completed before July. The discussion explored the possibility of coordinating with other towns' commissions and libraries to create a series of accessible story times for different age groups, with Commissioner Perna-Elias suggesting that adults might also attend for essay readings.

The group discussed broadening their outreach to include a wider age range and agreed to involve representatives from other commissions in their planning meetings. Commissioner Lawton suggested inviting chairs from the Amherst and Easthampton commissions to coordinate efforts more efficiently, with Commissioner Henrichs recommending either subcommittees or joint meetings as effective ways to manage collaboration. The group preferred holding joint meetings to ensure all voices are heard and to avoid the inefficiencies of having one person coordinate everything.

The group discussed plans for hosting book reading events in July across different towns, with a focus on controlling scope creep by limiting events to two locations (one at Lilly and one at Forbes) and coordinating with local commissions rather than directly with libraries. They assigned outreach tasks to various members, including Commissioner Dubs for Holyoke, Commissioner Henrichs for South Hadley, and Chair Sugihara for the

Amherst & Easthampton commissions. The group agreed to create a collaborative flyer and aim to have all details finalized by May to allow time for ASL interpreters and other preparations. They also discussed accessibility concerns regarding chemical sensitivities at library locations.

The group agreed to discuss this project in greater detail with more information at the next Disability Commission meeting.

8. Other business not anticipated: Reserved only for matters not reasonably anticipated.

Court announced that work is starting shortly on a new accessible trail at the Fitzgerald Lake property off of Cooke Avenue. This is a project that is being funded through CPA funds and should be concluded by summer 2026. This will add significantly to the city's accessible trail inventory.

9. Adjourn

Commissioners Henrichs & Perna-Elias moved to adjourn. Commissioner Lawton seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:07 PM.