

Annual Report of the Amherst Committee on Disabilities for 2024

Presented to the Town Board

I. Meeting Dates

1. **February 12, 2024**
 2. **March 4, 2024**
 3. **April 15, 2024**
 4. **May 6, 2024**
 5. **June 3, 2024**
 6. **August 12, 2024**
 7. **September 9, 2024**
 8. **October 7, 2024**
 9. **November 4, 2024**
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II. Special Guests

1. **February 12, 2024**
 - Laurie Stillwell (ADU Pilot Program)
 2. **April 15, 2024**
 - Anne Dafchik (Town Architect)
 - Parkitects Inc. Representatives
 3. **May 6, 2024**
 - Chris Schregel (Engineering Department)
 4. **August 12, 2024**
 - David Willer (IT Department)
 5. **September 9, 2024**
 - Brandon Peters & Daric Will (Emergency Services and Safety)
 6. **October 7, 2024**
 - Chief Chamberlin (Amherst Police Department)
 - Samuel Alba (Town Attorney)
 7. **November 4, 2024**
 - Steven Floss (Highway Department)
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III. Key Projects & Accomplishments

1. **Accessibility Initiatives**

- **FM System:** Collaborated with the IT Department and Town Board on ongoing improvements and accessibility for Town Board meetings.
 - **Website Accessibility:** Initiated updates to improve inclusivity, readability, and made suggestions for improved accessibility icons and resource pages.
 - **Sidewalk Accessibility:** Continued discussions on sidewalk repair responsibilities and residents' role in maintaining sidewalks.
 - **Amherst Central Park:** Collaborated with Anne Dafchik and Parkitects Inc. representatives on the new inclusive playground.
2. **Disability Awareness**
 - Successful collaboration with the Amherst Police Department on disability awareness and service animal training.
 - Ongoing work on Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) for Town facilities.
 - Advocacy for emergency shelters and transportation accessibility.
 3. **Health Fair and Outreach**
 - Supported the Senior Center Health Fair in July, addressing topics like service dog access, Committee Mission Statement, and aging with disabilities.
 4. **Committee Membership & Administration**
 - New liaison, Angela Marinucci, enhanced Committee functions.
 - New member, Jamie Mobberly, joined in February 2024.
 - Recruited new members appointed to join 2025 – 2027 term.
 - Five Committee members' terms expired in December 2024, with recommendations made for reappointments.
 5. **Public Engagement**
 - Enhanced community engagement through public meetings, where accessibility concerns such as stop sign visibility and "Child with Autism" signage were addressed.
 - Introduced improvements to the Committee's online presence, including social media and webpage updates.
 - Effectively managed challenges with disruptive individuals, ensuring that meetings adhered to rules of order and accessibility standards while maintaining a focus on the Committee's mission to serve the community.
 - Worked with a resident on a traffic concern on Getzville Rd. to enhance safety for disabled residents and pedestrians.
 - Advocated for accessibility issues related to APS signals in the community, including malfunctioning signals and obstructed pathways.

IV. Projects to Carry Into 2025

1. **Disability Awareness Training**
 - Plan for continued biannual training for Amherst Police Officers, including service animal law and VRI training.
2. **VRI for Town Facilities**

- Ensure the implementation of Video Remote Interpreting systems across Town facilities in 2025.
- 3. **Sidewalk and Roadway Accessibility**
 - Further collaboration with the Highway Department to address sidewalk repair responsibilities and ensure better accessibility around the town.
- 4. **Amherst Central Park**
 - Continue to advise on best practices for accessibility regarding the park and the inclusive playground.
- 5. **Emergency Preparedness**
 - Explore additional emergency preparedness measures, focusing on accessibility and inter-departmental communication during crises.
- 6. **Website Accessibility**
 - Continue improvements to the Town website, including more detailed accessibility features and user-friendly design updates.
- 7. **Promote Inclusivity in Public Spaces**
 - Further work on enhancing Town Board meeting accessibility, including signage, devices, and improvements to hearing assistance systems.
- 8. **Amherst Bike Path Emergency Phones**
 - Work with the Town Board to update the Emergency Phone System on the Amherst Bike Path.

V. Conclusion

2024 was a productive year for the Amherst Committee on Disabilities, with a focus on enhancing accessibility across public spaces and increasing the Town's awareness of disability issues. The Committee looks forward to continuing this momentum into 2025 with a renewed focus on training, public outreach, and system improvements that benefit all residents. We thank the Town Board for its continued support and look forward to further collaboration on these important initiatives.

Prepared by: Erica Rodman, Chair, Amherst Committee on Disabilities