

November 8, 2024

Public Comment to the Town of Stoughton

Re: Draft Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan

As the Chair of the Stoughton Disabilities Commission, I want to commend the town for obtaining the grant funding for this much needed and overdue evaluation. With this document, when finalized and approved, Stoughton will be ready to begin the needed work to ensure that Stoughton is accessible to all residents and employees with physical or mental challenges, enabling access to buildings, spaces and programs.

In reading the draft report, it is evident that the town employees have done their best to meet the needs of residents with disabilities. It is evident as described in the report, that more needs to be done. As detailed in the report, accessibility is much more than making sure buildings have ramps and handicapped parking spaces, but also includes staff training, modifications to technology and many more considerations. I have had the opportunity to work with Mr. Erickson, the ADA Coordinator and Building Inspector. He has been very helpful in helping to address some building accessibility concerns that were raised by citizens. Given the scope of the recommendations by the Collins Center, beyond buildings and public spaces, providing him with additional ongoing support will be needed. It may also be advisable for the Town Manager and Select Board to consider adding a position for someone whose sole role is oversight of ADA training, grievances, and projects.

As a taxpayer, it is concerning to see that two of our recent building projects (the Stoughton High School auditorium and the Stoughton Library) are listed as needing modifications to meet the 2010 ADA building standards. The report indicates that modifications to the High School auditorium should be completed before the spring annual town meeting, while library modifications should be completed within a year. With the discussions of additional building in Stoughton, including renovations of the train station, it is imperative that all future projects and renovations meet ADA standards in the initial design and planning stages.

While the list of recommendations is lengthy, as the report indicates on page 19, all constituent parties, including the Disabilities Commission need to work together to prioritize how Stoughton will address and plan the remediation needs. There are clearly some items that can be short term projects, such as modification to the web pages to allow for fillable forms. Many of the building modifications will need to be longer range projects, with an eye to applying for the Mass. Office on Disabilities grant funding in the spring/summer of 2025 and in subsequent years, along with other grant funding sources.

We look forward to meeting soon with the Town Manager and other department heads, along with Mr. Erickson, to continue this process of developing the Transition Plan. We have many senior citizens in Stoughton who may not identify as having a "disability", but may have mobility challenges, reduced hearing or vision. Their needs must be addressed so that they can remain active citizens in our town. We now have an opportunity to make Stoughton a leader in disability access.

Regards,

Charlotte Mullen

Chair, Stoughton Disabilities Commission (781)789-9587

Comments Provided by Cynthia Walsh, Stoughton Resident

Comments were originally submitted to the Town in August 2023.

Cynthia Walsh wants to make sure all items that should have been addressed in the ADA SETP have been.

Senior Center/Council on Aging- 110 Rockland Street

- No railings at the front or side entrances
- Had issue with number of Handicapped Stalls- Paul Giffune was able to add one

Stoughton Public Library - 84 Park Street

- Cynthia said that the previous Building Inspector said that "there is a walkway in the front of the building not a handicapped ramp so it doesn't need rails"
- Cynthia said that with one railing it makes it hard to go down because she is right handed so there is a rail on the right going in but when she comes out the front, there is no rail on the other side to hold onto with her right hand
- Cynthia said at the top of the ramp the automatic door button is on the far side of the ramp across the top of the stairs and it should be moved or one should be installed on the other side
- Cynthia said that in the back of the library she needs someone to hold her hand from door to pavement to get in and out because there is an apron but no ramp or railings.
- Cynthia said that there needs to be listening devices at the library especially because there are public meetings there

Police Station- 26 Rose Street

- Cynthia said that there are no railings

Other Observation

- None of the Municipal Buildings have Braille pads next to the entrance but should

Additional Concerns

- Existing Fire Station on Central Street will need an elevator when rehabbed- Should be in the plans
- Town Hall- "It's ridiculous to have handicapped spot in back; if you are in a wheelchair it is too narrow to get to the elevator"-Marc T. is looking into parking updates- could consider Cynthia's concern
- Golf Course- Hard to get up the hill when it was a voting destination- was told that a golf cart could be at the bottom to be used
- Train Depot- Will need handicapped bathrooms- This is in the rehab budget
- Lucius Clapp Building/ Historical Society- Needs ramps and elevator
- Recreation Department is ok
- Schools
 - o High School's automatic doors never work; only one entrance and one exit; Cynthia couldn't see the screen during Town Meeting. Got a Laptop but screen wasn't readable. High School said it would put in closed captioning- "No good if you can't see it"; Handicapped eating in auditorium is not enough for meetings- only enough room for 4 people and a companion.
 - o South School- No easy way to get in
 - o Jones School- Dark at night
 - o Cynthia mentioned that most buildings are not well lit

I have lived in Stoughton for over 37 yrs. We also have an adult son with cognitive disabilities. Pine St does not have a sidewalk that is usable or complete. Children walking from the Rte. 139 street side must walk in the road which has a sharp turn and has poor visibility until part way down there is a broken old sidewalk . This side is obscured with brush, broken asphalt, cars parking on it, muddy holes and is not safe for children, pets or the elderly. There is a sidewalk from Deady Ave towards the old NE Sinai hospital but it is also breaking down and is overrun by brush. A large puppy park was created at the old Capen Reynolds land however the residents off of Pine St cannot access it without a car . Foolish. Obviously, the residents that live off of Pine St need a new safer sidewalk.

There is a need for more senior and accessible housing also.

Nancy J Smith 16 Brad Rd Stoughton