

**Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues
The Year in Review
2016**



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Overview

The purpose of the Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues is to:

- promote equal opportunities for individuals with disabilities;
- strive to enable full participation in all aspects of community life for persons with disabilities, and;
- provide disability-related technical assistance, information, referral and advocacy to City Council, city staff, our community, individuals and groups.

The Commission consists of 12 community members nominated and appointed by City Council, and one City Council Member liaison. At the beginning of 2016, the Commission had one opening. At the end of 2016, there were four openings. However, two new members were appointed in January of 2017. Currently there are two openings.

Commissioners represent perspectives on living with disabilities including blindness and low vision, hard of hearing and deafness, chronic illness and mobility impairment. Some members are caregivers to family members with disabilities. The goal is for 70% of Commissioners be willing to disclose a disability. This means the two open positions should be filled with persons willing to disclose a disability.

Commission meetings take place on the third Wednesday of every month at 3:15pm in Council Chambers. There are no meetings in July or August. A standing agenda item has been an update from the Washtenaw Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled (AADL Downtown location) . In January 2017, we added a monthly update from the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (CIL) as another standing agenda item.

Committees of the Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues

The Commission has three active sub-committees: Community Engagement, Partners in Access, and Recruiting. Below are the accomplishments of each committee in 2016.

Community Engagement - Sally Hart Petersen, Chair

The purpose of the the Community Engagement Committee is to represent the Commission in our greater community and to promote awareness and advocacy for those with disabilities. The accomplishments of 2016 reflect significant collaboration with other agency advocates.

Key achievements:

- The Committee collaborated with the Lions Club for the continued care and maintenance of the Liberty Plaza Sensory Garden which was originally installed in 2013 in memory former Commissioner Pamela Baker Trostle. The Lions Club and the Commission participated in the Bloomsday event in May and hosted a summer tea in September.
- In 2016, *Ann Arbor Inclusive* taped 11 shows with CTN. Appearing on Channel 19, *Ann Arbor Inclusive* is a monthly talk show created by the Commission and portrays the outstanding accomplishments of individuals and organizations who are considered leading advocates for people with disabilities in our community. Commission Vice Chair Zach Damon is the show's host. Beginning in October of 2016, *Ann Arbor Inclusive* is closed captioned. Guests in 2016 included:
 - Eric McMahon, Michigan Partners for Freedom (January)
 - Debbie Dayton and Jan Crawford, Leader Dogs for the Blind (February)
 - Mayor Christopher Taylor (March)
 - Hilary Cohen and Sandy Ryder, Wild Swan Theater (April)
 - John Krienke of the Ann Arbor Area Lions Club and Austin Shepherd of the WISD Leo's program (May)

- Taylor Tinkham, Health Management Coordinator of the Ann Arbor YMCA (June)
- Dr. Edward Hurvitz of the U of M Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (July)
- Debbie Dayton and Jan Crawford, Leader Dogs for the Blind (August)
- Bryan Wilkinson of the U of M Wheelchair and Adaptive Tennis Program (October)
- Larissa Kunynskyj of the Ann Arbor Hands On Museum (November)
- Paul Schulte, former Paralympic and National Wheelchair Basketball Player (December)
- Throughout 2016, the Community Engagement committee collaborated with the Ann Arbor Police Department and the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living (CIL) to produce and distribute Disability Resource Cards as well as conduct Disability Awareness Training for all AAPD police officers.
- The Community Engagement Committee works with the City's Communications Director Lisa Wondrash to continuously update the Disability Resource Page on the Ann Arbor City website with relevant information to enhance accessibility throughout our community.

Partners in Access Committee - Alison Stroud, Chair

The purpose of the Partners in Access (PIA) Committee is to assist in breaking down barriers to access for people with disabilities as they experience daily life in Ann Arbor. Members of the PIA advocate for improved city services and consult regularly with traffic engineers and other city staff to promote better access. Key accomplishments in 2016 include:

- In February, City Council resolved to direct the City Attorney's office to work with the Disability Commission to research and draft language for new Chapter 120 of Title IX of the Code of the City of Ann Arbor known as the "Closed Captioning Ordinance". The first reading of the ordinance passed in November, 2016. This ordinance

requires that establishments which provide television broadcasting to the general public keep on closed captioning feature if so equipped. The second reading of the ordinance was passed in February, 2017.

- The Commission and Members of the PIA Committee gave ongoing advice and support to city staff with regard to the Dhu Varren Green Nixon Road roundabout, the installation of the RRFB on Huron Parkway, and on general crosswalk design.
- The PIA also drafted a letter sent by our Commission to the Department of Justice in support of requested changes to the Michigan Flyer Air Ride.
- The PIA has also collaborated with the AAATA. In July, PIA members met with Brian Clouse and Tracy Byrd of the AAATA to discuss potential participation in the Drivers' training and refresher course scheduled for early August. They also worked together to create a set of survey questions to evaluate the type of education and training from which drivers may benefit as well as the experiences with which they have struggled.
- A commissioner volunteered in the AAATA driver training and refresher course and is now a member of the AAATA's Local Advisory Council. This commissioner represents the Ann Arbor Commission on Disability Issues and shares any relevant updates regarding the LAC activities.
- The PIA began exploring resources to help the elderly and those with disabilities remove the snow leftover from the City's plows that blocks their driveways. This work will continue in 2017 with the expectation that a solution will be in place for the 2017-2018 winter season.

Recruiting - Larry Keeler, Chair

The purpose of the Recruiting Committee is to make Commission openings known to the public and work with the Mayor's Office to evaluate potential nominees. Below is the status of all people who served as Commissioners in 2016 and the month and year originally appointed.

Rebecca Benedict:	Appointed 5/16
Al Blixt:	Appointed 6/15
Zach Damon (Vice Chair)	Appointed 6/15
Larry Davis	Appointed 6/14
Larry Keeler	Appointed 6/11
Sally Hart Petersen (Chair)	Appointed 8/12
West Resendes	Appointed 2013, Res. 8/16 (Law School)
Lloyd Shelton	Appointed 6/13, Res. 6/16 (Term end)
Amy Shepherd	Appointed 11/13, Res. 3/16 (Term end)
Anna Ercoli-Schnitzer	Appointed 6/14
Alison Stroud	Appointed 8/13
Samantha Taylor	Appointed 6/15, Res. 3/16 (Family Obligation)
Kirk Westphal (CM Liaison)	Appointed 12/14

Timothy Hull and Kathleen Mozak-Betts were appointed to the Commission in January of 2017. Subsequently, Commissioner Hull has been appointed to serve on the new Transportation Commission of the City of Ann Arbor.