



TOWN OF WESTFORD
COMMISSION ON DISABILITY
55 MAIN STREET
WESTFORD, MASSACHUSETTS 01886
Tel: 978-692-5501 Fax: 978-399-2557

MEETING AGENDA

DATE: August 22, 2019
TIME: 7:00 PM
PLACE: Town Hall – Main Meeting Room

1. Open Forum: *Members of the public are encouraged to raise issues that are relevant to the work of the Commission on Disability (COD). These issues cannot be related to an item already on the Agenda. If a speaker desires action by the COD on an issue, they should include in their presentation a request for it to be placed on a future Agenda. Speakers are limited to ten minutes. For additional time or action on an issue at the same meeting, speakers should contact the Chair two weeks prior to the meeting and request to be listed as a formal Agenda item.*
2. Adopt Minutes of July 25, 2019 meeting
3. Old Business
 - a. MassDOT Guest: Michelle Ellicks
 - b. Bandstand Accessibility
 - i. Report: Test of the Bandstand Lift*
 - ii. Hearing: Architectural Access Board
 - c. Update of Westford's Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan
 - d. Appreciation of Service: Marguerite Sabatino
 - e. Election of Officers
 - i. Secretary
 - ii. Chair
4. New Business
 - a. FY 2019 Town Report
 - b. Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) Notices
 - c. U.S. Access Board Webinars
 - d. Other Business
5. Verify date for next meeting: September 26, 2019 – 7:00pm at the Main Meeting Room, Town Hall
6. Adjourn

REQUEST: *Please help make this a fragrance-free meeting in order to accommodate those members and guests that are chemically sensitive to fragrances and other scented products. Thank you.*

***ATTACHMENT:** *Westford Common Bandstand Lift: Test Report*

Westford Common Bandstand Lift: Test Report

*A Subjective Report Submitted to the Westford Commission on Disability
Describing the Test Conducted on July 12, 2019*

Raymond K. Clark

Background

The Westford Commission on Disability (COD) was interested in having a volunteer use the wheelchair lift on the back side of the Town Common Bandstand, presumably to ensure that a person with a disability could use it without incident. I have a wheelchair and volunteered to test the lift.

Caveats

A few notes to clarify the intent and scope of this report:

- The following account represents my assessment of my use of the bandstand lift. Others might evaluate this experience differently. For instance, a ride that seems smooth to me might seem rough to someone else. More importantly, I am still fairly mobile, typically using a wheelchair each day for only a few minutes. Someone that is less mobile or older and weaker might have a different experience in using the bandstand lift.
- The test covered not only the lift, but also the accessible path across the Common leading to and from the bandstand lift, as well as the portion of the sidewalk along the Common between Lincoln Street and the accessible path. That is, the test covered access to the bandstand from a parked car.
- No effort was made to make any measurements to determine whether any aspect of the bandstand, lift, or accessible path met Americans with Disabilities Act or Massachusetts Architectural Access Board requirements. Rather, I was interested in how accessible and how safe the process seemed.
- Although I am a member of the COD, for the purposes of this test, I was acting as any visitor who would want to use the lift, not as a COD member.

Arrangements for Use of Lift

In order to use the lift, arrangements must be made in advance to secure training in its operation. To that end, there is a published procedure that describes how to request access to the bandstand via the lift for a person with a disability.

That procedure was not used for this test. Rather, Kate Phaneuf (COD Chair), Ellen Harde (bandstand lift volunteer), and I coordinated via email to select a workable time to conduct the test.

Conditions and Test Participants

Kate, Ellen, and I met at the Town Common to begin the test at 1 p.m. on Friday, July 12th, 2019. Although it had rained earlier in the day, it was warm and dry for the test, so weather was not a factor.

Ellen facilitated access to the lift and explained its operation to us. Kate coordinated the test and witnessed its execution. I brought a wheelchair and acted as the test subject.

The wheelchair used for this test measures 24-25” wide and approximately 30” from front to back. I believe that it is a fairly typical lightweight wheelchair. Note that I did not have any leg rests on the wheelchair. In my opinion, however, it didn’t appear that leg rests would have made any difference.

Finally, I wanted to access the bandstand in my wheelchair without assistance from anyone except the lift operator/monitor. In particular, I did not want anyone to push the wheelchair.

Notes on Test Execution

Parking and Accessing the Town Common

I parked on the Lincoln Street side of the Town Common. I was then told that the Westford Museum was the suggested parking lot for a disabled visitor to the Town Common. To start this test, I took my wheelchair to the curb cut at the edge of the Common where Lincoln Street meets Boston Road. There I got in the wheelchair to begin.

Sidewalk Approach to the Accessible Entrance

The accessible entrance to the bandstand meets the sidewalk on the Boston Road side of the Common. I steered my wheelchair up the sidewalk along Boston Road. The surface was somewhat uneven, but certainly manageable for the most part. There was one spot where a dip caused the anti-tip arms on the wheelchair to scrape against the ground. I mentioned that it would be nice if that dip wasn’t so pronounced.

Accessible Path to the Bandstand

Although there was some material under the grass along the accessible path to the bandstand, it felt very much like rolling over grass, as opposed to a smoother, less resistive, surface. The grass path required much more effort than any other portion of the approach to the bandstand.

There are a number of small stones that mark the edges of the accessible path. They didn't really stand out, but I could see them well enough to stay in the designated area. It might be nice to highlight them better. They'd be easier to see for someone using the accessible path and might also mitigate a tripping hazard for others.

The last section of the accessible path was a (concrete?) ramp that led to the lift. Although I did not measure it, the slope seemed reasonable. There was one spot where the surface had cracked and introduced a break in the surface—possibly about half an inch deep.

Lift Up to Enter Bandstand

I pulled into the lift facing the bandstand. I rolled the wheelchair onto the lift and applied its brakes to prevent any additional rolling. There were no straps or other restraints to secure the wheelchair during transit. (I am referring to, for instance, the restraint mechanisms used in transport vans that carry wheelchair users.)

The control for the lift was held in place by a magnet. It could be pulled out and held in order to operate the lift. I held and operated the control for this test. All that was needed to begin was to press one button to raise the lift up to the bandstand. It started moving with a small jerk, but the remainder of the ride was very smooth. The lift stopped automatically at exactly the same level as the bandstand floor.

Access to and from the Bandstand

While I was on the lift riding up to the bandstand level, Ellen walked up to the bandstand and opened the gate from the bandstand to the lift so that I could enter.

The transition off of the lift onto the bandstand was perfectly smooth. There was plenty of room to move around the bandstand itself—at least that was the case when it was as empty as it was when I tested the lift. I exited facing away from the bandstand in order to ride the lift facing out (to see if that made any difference).

There was a small metal plate that lowered to the ground to act as a ramp onto or off of the lift. When the lift is in operation, the plate swings up to meet the frame of the lift—and apparently to act as a gate to prevent a wheelchair rolling off of the lift. It was not mechanically attached to the lift frame. Rather, it pivoted into place, and its weight kept it from opening.

When facing the plate, I tried to push it open using my foot. When I was very close to the plate, I couldn't move it. When I backed up a foot or so, then I could place my foot higher up, allowing me to open it with some effort.

We discussed the possibility of holding the plate in place mechanically.

There was also a chain (or two) hanging on the side of the lift that might be used to secure the metal plate or span the opening of the lift, but its purpose was not obvious to me.

Lift Down to Ground

The ride back to the ground was very similar to the ride up to the bandstand. A single button caused the lift to descend to the ground. Once again, the lift started moving with a small jerk, but the remainder of the ride was very smooth. The lift stopped automatically when it reached the ground with an abrupt stop.

While the sudden starts and stops were noticeable, I never felt any concern about the ride.

Return to Parking

I followed the same path back out of the Common that I used when entering it. I didn't notice anything new in the process.

Subjective Evaluation

The bandstand was accessible when using the bandstand lift. That said, there are a few defects that could be addressed and a few improvements that could be made. Once again, these are not necessarily issues that must be addressed. Rather, they are suggestions that could lead to a more accessible bandstand.

A few suggestions based on observations presented in the previous section include:

1. Consider filling the low spot on the Boston Road sidewalk bordering the Town Common.
2. Consider methods to make the sub-grass accessible path surface easier to roll over in a wheelchair.
3. Consider securing the wheelchair to the lift for the actual ride to and from the bandstand.
4. Consider repairing the break in the (concrete?) ramp leading to the lift itself.
5. Consider highlighting the markers that delimit the edges of the accessible path to the bandstand.
6. Consider securing the metal plate that swings up to "close" the lift when the lift is in use.

Once again, I do not know that any of these have to be done.