

Proposal

Proposal for the formation of an advisory commission on accessibility and inclusion for the City of Lathrup Village.

11/28/2023

Overview

A city commission for accessibility and inclusion benefits the city and its current and prospective residents and visitors by helping to ensure its services and communication are accessible and include the diverse needs of people. Such a commission should operate independently in an advisory role like a committee or advisory board – much like the Historic District Commission.

Several cities and municipalities in Michigan have such a commission or a similar role within the broader scope of another commission. Ferndale is such a city with an Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission. [[website](#), [Facebook group](#)] Their membership includes citizens (including those with disabilities) as well as a staff liaison and a council liaison.

This commission should consist of at least: a chair, a secretary, and three additional residents. Volunteer terms could be set at two years, with an option to renew consecutive terms in the absence of new volunteers. Council should determine these details. Ideally, members have some life and/or professional or academic experience with access, inclusion, and equity.

Need

It is evident and clear that the City of Lathrup Village and its 4,000 plus residents would significantly benefit from improved access resulting from the advice of such a commission. Examples in information and communication technologies currently include at least: its website; newsletter; and social media communications. Worse, its website uses an accessibility overlay (more information later in document) – which not only excludes people, but is an additional barrier and insult to access. The official city newsletter is distributed as an untagged and inaccessible PDF.

An example in the physical space is a lack of sufficient enforcement for clear sidewalks where residents have shrub and tree growth causing significant or total obstruction.

Additional Relevance

A proclamation for “upholding the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion” from June 2020, states:

“...welcomes, respects, and encourages the contributions of all people, in all our rich variety by ... language, mental and/or physical impairment and/or disability, ... or any of the other characteristics that are often used to divide people...”

“...the City of Lathrup Village hereby affirm and uphold the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We encourage our residents, businesses, civic groups, schools, government operations, and other institutions to undertake their own initiatives, beyond this resolution, to make the City of Lathrup

Village an inclusive community that honors and values all people, while preventing the tragic effects of bias and violence.”

Yet this is aspirational at best while all of its digital communication excludes many with disabilities. And encouraging everyone else in a single statement buried in archives is disingenuous.

The Law

Under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, State and local governments, all departments, agencies, special purpose districts, and other instrumentalities of State or local government (public entities) must not discriminate on the equal opportunity of or effective communication with people with disabilities – including in all information and communication technology.

[Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations](#)
[ADA Update: A Primer for State and Local Governments](#)
[Accessibility of State and Local Government Websites to People with Disabilities](#)
[Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA](#)

Updates and Pending Updates

In July 2023, an NPRM was issued.

[Fact Sheet: Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Accessibility of Web Information and Services of State and Local Government Entities](#)

[Justice Department Advances Proposed Rule to Strengthen Web and Mobile App Access for People with Disabilities](#)

There are also current US House and Senate bills that would specify the standards for digital content as well as the reporting responsibilities for public entities.

[More on accessibility overlays](#)

“It is a mistake to believe that the features provided by the overlay widget will be of much use by end users because if those features were necessary to use the website, they'd be needed for all websites that the user interacts with. Instead, the widget is — at best — redundant functionality with what the user already has.”

[Overlay Fact Sheet](#)

“Vendors of these products claim that their product can repair underlying code quality problems in the sites on which they're deployed and, further still, claim that they are using artificial intelligence to render websites compliant with laws and standards having to do with accessibility.”

[Overlay False Claims](#)

[All Posts Tagged Overlay](#) — Adrian Roselli

[New Low in the Accessibility “Industry:” Overlay Company Sues Globally-Recognized Accessibility Expert](#) — Lainey Feingold

[About the Proposer](#)

My name is Charles Hall. I have been a resident of Lathrup Village since August 2021. I plan to stay and invest here. Previously, I was a resident of Ferndale for over 22 years, and an active member of their Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Commission from 2019 – 2021. I am a Domain Expert in Inclusive Design and Digital Accessibility for CVS Health. I am an Invited Expert in the W3C Accessibility Guidelines Working Group. I have over 15 years of experience in digital accessibility among over 36 years of experience in digital design. Additionally, I have lived experience as a person with disabilities.