



DISABILITY ACCESS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Approved Meeting Minutes of April 20, 2021

This meeting was recorded on Zoom and may be viewed on the Town of Amherst YouTube Channel. Click on the following link to access this meeting recording: <https://youtu.be/q0D2JWFj55I>

The meeting was called to order at 11:30 a.m. with the following members:

PRESENT: Myra Ross, Chair; Elysse Link; Ruth Smith; Seren Derin; Marty Smith; and Tory Dixon.

ALSO PRESENT: Maureen Pollock, Planner and staff liaison to the DAAC; and Project representatives: Jane Wald, Executive Director of the Emily Dickinson Museum and Shantia Anderheggen, consultant from Preservation Strategies.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: none

NEW BUSINESS:

Review AAB variance requests at the Emily Dickinson Homestead, located 280 Main Street, including:

Variance request from 521 CMR 25.00 to provide an accessible entrance at the front door on the south side of building, in order to preserve the historic appearance and fabric of the central architectural feature on the south façade;

Variance request from 521 CMR 28.00 to provide vertical access elevator within The Homestead to deliver visitors to the second floor, in order to preserve the historic significance of the building.

Ms. Wald provided a presentation to the DAAC members which included:

- a brief overview of the overall proposed scope of work for the interior renovations of the Dickinson Homestead and exterior upgrades to the electrical and HVAC systems on-site.
- existing ADA improvements/programs;
- proposed ADA improvements; and
- proposed MAAB variance requests;

Ms. Wald stated two MAAB variances are being requested. Stated the first variance request is from 521 CMR 25.00 to provide an accessible entrance at the front door on the south side of building, in order to preserve the historic appearance and fabric of the central architectural feature on the south façade. This entrance is not used for public tours or programs as there is currently no approach from the public way or the Museum's driveway with an acceptable incline or surface under ADA guidelines. For the last 25

years, the main visitor's entrances to the Homestead have been on the north and east sides of the building.

Ms. Wald stated the second variance request is from 521 CMR 28.00 to provide vertical access elevator within The Homestead to deliver visitors to the second floor, in order to preserve the historic significance of the building. Stated that providing elevator service within or outside of a structure as significant – and as small – as Emily Dickinson's home would threaten or destroy the historic significance of the building.

The Board stated they have no issues with the variance requests, as submitted. The Board discussed ADA accommodations that should be provided regarding the Emily Dickinson Museum website and interpretation devices at the Dickinson Homestead.

MOTION: Moved by Tory Dixon, seconded by Elysse Link, and voted (6-0) to give a positive recommendation to the MAAB for the Emily Dickinson Museum's variance requests relative to 521 CMR 25.00 and 521 CMR 28.00 at the **Dickinson Homestead**, located at **280 Main Street**, as submitted, with the following suggestions:

1. Auxiliary aids and services (e.g., assistive listening devices, audio description tours, closed captioning controls in exhibitions) should be provided. Auxiliary aids and services should be maintained in good condition.
2. Headphones for audio description tours should be provided and maintained.
3. Staff and volunteers working at the information desk or answering questions by telephone should know what accessibility services are available and how to request them, including those that must be scheduled in advance.
4. The Emily Dickinson Museum website should provide information about accessibility services that are available and how to request them, including those that must be scheduled in advance.
5. The Emily Dickinson Museum website's content about its exhibitions and programs should be available to everyone, using methods such as screen-reader-accessible web design, adjustable font and color contrast, and high-contrast images. In addition, if the Emily Dickinson Museum uses the website to present accessibility information or to serve as an alternate format for exhibition labels or printed materials, the information should be current and easy to find on the site.
6. Touchable features contained as part of the Homestead collection should be offered to persons with disabilities, including persons with visual impairments.

OLD BUSINESS: none

OTHER BUSINESS NOT ANTICIPATED WITHIN 48 HOURS: none

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: none

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: none

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Moved by Ms. Ross, seconded by Ms. Dixon, and voted 6-0, to adjourn at 12:29PM