



Beverly Anthes, Chairwoman
Zoe Arthur
Joseph W. Mullen
Thomas F. O'Brien

TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
FROM: Eda Jane Matchak, Director of Elections
DATE: January 23, 2019
RE: Motion of November 20, 2018 by Councilor Conway
"Request City Manager provide a report regarding signage and accessibility at polling locations throughout the City for people with disabilities."

Since 2013 the Election & Census Commission has been working collaboratively with City of Lowell Commission on Disability and the Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth's Election Division to survey accessibility of polling locations and to achieve and if possible exceed compliance with Polling Place Accessibility for Elderly and Handicapped Voters regulations, 950 C.M.R. § 51.00, et seq. Additionally, the Election & Census Commission has partnered with the City of Lowell Commission on Disability to acquire handicap accessible voting booths at all polling locations and hosted informational trainings on the use of AutoMark voting machines at the Lowell Association for the Blind and at Lowell Telecommunications that was filmed and later broadcasted on local access television.

For the past two years, the Election & Census Commission has also partnered with the City of Lowell Commission on Disability and the Northeast Independent Living Program in conjunction with The Disability Law Center to survey polling locations prior to Election Day to identify locations that could benefit from additional signage, staffing, lighting and design. On Election Day, surveyors visit polling locations to confirm required equipment is set up and functioning properly.

The Election & Census Commission and City of Lowell Commission on Disability regularly are in contact and I frequently attend Commission on Disability meetings to debrief Election Day happenings and to discuss future partnership opportunities. On Thursday, January 10, 2019, I attended the Commission on Disability meeting to discuss the November 2018 election. On January 10th, commission members concurred that the pre-election planning and site visits had allowed time to make the recommended alterations and that Election Day communication between me and Chairwoman Hegarty identified challenges with equipment and signage that we solved throughout the day. Additionally, the Commission on Disability discussed expanding surveying practices to incorporate all public areas within the City that could be challenging for persons with disabilities including buildings, street crossing and traffic signals. The Commission discussed creating an index of locations to how to share feedback with other City departments, such as Engineering and the Department of Public Works to increase accessibility and awareness. I will continue to collaborate with the Commission on Disability and hope that the partnership between the Election & Census Commission and City of Lowell Commission on Disability can serve as a model for other departments.