



TOWN OF FREEPORT, MAINE

Town Manager's Office
30 Main Street
Freeport, ME 04032

Phone: 207-865-4743
Email: pjoseph@freeportmaine.com

MEMORANDUM

TO: Freeport Town Council
FROM: Peter Joseph, Town Manager
DATE: 09/04/22
RE: Update on accessibility improvements to Town facilities

During recent discussions of ongoing construction projects at Town facilities with individual members of the Town Council, several Councilors have requested that Town staff compile a list of accessibility improvements that are currently underway, as well as those that have been recently completed, so that these could be more easily communicated to residents. This update is the first draft of such as list, presented for your review and comment.

While the projects outlined in this update cover facilities that are either Town-owned, or Town-operated, it should be noted that staff from the Codes and Planning Departments work with property owners, business owners, and developers on a near-daily basis to improve accessibility at private properties within Freeport. Although their work has resulted in accessibility improvements to dozens of properties throughout Town, these improvements are rarely seen by the public. I am working separately with the Codes and Planning Departments to identify some of their work so that it can be made more visible to the public.

I'm very proud of the number of Town staff that have become increasingly involved in accessibility-related projects over the past several years. Management continues to stress the importance of accessibility on Town projects, but there is still always room for improvement. Management will continue to communicate this expectation of improvement to department directors and staff on an annual basis.

DUNNING BOAT YARD

Freeport Public Works recently completed a restoration/rehabilitation project at the Town-owned Dunning Boat Yard. One of the deficiencies on the property which was noted during the project was the ADA parking and accessibility on site. When the site was last rehabilitated in the 1990's it does not appear that ADA-compliant parking was created at that time. Additionally, none of the other site features permitted at that time were accessible. Part of the project was constructing an accessible picnic area that was permitted in the 1990's but had never been completed at that time. During the project, steps were taken to locate the ADA-compliant parking on an accessible route immediately adjacent to the boat launch and picnic area.

BEFORE:



AFTER:



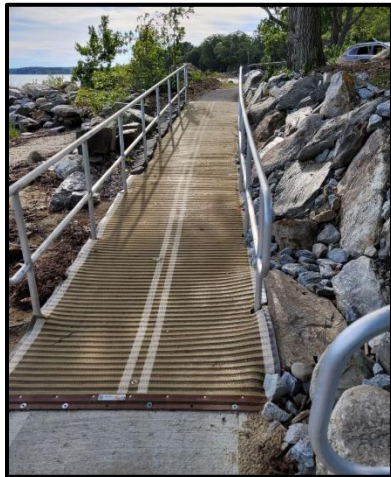
WINSLOW PARK

For several years, the Town has received consistent feedback about difficulties accessing the tidal beach at Winslow Park for users with mobility limitations. As a result, the Town Council and Winslow Park Commission approved and funded construction of a ramp near the main entrance to the park, leading to the beach area. This ramp was designed and permitted last year, and constructed this year. A second phase of the project in the immediate future will add van-accessible parking and an accessible path between the top of the ramp and the adjacent parking area.

While the Park has had a beach capable wheelchair for several years, the Park also recently added a beach/float wheelchair, as well as sand mats that will be used to run between the ramp landing and the water. Due to tidal action, there is still a question as to whether the sand mats will be able to be left out permanently, or whether they will need to be installed daily/upon request of users. Park staff will be experimenting with the sand mats in the near future to determine the answer to this question and to develop procedures to install and maintain these accessibility features.

These improvements join numerous accessibility-related improvements made by Park staff in recent years including the addition of accessible picnic tables and fire rings at accessible campsites throughout the park.

BEACH ACCESS RAMP (L) AND BEACH MAT (R):



BEACH CHAIR (L) AND FLOAT CHAIR (R):



FREEPORT COMMUNITY CENTER PARKING LOT

While the parking lot adjacent to the Community Center is owned by Freeport Community Services (FCS), there is a shared use agreement (essentially a lease) that allocates 22 of the parking spots owned by FCS to the Town's parking pool. The Town recently consulted with FCS to assist them in re-striping their parking lot to bring it up to current ADA specifications. While the existing parking lot did have the correct number of accessible parking spaces, they did not meet current dimensional requirements including loading/unloading stalls beside the parking spots for users with van lift systems. Additionally, both spots were relocated to be adjacent to each other and more visible to drivers, including a clearly marked travel path to the access ramp curb cut, for better pedestrian safety.

The existing agreement between the Town and FCS specifies that 60 percent of parking lot maintenance costs are to be the responsibility of FCS, and 40 percent are the responsibility of the Town. As a result, FCS purchased the materials (signs, paint, etc.) for the parking lot reconfiguration, and the Town provided a matching contribution of direct labor to complete the project.

RESTRIPEDED ADA-COMPLIANT PARKING:



ACCESSIBLE ROUTE:



PUBLIC WORKS GARAGE

During the above-described work at Dunning Boatyard and the Community Center this summer, Public Works Department staff noted that the Public Works Garage, which serves a secondary function as the school bus storage and maintenance facility for our local schools, did not have ADA-complaint parking on site. Public Works Department staff took the initiative to restripe three existing standard parking spots adjacent to the Public Works office to create ADA-compliant parking.

After the restriping, we worked with Public Works Department staff to analyze how a user with mobility impairment would access the site. As a result, staff is also working on the installation of a buzzer system at the front entrance to the Public Works Office adjacent to the accessible route shown at the right of the picture below. As access to the Public Works facility by the general public is limited for safety reasons, this would serve as notice that a visitor requires escort into the facility. This is an excellent example of how thinking about accessibility in terms of ADA requirements can improve access, safety, and convenience for all users.



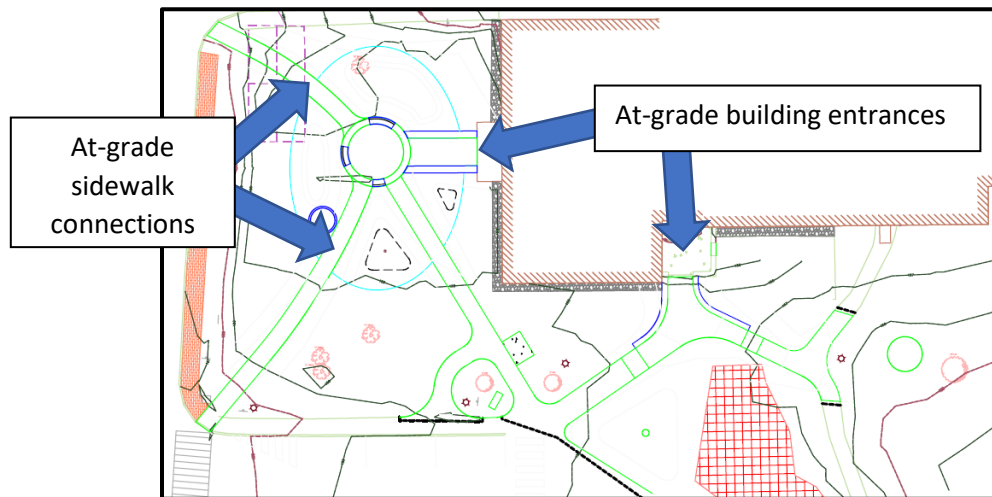
ONGOING / PENDING PROJECTS

TOWN HALL – COMPREHENSIVE SITE WORK

For the past two years, the Town Engineer has been developing comprehensive revisions to the external grounds of the Town Hall property. These revisions were prompted by the observations of Town staff, who noted that the open space between the Town Hall and Main Street was awkwardly laid out when the property was originally converted from a schoolhouse to a Town Hall. As a result, this part of the property has been historically underutilized, given its location on Main Street.

Additionally, this open space is only accessible from the parking lot side, as stairs currently block access from both Grove and Main Streets. During this design process it was also noted that of the three building entrances to the Town Hall, only one was ADA-accessible, and the ramp that provides this access seemed to have been added almost as an afterthought, requiring users to take a much longer and less convenient route to access the main entrance to the Town Hall. As such, one of the primary purposes of the site re-design has been to provide at-grade access to all users, both at the entrances to the Town Hall, as well as the entrances to the open space from both the street and the parking lot.

This project is currently in queue for the Project Review Board review process, and construction is expected to begin this fall and continue into next year.



HUNTER ROAD FIELDS

When the Hunter Road Fields facility was designed and constructed in 2011/2012, ADA-compliant parking was added in sufficient quantity for the parking constructed, however very few of these parking spots lie on an accessible route to either the fields or the onsite clubhouse/restroom building. As the facility is permitted under a state Site Location of Development permit, any alterations to the impervious cover on this site requires an amendment to the state-issued permit. As such, the Town Engineer is currently working on the design and permitting of the installation of accessible routes between the existing accessible parking and the fields and buildings on site. It is expected that these improvements will be constructed in 2023, along with an expansion parking lot, which will be permitted at the same time.

PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING

As part of the continuous review of Town properties by staff for accessibility compliance, it was recently noted that while there is accessible parking designated adjacent to the public entrance to the Public Safety Building, there is a barrier at the curb, which does not have a tip-down to provide an accessible route to the main entrance to the building, without traveling within the circulation pattern of the parking lot. This upgrade is currently on the Public Works Department's to-do list, and should be able to be completed the next time a small paving contract is undertaken, either later this year or early next.