

Mr. Mayor, Members of Council, Township Administrators,

Two weeks from today, on July 26th, we will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This anniversary has tremendous significance for the millions of people in this country living with disabilities; I consider myself fortunate that my own disability has been in the post-ADA era. To show his commitment, President Obama is also joining the celebrations and commemorations. At the local level, I want to thank the Township of West Windsor for its support of the requirements of the ADA over the last 20 years and in the process, for having made this one of the better places in the State of New Jersey for people with disabilities.

However, the work is never finished. I want to highlight three areas in particular on which I would like to see greater attention, to have on the Township's "to do" list and the Division of Engineering's project checklist.

1. Five months after first alerting the Township to deficiencies in its ADA compliance, I have yet to see any progress. To say the least, I find this very disturbing and a serious abrogation of the Township's responsibilities.
2. Township maintenance should always be mindful of the needs of people with disabilities. Trivial, but by no means insignificant, examples include snow clearance and sidewalk repair. A curb ramp blocked by snow or a broken paving slab are minor inconveniences to most but an impassable barrier to people with disabilities.
3. Lastly, and in a way most disturbing, are the ADA omissions and errors in new construction. As an example, my friends will point out issues with the new Meadow Road. This is not only entirely avoidable but ends up costing the Township for *post facto* corrections.

Why should we care? Besides the obvious answer: because it's the law, there's another answer that will eventually affect most of us in a very personal way. The chance of having a disability, or having a parent, child, other relative, friend or loved one with a disability is, sadly, rather high. The ADA is therefore for everybody. Happy twentieth birthday!

Respectfully,
Michael Ogg

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July 12, 2010