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Port Jervis Common Council Tackles Accessibility Issues For The Handicapped By Skip Leon Aug 28, 2003, 12:05am

The Port Jervis Common Council at its meeting Monday accepted a report that included a five-year plan for making city buildings and facilities more accessible to handicapped people.

The Transition Report includes an evaluation of accessibility to each of the city's buildings and also prioritizes improvements and has recommendations of projects that might be undertaken.

Thomas R. Burrow, Jr., who is with Action Toward Independence and the Independent Living Center in Middletown, spoke to the council about the report, which was done in July by a committee that included Councilwoman Judith Oppelt, who is the liason to the ADA/Housing Authority/Senior Advisory committees

"We took every facility the city owns and broke it down into areas that needed attention such as ramps, parking, bathrooms," Burrow said. "From that database we took the top 10 priorities for each category. These are a lot of small projects that are inexpensive and can be done by city departments."

Phase one of the project with regard to parking includes the following: provide a designated parking area at West End Beach; provide a designated parking area near the office of the Department of Public Works; provide a designated parking area near the entrance to the Water Treatment Plant; provide designated parking areas near the entrance of Fowler Rescue and Salvage Co. No. 3 and Delaware Engine Co. No. 2; provide designated parking near the front of Farnum Park; provide designated parking near the information board at Turntable Park; provide designated parking near the overlook at Elk-Brox Park; and provide designated parking nearest the entrance of Chris Marion Park.

There are also recommendations for paving 36-foot wide paths to major elements of West End Beach, Farnum Park,

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Riverside Park, among other projects.

Burrow said the proposed changes are recommendations based on what the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) requires. And the report should give the city some guidelines for the future.

"We wanted to create a report that deals with how the city will attack accessibility issues over a five-year period," Burrow said. "This should be a good framework for the city to base its future work on over the next five years. Little by little it will become more accessible and not be so much of a chore."

Burrow complimented the city on its attitude in undertaking the project of improving accessibility for handicapped people.

"I think the city of Port Jervis has shown tremendous willingness to work on this," he said. "I think Port Jervis's attitude is tremendous. We know we can't do everything at once, but we can aim in the right direction and eventually have everything accessible to everyone."

The council voted unanimously to accept the report.

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