

June 25, 2007

TO: Citizens Bank Regional Manager CG

FROM: disability advocate, Chair, Somerville Commission for Persons With DisAbilities

RE: ACCESSIBILITY AT UNION SQUARE CITIZENS BANK

Dear Mr. G,

The Somerville DisAbilities Commission opened an account at the Union Square, Somerville MA branch of the Citizens Bank in January 2007. We chose this bank because of good relations with staff members there, as well as because of the excellent location, right near where we hold our regular meetings.

In addition, many of our constituents are located in the Union Square area. Over the past two years, I have been hearing a request repeatedly to encourage your Bank to become accessible to people with disAbilities; in particular, people who are wheelchair-mobile, people who are less-than-average tall, people who have visual impairments, and people who need canes and other mobility devices to safely get around.

I began speaking with Mr. Fiorentino about this in early January, when we opened our account. Since then, we have spoken 5 or more times about the progress of our request to have this Citizens Bank become more accessible, starting with the entrance. As I understand, important progress has been made, in that technical experts have come to the Branch to measure and plan how to implement an accessible Entranceway, for starters.

Last we spoke, on June 12, 2007, Mr. Fiorentino said that Citizens Bank would try to place this as a budget item in next year's budget. At that time, I informed Mr. Fiorentino that such a modification is mandated by the ADA (see below for information about the Americans With Disabilities Act, Title III, which deals with places of public

accommodation and commercial facilities), and that it is necessary for this Branch (and all banks) to be accessible to all people, regardless of when the facility was bought to be used for its purpose- in other words, there is no "grandfathering" in of facilities. I also mentioned that there have been several cases of litigation across the country regarding inaccessibility of banks in the past several years.

I requested contact information for you, so that I could encourage you to move up the access improvements at the Union Square branch to be scheduled *without any further delay*. In addition, I am writing so that you will understand the importance of creating a *temporary Access Entrance* until the accessibility modifications are completed.

Union Square and its adjacent area (zip code 02143) is home to approximately 25,000; approximately 36% are 62 years and older. In fact, The American FactFinder 2000 Census maps Union Square proper as having between:

14.5 - 18.2 percent aged 21 - 64 with disabilities; and
44.3 - 50.8 percent over age 65 with disabilities.

(Source: <http://factfinder.census.gov> Somerville, MA Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population, Summary File 3)

As you can see, that's a large percentage of local constituents that would be very positively impacted by your creation of accessibility improvements.

The Commission for Persons With Disabilities holds monthly meetings at the TV station; our meetings are broadcast to the larger public on a weekly basis. **Since our next public meeting is on July 17, 2007, would you please return this email with a progress report, so that I can update our City's constituents by that date?**

Accessibility is definitely something that we can work together on- and every bit of progress is most certainly a meaningful and positive step for everyone! This email is not intended as anything but encouragement and support to the Citizens Bank for doing the right thing- and doing that without fail.

I look forward to your reply.

Cordially yours,
disAbilityadvocate

CC: GF, Ass't. Vice President, Citizens Bank, Union Square Somerville,
MA

The Americans With Disabilities Act, Title III:

below are portions of Title III; the full text of the ADA, Title III (plus links to Standards of Accessible Design) may be found at: <http://www.ada.gov/reg3a.html#Anchor-91481>

Sec.36.304 Removal of barriers.

(a) General. A public accommodation shall remove architectural barriers in existing facilities, including communication barriers that are structural in nature, where such removal is readily achievable, i.e., easily accomplishable and able to be carried out without much difficulty or expense.

(b) Examples. Examples of steps to remove barriers include, but are not limited to, the following actions --

- (1) Installing ramps;
- (2) Making curb cuts in sidewalks and entrances;
- (3) Repositioning shelves;
- (4) Rearranging tables, chairs, vending machines, display racks, and other furniture;...

- (7) Installing flashing alarm lights;
- (8) Widening doors;
- (9) Installing offset hinges to widen doorways;
- (10) Eliminating a turnstile or providing an alternative accessible path;
- (11) Installing accessible door hardware;
- ...
- (18) Creating designated accessible parking spaces;
- (20) Removing high pile, low density carpeting...

(c) Priorities. A public accommodation is urged to take measures to comply with the barrier removal requirements of this section in accordance with the following order of priorities.

(1) First, a public accommodation should take measures to provide access to a place of public accommodation from public sidewalks, parking, or public transportation. These measures include, for example, installing an entrance ramp, widening entrances, and providing accessible parking spaces.

(2) Second, a public accommodation should take measures to provide access to those areas of a place of public accommodation where goods and services are made available to the public. These measures include, for example, adjusting the layout of display racks, rearranging tables, providing Brailled and raised character signage, widening doors, providing visual alarms, and installing ramps.

(3) Third, a public accommodation should take measures to provide access to restroom facilities. These measures include, for example, removal of obstructing furniture or vending machines, widening of doors, installation of ramps, providing accessible signage, widening of toilet stalls, and installation of grab bars.

(4) Fourth, a public accommodation should take any other measures necessary to provide access to the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of a place of public accommodation.

(d) Relationship to alterations requirements of subpart D of this part. (1) Except as provided in paragraph (d)(2) of this section, measures taken to comply with the barrier removal requirements of this section shall comply with the applicable requirements for alterations in Sec.36.402 and Sec..36.404 - 36.406 of this part for the element being altered. The path of travel requirements of Sec.36.403 shall not apply to measures taken solely to comply with the barrier removal requirements of this section.

(2) If, as a result of compliance with the alterations requirements specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, the measures required to remove a barrier would not be readily achievable, a public accommodation may take other readily achievable measures to remove the barrier that do not fully comply with the specified requirements. Such measures include, for example, providing a ramp with a steeper slope or widening a doorway to a narrower width than that mandated by the alterations requirements. No measure shall be taken, however, that poses a significant risk to the health or safety of individuals with disabilities or others.

(e) Portable ramps. Portable ramps should be used to comply with this section only when installation of a permanent ramp is not readily achievable. In order to avoid any significant risk to the health or safety of individuals with disabilities or others in using portable ramps, due consideration shall be given to safety features such as nonslip surfaces, railings, anchoring, and strength of materials.