

## **Accessibility Advisory Commission**

**Tuesday, October 20, 2020, 4:30 PM Minutes**

**Virtual meeting with WebEx platform**

**Live streaming on City's website:**

**<http://www.worcesterma.gov/video-on-demand>**

**Call-in conference line and ASL interpreters provided**

### **Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Philip Economou, John Finn, Jr., Nancy Garr-Colzie, Dee Karuna, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

**Member Absent:** Robert Bureau, Fitzroy Hall, Paul Keister

**Staff:** Jayna Turчек, Miriam Nyante, Dawn E. Clark

**Guests:** Judy Warren, Worcester Cable Services Division; Mark Elbag, City of Worcester Engineering; Jacob Sanders, City Manager's Office and Bart Harvey WooSox

### **Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions**

Vice Chairperson Prochilo called the meeting to order and requested Director Turчек to provide the technology instructions for access and communication during the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves. New members, Linda Larrivee and Philip Economou were welcomed.

### **Approval of September 15, 2020 minutes\***

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved to approve the September 15, 2020 minutes as written. Commissioner Prochilo seconded the motion. All approved.

### **Presentation of construction issues\***

City Engineer Mark Elbag joined the Commission for a discussion of specific construction issues found on Main Street, Webster Square and Shrewsbury Street.

**Main Street:** Mr. Elbag indicated that Mass. DOT is currently responsible for construction on Main Street. In the past couple of weeks they have been milling to lay the last pavement. The utilities have to raise all their items before paving can commence. He will request Mass. DOT to put in usable temporary curb cuts. The City's work on two projects 1.From Highland Street, north, to George Street/Court

House and 2. Chandler Street, south one block, to the Federal Court House, is almost complete.

Commissioner Prochilo identified access issues that would affect all construction zones around the city including Main Street. Signs identifying hazards and redirecting pedestrians do not work for those who are blind and can create safety issues. It was noted that yellow tape is not compliant with access regulations/guidance.

From the mobility perspective: There is a lack of curb cuts. Asphalt is crumbly so traction is at best difficult and crushed stone is impossible for a wheelchair to go through. There is 1 inch to 1 1/2 drop off on Main Street curb cut. In August on Harding Street, the same issues were found. Mr. Elbag informed the Commission that road closures roughly fall into four categories: 1. road reconstruction, 2. road reconstruction by Mass. DOT, 3. roadway excavation by utility companies, 4. private party street closure permitting (This is what happened on Harding Street-rehabilitation of buildings etc.)

Often the Commission does not see an interim update for plan review. The concern is sidewalks. The original plan does not include enough details or pre-planning to see potential obstacles and the finished product with items such as trees that interfere with mobility. Mr. Elbag explained this planning is a means and method piece that is not necessarily part of the review process and allows for construction flexibility. Sometimes four or five contractors are involved with a project. Compliance of mobility and accessibility as well as code comes down to the city's ability to enforce the approved plans, etc. He suggested the city might look at the language in the permit and contract to strengthen compliance.

The city relies on flyers and website for project notification of projects. Suggestion that all entrances to properties, especially multi-unit properties where front entrance is not accessible) to include notifications at multiple entrances. This year the city has started email distribution lists to notify residents of upcoming projects in their neighborhood.

Audible signals are important for construction site. Cost of technology is coming down. In general the city has been working on audible signals beginning at the city's core and fanning out. If there is a need please contact Mark. Concern for signalized crossing in Webster Square high rises where elderly and people with disabilities live was not working for about a year. He will look into getting this fixed. With regard to a question about enhanced warning signals, this is an alert for

drivers but not a true red stop signal. There is a unresolved disagreement about their use at the federal level.

Commissioner Prochilo made a motion to send the document being used for this discussion to Mass. DOT and Northern Construction to educate them about the issues the Commission has encountered during the Main Street Construction project minus the Harding Street issues. Commissioner Larrivee seconded the motion. All approved.

**Conversation with City of Worcester Cable Services Division regarding American Sign Language (ASL), closed captioning and audio description for public agency meetings**

Ms. Judy Warren, Worcester Cable Services Director, met with the Commission. They have been keeping an eye on the possibility of providing closed captioning over the years. She has spoken to Municipal Caption.com about closed captioning. While it is expensive the costs have gone down. To provide Artificial Intelligence (AI) captioning would be about \$5,000 for equipment and \$5,000 for a three year contract and would be available for all public posted public meetings. AI captioning is possible, but has its limitations, done live with 90% plus accuracy.

ASL Interpreting would be about \$100 an hour done live with accuracy. David Del Pizzo from the Mass. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission concurred with this information. He recommends reaching out to the Deaf Community for their input and contact other members of MCDHH who have additional knowledge of effective communication.

Audio description is done by a human and can take up to five days to turn around a program with today's technology and is pay for each meeting. Estimated cost would be \$9 a minute and \$540 an hour. Costs go up as extended services are required.

Commissioner Myska made a motion to research further with the Deaf, Visually Impaired and other appropriate parties to determine a proposal for closed captioning and audio description resources to make Worcester public agency meetings accessible to individuals needing these services. Commissioner Karuna seconded the motion. All approved.

**Response from WooSox regarding accessible seating questions and incorporation of other Commission recommendations (Jacob Sanders, City Manager's Office; Bart Harvey WooSox)\***

Jacob Sanders, City Manager's Office, Bart Harvey and Janice Smith for the WooSox's and their architects Tom Quirk and Tom Martinis were present for this presentation.

Computer rendering and comparison current slides of Ceremonial Park and the positioning of Polar Park nestled into the topography of the land were shown.

The score board is large enough to allow for closed captioning for Deaf and Hard of Hearing audience members. They also spoke with the Mass. Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing about the most effective listening devices.

There are three elevators at various points to accommodate land elevation making the Park accessible to each level.

Every section of the park has accessible seating. The vision for the park is to be close to the action. So the infield seats are tight. Planning of sight lines has been done so if a person in front of an accessible seat is standing the person using the accessible seat can still see. Tom Quirk then went through the accessible seating at each level. The accessible, companion and group seats are available at the different price points. There will be seats that can be moved out of the way to make room for wheelchairs.

Other accessible item: There are lifts to get in and out of the dug outs for players, coaches and guests who may need this assistance. The party decks are accessible by elevator. There is a quiet room too. There is a least one accessible space in every suite.

Questions from the Commissioners:

- Can steps be taken to reduce the time standing to get into the Park? This is a management issue for Bart to consider.
- Is furniture like tables and chairs fixed (bolted down) or movable? Furniture is a combination of both. Chairs go under the tables providing a clear path of travel.
- Are there listening devices being planned? Yes. The technical capacity is already provided in the structure.
- What is the Park's capacity? There are 6,500 seats and then there are additional areas that can accommodate people.

- Will the accessible seats be available when there are concerts? Yes and an accessible path of travel will be provided to the seats.
- Will there be signage throughout the Park? Yes there is braille. Working out kiosk information and public wayfinding.

### **Review of AAB notices and applications: (No City owned properties)**

#### **Notice of Action:**

- Stamp Factory Lofts 128 Chandler St. Worcester MA 01609 (V20-149)

#### **First Notice:**

- Arbour Counseling Center 411 Chandler St Worcester, MA, 01602 (C19141)
- Tatnuck Plaza 638 Chandler St Worcester, MA 01602 (C19142)

### **Suggestions for upcoming agenda items**

- Recommendations for placement of a tactile street map downtown to assist Vision Impaired Persons (Elizabeth Myska) (November 17, 2020)
- Follow up on Doherty High School Construction Project

### **Announcements:**

- **White Cane Safety Awareness Day and Exercise: Wednesday October 21, 9:30am Meet at Worcester Common Market**
- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting October 21, 2020 1-2:30pm, Contact: [cmellis@cmrpc.org](mailto:cmellis@cmrpc.org)**
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled) November 2, 2020, 4:00 – 5:30pm, For questions email: [jbellel@yahoo.com](mailto:jbellel@yahoo.com)**
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting: November 17, 2020 4:30pm**
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting, October 23, 2020, 11:30am, WebEx**

### **Adjournment:**

Commissioner Prochilo moved to adjourn and Commissioner Larrivee seconded. All approved. 6:52pm

\*Material can be viewed at the Office of Human Rights & Accessibility during normal business hours.