

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for January 15th, 2019, 4:30PM
Levi Lincoln Chamber (3rd fl.)
Worcester City Hall

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bilotta, Robert Bureau, Nancy Garr- Colzie, John Gleason, Dee Karuna, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Lindsay Silva (via phone), Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: Fitzroy Hall, Paul Keister,

Staff: Jayna Turчек, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: James Saucedo, Organizer, MA Coalition for the Homeless;
Vianna Mercedes and Kathleen Esparza from City Division of Youth Opportunities

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Chairperson Bilotta called the meeting to order. Commissioners introduced themselves.

Approval of December 18th, 2018 Minutes

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved approval and Commissioner Myska seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the December 18th, 2018 minutes.

Presentation and request for endorsement: Rent Arrears Program (formerly H bill 84) (MA Coalition for the Homeless)

James Saucedo, Community Organizer, from the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless which is an advocacy and policy group working across the State working to advocate funds to house the homeless and other assistance from the state legislature to restore the Arrearage Program, formally HB 84. His focus was on the Rent Arrearage Assistance Program. This was a program that began in the 1980's and ran to 2003 when it lost its funding. This is was tax assistance program for low income people with rent to prevent them from losing their home provide stability to remain in their homes and communities. Thus avoid being evicted and becoming homeless. This would be a resource available to all low income people including

families with children, couples and single people. This program would be aim at people with the lowest income or 30% below the poverty income level and translates to \$29, 923. Statewide, there are just under 300,000 households that match this annual level of income. These households predominately are with people with disabilities. Data nationwide indicates extremely low income (50% below poverty) is 22% with a person with a disability in the household compared to 9 % of all income levels.

The Coalition is working with Rep. Marjorie Decker representing Cambridge. She filled a bill to restore this program in the last session. We want to build on last year's momentum; she is planning to refile this bill for the 2019 session. He said it is time to advocate legislators to sign on as cosponsors. Rep. James O'Day from Worcester has already signed on. He will inform the Commission when a bill number is assigned. Packets were shared with Commission members.*

The campaign is currently endorsed by 62 organizations. Mr. Saucedo, requested the Worcester Commission to endorse this upcoming legislation.

Question asked by Commission:

- Will this take away funds from the resources of the Residents and Families Transition Program (RAFT)? Hopefully the Rent Arrears Program will work to compliment RAFT program. To qualify for one has to have an eviction notice. The Arrears Program would allow stability before a notice of eviction is given.

Chairperson Bilotta moved to endorse the Rent Arrears Program (formerly H bill 84) proposed by the MA Coalition for the Homeless. Commissioner Bureau seconded. All approved.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Saucedo for his presentation.

Discussion on summer recreation and employment opportunities with Youth Opportunities Office

Vianna Mercedes and Kathleen Esparza from City Youth Opportunities were introduced. Their presentation was via a power point*.

Mission

To collaborate and influence systems stakeholders and Worcester Community to create justice for youth

Vision

Through Community driven efforts, leverage resources to support youth centered opportunities that create equity.

How do we do it?

Run out of school time programs

Provide professional development for youth workers

Develop quality standards for local youth opportunities

Work with Worcester Public Schools

Address disparities that negatively impact youth through policy work

Meeting our Mission

a. Programs

- Recreation Worcester
- Worcester Youth Leadership Institute

b. Policy

- City Manager's Youth Council
- City Manager's Committee on Youth
- Youth Violence Prevention Initiative
- Sexual Health Education
- The "W"

c. Partnerships

- Worcester Public Schools
- Higher Educational Institutions
- State Treasurer
- Financial Institutions
- Center for Health Impact
- MassHire Worcester

- Others

Our History Story

- Used to be Wheels on Water
- Born from Worcester Youth Violence Initiative
- Transitioned to Recreation Worcester in 2015

Our Services

a. Recreation Worcester Core

- Year round out of school programs focusing on academics, art and athletics

b. Spins Offs

- To increase awareness and capacity within the city Recreation Worcester facilitates smaller programs (ie. City Hoops, IMP, ICCT, Bike Program)

c. Professional Development

- All staff receives 30 hours or more training
- M. L.E. (Mentorship, Leadership, Experience)

Our Program Schedule

- Academic
 - 3 days a week which consists of the following:
Snack time
Team building activity with the intention of reflection
1 day of special programming for exposure to community opportunities
- Summer
 - 5 days a week which consists of the following:
2 Meals
Activities around academics, art and athletics
Reading time
Community partnership

Locations

- Academic Year
Chandler Magnet, Nelson Place, Canterbury, Quinsigamond, Vernon Hill, Union Hill
- Summer:
Beaver Brook, Burncoat Playground, Castle Park, East Park, Lake Park, Logan field, Grant Square, Greenwood, University Park, Vernon Hill

*Additional locations for special programs

Our Youth * Summer 2018, Academic Year 2018-19

Academic

Participants – Capacity of 250 participants in core program between 20 and 300 in Spin off programs – Grades 4th to 8th

Paid and unpaid staff – Recreation Worcester Core: 15 direct service staff, this year 14 qualify as youth, 1 Worcester Public School Instructional Assistant

Interns – from various institutions, including Center for Living & Working, Inc.

Summer

Participants – Over 1700 registered, average of 700 daily attendance --- ages 7-13

Paid and unpaid staff - Recreation Worcester Core: 110 Staff, this year about 95% qualified as youth, 1 Worcester Public School Instructional Assistant

Interns – from various institutions, including Center for Living & Working, Inc.

*The program does not track how many youth or employees have disabilities

Our Partners

G.E.'s Martial Arts, YMCA, The Learning Hub, Worcester Public Library, Worcester Public Schools, Department of Public Works and Parks, Worcester Fire Department, Worcester Fire Department, Center for Child care Services, Center for Living & Working, Inc., State Treasurer, ArtReach, Monano Art, Creative Minds, JustPaint, Extreme Kids Lab, Mass. Audubon, Higher Educational Institutions, Others

Some Challenges

- Up until FY'19, funding was not stable which limited outreach and ability to plan
- Any initiative needs to be piloted city-wide
- Capacity only allows us to take in 1-2 youth from Center for Living & Working to work at the office
- Lack of funding impact those with physical disabilities
- Not enough training on working with non-neurotypicals
- Not a strong strategy to recruit and support employees with different abilities

The following information was provided as a result of questions asked by the Commission prior to the meeting.

1. *Ways in which community partners can partner with Recreation Worcester programming*

- Provide staff training for working with youth with different abilities
- Provide engaging, age appropriate programming one hour a week on Thursdays during the academic program or any day in the summer
- Advocate for accessibility equipment at our sites
- Advocate for funding to increase during program hours

2. *How are sites chosen?*

- Located in all school quadrants
- At least one park in each city councilor's district
- City schools and underused city parks preferred
- *Variables: New establishment, very high need area

3. *What type of assistance is there for recreational or artistic activities in terms of instructional assistance?*

- Staff receives 30+ hours of training each session
- Curriculum development specialist provides coaching and support for staff
- About \$25,000 for year round partnerships

4. *How viable is occupational therapy or adaptive tools to make the transition successful for someone with mobility issues?*

- Provide our staff with further training to include occupational therapy in our daily routine
- Provide funding for a position who floats to provide support for all sites OR a partner who rotates between all sites similar to WPL
- The program always welcomes ideas on how to incorporate adaptive tools for someone with mobility issues

Further questions from the Commission:

Q: Given the general statistic that 1 in 4 youth has a mental health issue and due to the city environment and greater stress more recently, how does the staff plan to deal with this?

A: There are plans to work with the Worcester School psychiatrist, Worcester Here, and other mental health services available. They have weekly check in with the staff and work with school clinicians where needed. The program does do mental health first aid sometimes with Boys and Club and other groups.

Q: Does staff get life saving training?

A: All summer leadership staff does get CPR training. During the school year staff does not because certified administrative staff is available.

Q: Where does staff training take place?

A: Training is done at the sites.

Q: Maybe there is a training opportunity about disabilities? Depending on the age using the curiosity factor questions about disability could be asked.

A: Ms. Esparza explained that at the beginning of the summer program they have a week long symposium which encompasses all the areas youth leadership need to be aware of and disability issue awareness could be offered here.

Suggestion was made to have visually impaired and sight do an art project or recreational activity together.

Jerri Roach from the Worcester School Transition Program offered her assistance and is willing to meet with the Youth Opportunities staff to discuss possibilities for educating staff and including people with disabilities in the two programs.

Chairperson thanked the staff from the City's Youth Opportunities Program.

Commissioner Silva emailed two questions after the presenters had left. These questions will be forwarded for response.

1. If the youth program has photos of youth with disabilities in their marketing materials?
2. Do they utilize disabled staff as mentors for disabled youth?

Request of Union Station Grand Hall- 2019 White Cane Day October 16th, 2019

Commissioner Myska stated this will be the sixth year of celebrating White Cane Day. The first year we did a flash mob. The next four years we have done mobility walk when dignitaries/public officials were blindfolded and assisted by sighted guides.

Last year we used the Worcester Public Library to provide space for agencies that serve the visually impaired. This year we would like to use Union Station's Grand Hall and include other agencies that serve the disability community in general. Similar to what was done for the 25th ADA Anniversary.

Commissioner Myska moved to approve the request for the use of Union Station Grand Hall on October 16th, 2019 for 2919 White Cane Day from 9:00AM to noon. Commissioner Bureau seconded. All approved.

Discussion of progress of FY19 COD goals

The Commission reviewed the progress and next steps needed to be taken to achieve the Commission's FY'19 Goals.*

Introduction to planning for 2019 ADA public event

Chairperson Bilotta presented a two part event to celebrate the ADA this summer as follows:

- Workshop on advocacy development for people with disabilities and allies
- Outdoor networking social event (back of City Hall)

***Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold**

Variance Application

- 2 Main Street, Docket # TBD

U Decision of the Board

- 8-12 Sever Street, Docket #V 18 190
- **Multiple Streets (Winthrop Street), Worcester. Docket #V18 357**

Suggestions for upcoming meetings

The May 21st Commission meeting will be at the new Blackstone Visitors Center located at 3 Paul Clancy Way across from Walmart.

Announcements:

- WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting January 16th, 2019, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)** February 5th, 2019, 4:00 – 5:30pm, YWCA, Members Lounge
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** February 19th, 2019, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** May TBD, 2019 at 9:00am at 2 Coppage Drive.
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** February 19th, 2019 4:30pm

Adjournment: 6:10pm

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