

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for November 19, 2019, 4:30PM
Levi Lincoln Chamber, Worcester City Hall, 455 Main Street

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bilotta, Robert Bureau, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Fitzroy Hall, Dee Karuna, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg, John Finn

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Dawn E. Clark, Ann Gabor, QCC intern

Guests: Bart Harvey, Director of Ball Park Planning and Thomas Quick, D'Agostino, Izzo, Quirk Architects, Inc. representing the Worcester Red Sox;
Robert Antonelli, Asst. Commissioner Parks; and
John Odell, City Director of Asset and Energy Management

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Vice Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order. Commissioners introduced themselves.

Approval of September 17th, 2019 minutes

Commissioner Prochilo moved to accept the September 17 minutes as written. Commissioner Bilotta seconded. All approved.

Woosox Stadium review for Accessibility

Bart Harvey, Planning Director of the Ball Park, was pleased to return to the Commission after having visited in December and hearing ideas related to disability needs at the time particularly the request to have a point person at the park for people who have disabilities who may need assistance. He stated that Thomas Quirk from their architectural firm was with him and welcomed questions at any time.

He presented floor plans of the stadium's three levels. First level is at grade and Madison Street. The second level is at grade level at the corner of Washington and Ash Streets. The third level is at grade on Summit Street. Mr. Quirk indicated that usually minor league ball parks were on open flat surfaces. Worcester's Polar Park offers challenges which are opportunities being a rather small urban space between parking lots and on a hill. On the operational end they have addressed the need for

assistive hearing devices, screens visible around the park, and all the ADA compliance issues. The park has also allowed for other welcoming items as well. There is a ceremonial entrance, on Madison Street. They have worked with their landscape and graphic designer, the city and state to make sure the sidewalks do not exceed 2% slope. Also working on contrast color, brail etc. The support buildings and services are at this area. The outfield is built into the hill.

The second level of the concourse by center field where most of the public is anticipated to enter the bowl area of the stadium. This will be located at Summit and Plymouth Streets with parking at the library etc. and walk down Green Street. The railroad bridge archway to Green Street would be lighted as the entrance to the Canal District. Landscapers are designing Picket Park. There is a children's play area. All are to be accessible. This would be the place where people would be dropped off. The ball field back is to the city and center field is toward the Canal neighborhood where there is a terrace is place beyond the elevators and concessions. The walkway around the stadium from this entrance to the support building on the other side is flat. Here there is an area with larger seating area away from the bowl be also visible to the field for people who may need space to move around than a regular seat would have by the fan club. There is also a quiet room. The family bathrooms are large so there can be privacy between the user and the person with them.

There is an elevator by the fan club that brings people to the third level. There is a function room available that accommodates up to 400 people and a kitchen. A roof is provided for a future garden. The function room has glass on two sides overlooking the city and the neighborhood. The elevator will land outside along a wall parallel to Summit Street that on off game time one can look into the ball field that is part of the wall. Yet to be built is Summit Street extension when on game days it will be similar to Jersey Street in Boston. Festivals could be available every day of the week.

In coordination with the team and city, the park is anticipated to be open almost every day when there is no game to utilize the various venues in the park. Mr. Quirk noted at the back of the seating bowl, the seating tiers have been raised higher than usual so that people using wheelchairs will be able to see when someone in front of them stands up.

Public member requested the MCDHH be consulted with for people who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing so there are no issues in the future. The Mass. Commissioner of the Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing was present and encouraged the team to work with the Commission as they have a lot of technological experience. Mr. Harvey was eager to work with the Commissioner and people who have hearing loss to be ready to welcome the one in five with hearing loss. The Commissioner stated that there are 2 million people with hearing loss in New England.

There are other projects being built at the same time by private developer(s). The city is planning to build a parking garage on the opposite side of Madison Street from Polar Park. Parking is being provided by the hotel and apartments being built, so people living there should not be using the public spaces.

The exterior part design is taken from the steel and glass curtain design of the Higgins Amory to reflect the history of Worcester industrial past. It is metal building as opposed to a brick building.

The following information was garnered through questions for the Commission and public questions:

- Facility will hold about 6,500. Wheelchair seating is all the way around and at the field wall. Suites are accessible. Line of sights are clear.
- Movable seats are tripping hazard for visually impaired; Most would be under the drink lines. They will consider affixing the chairs.
- Different pricing levels not yet set. Bowl seats about \$13. Color or contrast may or may not be helpful to a visually impaired. Elevators should have floors identified by verbal floor announcement and a star on the button panel.
- Anyone can sit in any section of the ball park.
- Accommodating a reduced wait time to get into the park on game time is possible.
- Staffing a point person for disabled individuals and groups has been discussed internally: waiting until next year to assign.
- Medical vendor has not yet been determined.
- Parking on the property: City Manager's staff Jacob Sanders said negotiations were still in process. There is a staff person assigned to developing a parking plan for the area. The short term plan is almost completed and a long term plan will be starting very soon which will include HP, valet option and

enforcement issues. DOT and WRTA is working with Park officials. Good public transportation is critical for making the ball park successful.

Drawings were brought and passed around for viewing.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Harvey and Mr. Quirk for the presentation.

Discussion on 2020 Parks Open Space and Recreation Plan

Robert Antonelli, Asst. Commissioner Parks stated the City was moving into developing the Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan which is done every seven (7) years and last updated in 2013. He explained the public input process. This revised document will need to be submitted in September 2020. Five district meetings have been planned and there will be additional meetings with groups and commissions to receive input into this plan. The 2013 plan is on the city's website with maps, GIS and other information.

There has been a lot of work done over the years with the help of the Commission to make city parks accessible and there is more work to be done.

Again, this round Weston and Sampson engineers are assisting with this plan. The hope is to update the GIS, identify accessibility needs and to include these needs as action items to be addressed. Over the last 7 years 15 master plans have been done and 7 billion dollars have been spent.

Mr. Bollinger affirmed the process for getting this document submitted and said they would be back to the Commission with the progress and request for review and input. He introduced Tabor Kaden, Project Manager from his staff to present sides detailing the project. She has already visited several of the parks already.

This plan is be a seven year plan. It used to be a five year plan. 150 municipalities have Open Space Plans on file with the state at this time. This effort will help reflect on what accomplishments have been achieved and develop the actions plan for the next steps to improving the city's parks from FY'20 –FY'27. This is an opportunity to catalogue all the parks and open space assets the city has as well as noting the condition of each and possible new features that would be helpful for residents and visitors. An effort is made to have this plan integrative with other plans the city is working on such as economic development plans.

The tools that help identify what is needed include groups like the Commission field observations of current conditions, an on-line survey and grant eligibility because the city has filed a plan with the state. The City has been very successful in receiving grants from the state for park and open space work each year. Accessibility issues attract the dollars.

There are 61 properties (Parks and Open Spaces) that fall under the responsibility of the Parks Department. There are also properties under the domain of the Conservation Commission that will be inventoried and identify how to make them more accessible to the general public. Also in this plan state and other open spaces will be included.

There are several parts to this plan including an Executive summary and an ADA self-evaluation.

Concerns raised by Commission and public:

- Surface at Elm Park tends to be hard walking on and wears tire on vehicles
- Two inch gap at MK bridge in Elm Park getting on to the bridge. Also some of the deck boards are weak and need replacing
- WPI students did an assessment of several parks a couple of years ago from the sight impairment perspective that can be shared. It is almost impossible to traverse the interior of Elm park without a sighted guide.
- Want a larger size dog park. There are three dog parks Beaver Park, Vernon Hill and the downtown one which is small. There is a dog park plan with other parks designated for open dog park possibility. There has been no additional funding for dog parks, if that is being requested by the community, please let the Park Department know.

Please provide other ideas through Director Turchek and/or the on-line survey.

The Chairperson thanked the presenters and looks forward to learning the results of the work being done by the consultant firm.

ADA Transition Plan Update- City facilities

John O'Dell, City's Director of Asset and Energy Management presented the annual ADA Transition update on City facilities. The counter project is the remaining City Hall ADA compliant project that is on the transition plan list. This involves counters at Treasury and Elections on the 2nd floor and an accessible counter at the entrance of Planning on the 4th Floor. The contract has been awarded and there is a pre-construction meeting scheduled for next week to determine the timeline.

On the treasury side, the marble base will remain with a colored laminate counter top. On the election side oak will be used.

Commissioner questioned how the threshold into Levi Lincoln Chamber could be more accessible. Shaving the marble is very difficult without ruining the threshold. A search for replacement marble has not been successful. Other offices in City Hall have a hard plastic placed over them that provide a slight ramp like walk over the threshold. This will be added to the list.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. O'Dell for his report.

Notice: Sidewalk snow removal preparations*

Director Turchek reviewed three documents for preparations for snow removal, outlining the city's snow ordinance and available services including a list of snow removal referrals and a pictorial flyer to remind people to report sidewalks and curb cuts not shoveled.

Review Park Avenue and Harding Street Wheelchair Strolls issue lists for submission to DPW for action*

This summer there were two wheelchair strolls. One from Wendy's to Beaver Street up Main Street during the height of the Main street construction which highlighted the issues. There was one tree that prevented wheelchair getting through on sidewalk.

The second stroll was on Harding and Green Streets. Curb cuts and crosswalks were lined up, but there were no audible signals at lights. Kelly Square had its own

issues. On Harding Street where the new Worcester Market is there was no curb cut only a four inch curb to traverse.

Commissioner Prochilo moved to accept the report and forward the DPW for action. Commissioner Bilotta seconded. All approved.

Red Cab Accessible Vans Notice*

The Commission received and reviewed the accessible taxi statistics from FY18-FY20 through October 10th, 2019. Director Turcek explained the review of accessible cab ride statistics have been an ongoing item on the Commission's agenda. Recently the WPD license department officers requested Red Cab provide ride data from when cab109 came back on the road. Red Cab provided this most recent data and also provided outstanding data from gaps in reporting from the last three years. This material gives the Commission a three year history of accessible rides provided by Red Cab Taxi.

Accessible van 110 has been voluntarily surrendered to the WPD Licensing Department. The owner of Red Cab gave up her search to purchase a second accessible vehicle. Unfortunately with this decision the city now has only one accessible cab on the road. Director Turcek is working internally to seek another vender to provide this service to the disabled community.

Notice: Planning meeting for 30th ADA Celebration November 21st

The meeting will be held at 2:30pm at Center for Living & Working, Inc., 484 Main Street. CLW is interested in partnering with the city and commission on this event.

Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold

Correspondence

- 100 Institute Road, Docket # V 19 223

Decision of the Board

- **Grafton Street, Docket # V19 135**
- 16 Salisbury Street, Docket # V1 9 136
- 6 Brussels Street, Docket # V16 363

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting** November 20th, 2019, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **MassDOT Kelly Square Improvement Project Public Meeting on upcoming construction** November 20th, 2019, 6pm, Crompton Collective-White Room, 138 Green Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)** December 3rd, 2019, 4:00 – 5:30pm, Easter Seals Conference Room, 484 Main Street (6th fl.)
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** December 13, 2019, 9am – Noon, 2 Coppage Drive
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** December 17th, 2019 4:30pm

Member Announcements

Welcome to John Finn a new Associate member and return of Commissioner Keister. We are glad to see Commissioner Keister with us and feeling better.

Commissioner Lindsey Silva has moved out of state and we are glad to have Fitzroy as an appointed full member.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned

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