

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes from Monday, December 30, 2013
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Room, 3rd Floor

(This meeting was rescheduled due to snow on December 17, 2013)

Attendance:

Members Present:

Herbert Cremer, Chair	District 1
Stephen Stolberg, Vice Chair	District 2
Rachel Shannon Brown	District 4
Charles Hiamah	District 5
Paul Keister	District 4
Susan Swanson	District 5
Nancy Garr-Colzie	District 5

Members Absent: John Nah, Lynne Towler, Elizabeth Myska

Staff: Pam Callahan, Dawn Clark

Guests: Robert C. Antonelli Jr., DPW & Parks.

Eugene Bolinger, RLA Weston & Sampson

Members of the Public:

Vince Lombardi, Audio Journal

Mr. Scott Ricker, Reli-Abilities

Jackie Norton, Worcester Resident

Terry Burke-Dotson, Millbury Resident

1. Call to Order: 4:35 PM. The Chair welcomed guests and commission members; each member introduced themselves.

2. Minutes: Minutes of July 16, 2013 and September 17, 2013 meeting were approved by unanimous vote, 0- opposed and 0- abstentions. 3. Minutes of the November 26, 2013 meeting were approved with 2 amendments. 0- oppose and 0- abstentions.

3. Presentation - Open Space and Recreation Plan: Robert Antonelli Jr. Asst. Commissioner DPW & Parks and Eugene Bolinger from Weston & Sampson gave an overview of short and long term plans to enhance parks and recreation areas. Mr. Antonelli said that the plans have already gone to the State Department of Parks and Recreation for approval and once final plans are amended they will go to City Council for approval. Once approved by the City Council, plans will be submitted to the AAB.

The PowerPoint presentation reviewed the following topics:

1. Status of Open Space Plans
2. Sample Results of the Park Inventory Work
3. Needs Analysis Highlights
4. Action Plan Highlights
5. Priority Park Improvement Initiatives
6. Other Related Initiatives

Mr. Bolinger told the commission that the public input and needs analysis revealed the need to put greater emphasis on natural resources, for example creating accessibility to trails, lakes and streams. He also indicated the need to restoring and maintaining equipment for active participation.

Board Member Comments:

Susan Swanson stated she was impressed with the extraordinary presentation and effort given that Environmental Justice had not typically included disabled persons and asked how environmental Justice areas are prioritized. Mr. Antonelli stated that it was a challenge to develop new open space in the core of the City because those areas were heavily developed. Environmental justice parks are smaller due to lack of space. Mr. Bolinger stated that brownstone properties do have opportunities and they have already completed a lot of things in those area parks such as Compton Park and University Park.

Mr. Paul Keister asked what percentage of Worcester is open space and how did Worcester compare to other municipalities. It was determined that approximately 17% of Worcester is open space including Audubon and State land and this compares quite well to other communities in the United States.

Rachel Shannon Brown asked of 31 locations not currently funded, how they will be prioritized for accessibility. Mr. Antonelli stated that there were many more issues than just parking such as walkways from one element to another within the park and that it depends on which issue and which park. He said that they look at all the concerns facing a park and consider all the issues when putting in for additional funding.

Susan Swanson asked about the public survey. It was not emailed to any persons but rather was on the City Council calendar, on the City's website and was sent as outreach to many groups. Over 550 responded and 25% -33% reported that they learned of the survey via social media.

Mr. Herb Cremer asked Mr. Antonelli if he had looked into playground equipment for disabled children and Mr. Antonelli stated that yes, they

had looked into this and were looking for a location for a complete handicapped accessible park include access for water recreation as well.

Public Comments:

Question regarding the renovating of football facilities such as at QCC and there are no new plans to update state Parks.

Question regarding the potential for a dog park. Mr. Antonelli said that it is an action item to be reviewed however it would need a City Ordinance because now dogs are not allowed in City parks with the exception of service or police dogs.

Question on who would inspect playgrounds and what qualifications would be required. Mr. Antonelli said that playgrounds would be inspected by certified playground inspectors, engineers and consultants who understand the needs and scope such as slopes and cross slopes. Additionally, the ADA Coordinator would look at this as well.

Comment regarding members of the disabled community inspecting parks as well and Mr. Antonelli stated that all comments or issues regarding parks and recreation areas should be forwarded to the parks department for review. There is a link on the City's website to email comments to the parks department or they can be sent to 50 Skyline Drive.

Question regarding a plan to address wood fiber and accessibility on the ground in the parks. Mr. Antonelli stated that this is currently under review and that the review is incomplete at this time. There are 2 different types of ground cover that is used and the time line for updating each park is depending on when the consultant submits a final report regarding accessibility and wood fiber. It is under a comprehensive assessment that will look at both safety and accessibility.

Comment regarding the term ADA and its frequent use when Massachusetts has access requirements that are more stringent. The city looks very closely at CMR 521 and will continue to do so.

4. Bullying Discussion:

The Commission identified areas of concern regarding the bullying of fragile elders and disabled persons:

1. Fragile elders and disabled persons will tolerate bullying and/or abuse out of fear of losing health care provider or being forced into a nursing home.
2. There does not appear to be a comprehensive list of resources for elders/disabled persons who experience bullying or abuse.
3. There is confusion regarding protection of elders/disabled persons for ages under 59 and over 60.

The commission made the following recommendations:

1. To have a speaker come in to address these issues and provide information regarding:
 - a. Clarification on what is bullying and what is abuse
 - b. Resources available to help elders and disabled persons who experience bullying/abuse
 - c. Ways people could potentially protect themselves from bullying or abuse
2. To reach out to the Elder Commission and Human Rights Commission to see if they would be interested in either attending a meeting or submit any concerns they have regarding bullying and abuse of elders and other populations.

Mr. Cremer made a motion to have Ms. Susan Swanson take the lead on the issue and subsequent meetings. Rachel Brown Shannon seconded the motion and it was accepted by unanimous vote.

5. Community Meetings:

The Chair asked if members would volunteer to attend various meetings in the community and bring the information back to the board. Rachel Brown Shannon currently attends the REDD meetings in a professional capacity and they are usually on Monday evenings 5:00-7:00 at the CLW- Mr. Kennedy from the CLW will inform the board when the next meeting is scheduled. Nancy Garr-Colzie will attend the next TPAG meeting to be held on February 19th at the WRTA location on Grove St. Susan Swanson will attend the Human Rights Commission meeting to be held on Monday, January 6, 2014 at the South Main CDC 875 Main St.

6. Public Comment:

Mr. Vince Lombardi from Audio Journal:

Mr. Lombardi asked the Board to consider bringing the issues facing disabled persons in the City to the public through regular broadcasting. This was well received and members thought other entities such as the Center for Living and Working could also contribute.

Mr. Scott Ricker stated that he had 3 comments:

First, he advised the board that he was a mandated reporter of abuse and there was a state agency for reporting abuse: DPPC- Disabled Person Protection Commission.

Second, he stated he was disappointed his district, Number 3, was not represented by the board. (John Nah is from District 3, however was absent.)

Third, he asked for an update to the Shelter Facility Survey.

Ms. Jackie Norton asked the board if the COD had set goals for the next year and if they were based on what the most common complaints were coming into the Office of Disabilities.

The Commission requests an update of complaints that were received by the Office of Disabilities in the past year.

7:20 Meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted by Pamela Callahan