

**Commission on Disability Meeting**  
Minutes for January 21, 2020, 4:30PM  
Levi Lincoln Chamber, Worcester City Hall, 455 Main Street

**Attendance:**

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

Member Absent: Robert Bilotta

**Staff:** Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark,

**Guests:** Michele Ellicks, Mass. Registry of Motor Vehicles  
Juliet Feibel, Arts Worcester

**Welcome, Call to Order & Introduction**

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

**Approval of November 19, 2019 minutes\***

Commissioner Nancy Garr-Colzie moved to accept the September 17 minutes as written. Commissioner Prochilo seconded. All approved.

**Pre-AAB variance consultation, Code Red Consultants on behalf of the YWCA of Central MA\***

Linda Cavaoli, Executive Director of the YWCA, said that the Y at One Salem square, Worcester is conducting a 24 million dollar renovation of their building and is seeking a variance from the AAB. The mission is to She introduced Jeffery Parras from their architect Code Red Consultants. The request is for variance of the floating stairway and the related handrails. The Commission received a letter from the Worcester Historical Commission stating the any changes in the stairway would unnecessarily detract from the historical significance and architectural integrity of the building. A similar request for a variance will be going to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

There was a variance for pre-school furniture which has been tabled so the AAB can review the whole project for consistency. There were also two time variance

requests: one for the general work and the other was for elevator down time. These two time variances were granted with the submission of periodic updates. This renovation triggers the 30% rule which means if a project or projects in a certain time frame amount to 30% of the building worth then the building must be made accessible in its entirety.

This building is eligible for the historic register and which it is not currently on the register. An effort is being made to preserve the elements of the building so that eligibility option remains intact. After reviewing with Mr. Parras the issues with the floating stair and handrails from a access perspective and that there is an alternative way via a code compliant elevator and a set of stairs to reach the upper levels of the building, Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved and Commissioner Bureau seconded a motion to support the YWCA's request for this variance. All approved. The Office will communicate this vote of support in a letter to the Mass. Architectural Access Board.

### **Massachusetts Real ID presentation\***

Michele Ellicks from the Mass. Registry of Motor Vehicles presented information on the Real ID. The Registry is now issuing the federal credentialed ID and is also interested in educating groups about the ID. Commission members were encouraged to let her know of groups the may be interested in learning about the Real ID.

Beginning on October 1, 2020 a person who wants to fly in the Unites States or enter secure federal office buildings will need either a current passport or a Real ID which is a Mass. driver's license that meets federal credentialing process. Informational flyers were distributed detailing the documents needed for a standard license and the Real ID. People who need a Mass. ID/Real ID can obtained them at the registry. AAA members can renew their license and obtain a Real ID with current license and appropriate documentation.

Commissioners asked questions related to individual situations and Ms. Ellick's addressed these after the meeting.

### **Arts Worcester presentation on accessible programming and center\***

Juliet Feibel, Director of Arts Worcester, provided the following information on the program located at 44 Portland Street known as the Printer's Building which is

accessible and welcome to all. For the last 40 years Arts Worcester past worked with contemporary artists.

There are eight to ten exhibitions a year open and free to all. There are two-week intervals of down time for exhibit changes. Material for the next exhibits and artists were distributed to the Commission members. This is a membership group for artists with a reasonable fee. If an artist is unable to afford the fee there is a fund to support this need.

They are cosponsoring a touchable art exhibit in collaboration with the Talking Book Library and Audio Journal during the month of February. On February 20<sup>th</sup> 12-2PM, people are gathering at the library to walk over to Arts Worcester. Sighted guides will be available at this time.

With the closing of the presentation, the Chairperson thanked Ms. Feibel.

### **Proposal to change the name of the Commission: Accessibility Advisory Commission**

Commissioner Prochilo made the following augment for changing the name of the Commission to better reflect its mission. Historically, cripple, lame, handicapped, special needs – these were words used to describe the population we currently refer to as 'disabled'.

The prefix and definition of "dis" in English is to "have a primitive, negative or reversing force" for example; to discredit; to disengage; dis + belief; dis + content; dis + like; dis + own. In recent parlance "diss", with an extra s, has been popularized as an abbreviation of disrespect - "Don't diss me." "Dis" is not a thing that many people want prefixed on themselves. It is, after all, inherently negative.

The American Community Survey refers to us as persons with various 'difficulties': hearing difficulty; visual difficulty; cognitive difficulty; mobility difficulty

While Disabled speaks to the class of people we represent – it does not speak to those things this commission does.

The naming of the commission should reflect what we do – According to the State and City we are an Advisory Commission to the City Manager and others on various matters.

We advise to ensure:

- compliance with Federal and State access laws;
- review policies and activities of municipal departments to ensure these are accessible for all;
- provide information, referrals, advocacy and technical assistance to individuals, businesses, and organizations in all matters relating to accessibility; and
- coordinate with activities of other local groups organized to meet the access needs in the community.

We actually advise on the means by which policies, procedures and regulations can be applied to make everything in the City ‘Accessible’ for all.

In Massachusetts we have 179 Commissions – Most who have active boards refer to themselves with Disability or Disabilities somewhere in the description - ADA Committee, Commission on Handicapped (several of these), ADA Review Committee, ADA Advisory Committee, ADA Oversight Committee, Disability Advisory Committee, ADA Compliance Committees,

Remember that the ADA/(ADAAG) is simply one of many laws that impact equal Access. Other laws include: The Fair Housing Act, Telecommunications Act, Air Carrier Access Act, Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act, National Voter Registration Act, Civil Rights of Institutionalized Person Act, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Rehab Act.

Director Turchek reported that she contacted the Mass. Office on Disability about the names of commissions around the state. They were not aware of name change occurring. She said the College offices working with the disabled population was changing to use access is positive. This proposal if recommended would take a process and would not happen overnight and take into consideration such as cost as noted.

After further positive input from both Commissioners and members of the public, Commissioner Prochilo moved to recommend to the City Manager to change the name from Commission on Disability to Accessibility Advisory Commission. Commissioner Hall seconded. The motion was approved 5 yeases, 1 no.

### **Key Findings and takeaways of Shrewsbury Street restaurants surveyed to date\***

Commissioner Prochilo reported, summarizing a pilot review of restaurants that was done on Shrewsbury Street in Worcester over the past three of years. 30 restaurants were reviewed. Reviews concentrated on physical and communication accessibility for three distinct populations: Visually Challenged, Deaf & Hard of Hearing, and Mobility Challenged. A power point of this presentation was in the Commission's material.

The key findings include:

- Communication challenges persist for the Deaf population.
- Elevated noise levels in 111 Chop House during peak dining hours adversely impact dining experience for Hard of Hearing individuals.
- Most restaurants meet mobility access criteria.
- Staff patient and willing to assist in all restaurants visited.
- Existing building configurations make 20% (6/20) of the restaurants on Shrewsbury Street inaccessible.
- Challenge of outside dining

The next steps are:

- Review details with Shrewsbury Street Business Association
- Use surveys as training/education tools for businesses.

Commission Myska requested that a member of each challenge category go with him to the Shrewsbury groups. She would be willing to represent the visually impaired people.

Commissioner Prochilo moved that these findings and the survey be shared with the Shrewsbury Street Neighborhood and Shrewsbury Street Business Associations. Commissioner Bureau seconded. All approved.

### **Update on Planning for 30<sup>th</sup> ADA Celebration (Nancy Garr- Colzie)**

The celebration venue has not been finalized: indoor or outdoor? There is interest in Worcester Common. The next planning meeting is on Tuesday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at

2:00pm at the Center for Living & Working, Inc. Planning meetings are the first Tuesday of the month until the event open to all who wish to contribute.

**Review of AAB notices and applications:\* City properties in bold (none)**

Variance Application

- One Salem Square, Docket # TBD
- 2 Main Street, Docket # TBD

First Notice

- 1394 Main Street, Docket # C19 064

Correspondence

- 100 Institute Road, Docket # V19 207

Decision of the Board

- 100 Institute Road, Docket # V19 223
- 218 Shrewsbury Street, Docket #19 307

**Suggestions for upcoming agenda items**

Follow up on Polar Park seating

**Announcements:**

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting March 18, 2020, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street**
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled) February 4, 2020, 4:00 – 5:30pm, Easter Seals Conference Room, 484 Main Street (6<sup>th</sup> fl.)**
- **ADA 30 Citywide Event Planning Committee Meeting February 4, 2020, 2:00-4:00pm, Center for Living & Working, Inc.**
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting: TBD**
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting: Febraury18, 2020 4:30pm**

**Adjournment:**

Motion made by Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconded by Commissioner Prochilo meeting adjourned at 6:13pm.

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