

Accessibility Advisory Commission

Tuesday, March 16, 2021, 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: Robert Bureau, James Delage, Philip Economou, John Finn, Jr., Nancy Garr-Colzie, Fitzroy Hall, Dee Karuna, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Miriam Nyante, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Mr. Robert Antonelli, Worcester Commissioner of Parks; Robert Raymond, Central MA Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC); Colleen Bolen, Worcester's Deputy Chef of Worcester Public Health

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order and requested Director Turchek to provide the technology instructions for access to the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves.

Approval of February, 2021 minutes

Commissioner Linda Larrivee moved to approve the February 16, 2021 minutes as written. Commissioner Nancy Garr-Colzie seconded the motion. All approved.

Parks Master Plans and Construction Updates

Mr. Robert Antonelli, Commissioner of Parks gave the following information on Parks Master Plans and Construction Updates:

Parks in design phase

Coes Pond Canoe and Kayak Launch

The City recently received a grant to make the launch at Coes Pond fully accessible along with additional HP and standard parking next to the storage building. The design is in the process of being completed. The mats made of plastic with metal strips used each summer are also part of this program. There will be a new sidewalk from sidewalk to building which will be more permanent rather

than having to put the mats down each season. The ball and chain rails will be replaced with wood rails at the accessible walkway along the beach goes down to the launch site which will have a wheelchair accessible platform.

The plans are to build a small canoe/kayak storage area to have these available to the public for rental and pavilion where the picnic tables are located. This idea has not been finalized. The current building is accessible. Two HP spaces in the road and two HP spaces in the parking lot are being moved alongside the building to make traffic in and out of the Mill Street parking lot safer.

Skate Park at Crompton

This design for this park is complete with ramps, bowls, rails, etc. There is an accessible rail and ramp on Endicott Street to the top and another accessible area on Quinsigamond Street to the lower level. This presentation is phase 1. There will be a phase 2 when the softball field has been moved to make space for additional segment to the skate park. A third accessible ramp to the main level is on Endicott Street. There will be lighting and security cameras for safety of park users. The entire park is skate able.

Both neighbors and skate community were consulted and addressed in the Park's Master Plan so there is no expectation that parking will be an issue.

The softball field will be reoriented so the backstop will be on the other side of the park. This has been addressed in the Crompton Park Master Plan as well.

There will be pedestrian lighting and in phase 2 lighting will be installed for the skate park.

Parks Under Construction

Faber Field

This field is currently under construction on Camelot Drive off of Mooreland Street. This is a brand new synthetic full size and a junior (under 12 years of age) soccer fields with a playground. This is in addition current two soccer fields.

- Parking is across the street and a crosswalk is being installed. There will be accessible seating in and around the bleacher area.
- The plan is to put rigid walkways on the field so people can use the fields to walk. Synthetic material can be hard to walk on.

- The building has been painted, new roof, and upgrading is ongoing. The City Manager, Commissioner and he are seeking ways to find resources to upgrade the toilet facilities.
- A poured-in-place surface on the new small playground with accessible swing will be created.
- Lighting will be available.
- Anticipated completion date: July 2021

Institute Park

There will be a walkway and Firefighters Memorial on the corner of Park Avenue and Grove Street. Plan is to erect an accessible board walk through the wetlands to the spillway of the Sudbury River with a synthetic field at the corner. In the area of the Fire Department there will be a firefighters' memorial to honor those lost while on active duty. The current memorial is being moved to this area. There will be three displays: 1. The Cold Storage Fire, 2. A listing of those lost while on active duty and 3. The Neiland Street Fire. The Parks Department has worked closely with the Fire Department to be sure information is correct. There will be plantings at the memorial as well as lighting and accessibility throughout the area.

- Anticipated completion date: July 2021

Coes Park Parking Lot Connection

This is an updated plan to accommodate this parking need to Sterns Tavern and the accessible playground. An additional walkway has had to be built including storm water management system and contaminated soil removal.

- Anticipated completion date: late summer 2021

Coes Pond Reservoir – Columbus Park Trail – 850 Linear Feet

This walkway/trail will start at Sterns Tavern go across the bridge go behind the property owned and operated by the Worcester Housing Authority connecting to the City of Worcester Columbus Park avert the Park and over to North Circuit Ave. ending at a small parking lot with HP spaces.

- Storm management
- Accessible Fishing pier
- Remove Hillside beach replacing with a wetland learning space

Chairperson Bureau thanked Mr. Antonelli for the detailed presentation.

Updated CMRPC Sidewalk and Ramp Map and Dashboard *

Robert Raymond, Central MA Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) gave the following background information and presentation about Worcester's sidewalks

and ramps. Mr. Raymond has been with the agency for about 10 years and currently runs the Data Analysis Unit in the Transportation Department for Worcester and the 39 surrounding towns. CMRPC is one of thirteen regional planning commissions in Massachusetts. The focus is on the federally eligible road network and also serves as the metropolitan planning organization for Central Mass.

The agency monitors the federally eligible road system which is a set of roads which include interstates, urban and rural arterial roads, etc. Local roads are not considered eligible. They use the MassDOT road list which is a GIS data base and authoritative file of federal roads. There are 632 miles roads in the City of Worcester on this list. 195 miles are federally eligible. The agency does not look at interstates due to the danger factor. They focus on 172 miles of road in the City. 30 of these roads are owned by MassDOT and the rest are owned by the City. They conduct data counts, pavement conditions, sidewalk and ramp surveys, and culvert and traffic signal listing.

The sidewalk and ramp data collection started about seven years ago as part of the pavement analysis data collection working with the MassDOT and the new Complete Street Program. With the pandemic and changes in plans CMRPC was able to focus on roads and ramps in Worcester. They have identified 6,014 ramps and 607 miles of sidewalks. Of these 5,365 ramps and 171 sidewalk miles are federally eligible. They might not be able to access all, when not federally eligible.

There is an effort to have a photo attached to each item.

Concerned raised about truncated domes identification as apex or parallel. There is a phasing out using compliant replacing with good referring to condition. As of the 2020 surveyed 313 apex ramps were inspected. Mr. Raymond noted this is probably a third of apex ramps existing in the city. This information is shared with several city offices plus WalkBike Worcester. There does not seem to be a complete inventory of ramps and sidewalks in the city.

Suggestion was made to provide a feedback function on the dashboard for public input. Another suggestion is to provide a HP spaces inventory. Mr, Raymond was not aware of such an inventory in existence. He did say it was something that could be included.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Raymond.

Notice: WRTA’s grant application for an accessible taxi through MAPC was not selected for funding

This Commission expressed disappointment about this announcement, but will continue to seek ways to have accessible, affordable and available on – demand transportation for people needing Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle(s) (WAV).

Notice: Closed captioning now available for WebEx video conferencing for City of Worcester public agency meetings

The WebEx video conferencing license for the City of Worcester now provides for closed captioning of meetings using artificial intelligence. This features has been activated most recently for city council meetings and will be rolled out at other public agency meetings including the Accessibility Advisory Commission meetings in the future.

Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine

- Eligibility and appointments <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>
- FAQ-Transportation to COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments for MassHealth Members and Health Safety Net Patients
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/transportation-to-covid-19-vaccineappointments-for-masshealth-members-and-health-safety-net0/download>
- City of Worcester COVID information and town hall video

Discussion and requests for information regarding vaccine access

Colleen Bolen, Worcester’s Deputy Public Health Director provided the following information:

- The City is in constant communication with the Mass. Department of Public Health. Any question that cannot be addressed by the city will be brought to the state in these communications.
- Currently there are two vaccination sites in the City of Worcester.
 - o Senior Center will be phasing out at the end of March transitioning to clinics per State request. Those who had their first shot at the Center should be able to get their second shot there as well.
 - o Worcester State University on Chandler Street
- Worcester has been chosen to receive 800 doses of vaccine per week to offer clinics in the communities that have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Dr. Mattie Castiel is taking the lead to work with trusted leaders and city offices to make this to be as effective as possible. They begin March 17. Locations vary between two and three each week.

- Anyone can sign up to go to any of the large sites around the State. There are smaller sites that have community criteria. Check as you sign up and keep in mind the vaccination eligibility phases.
- Accessibility has been an issue throughout the roll out both in regard to technology access, transportation and disability. Municipalities and groups have been vocal about these needs.
- The city has notified the State that Worcester and regional health Collaborative will opt for the State Homebound Program for in home vaccinations for those people who cannot travel to a site. The State has contracted with a vendor to do this. A call center is being developed to determine if the caller is eligible.
- The demand for the vaccine is greater than the supply. The expectation is that the supply will increase over time.
- She noted the published list of programs that offer transportation for their clients.

Information gathered as a result of Commissioner questions etc.

- Up to this point the Senior Center has been able to accommodate for sight impaired and other needs. They have been in touch with the State to add need for accommodation(s) on the registration site. Another option would be to call 211.
- Caregiver can get a vaccination also. The caregiver needs to sign up for an appointment. The appointment is the proof that the person is the caregiver.
- Whoever is in the home with the person at home can get a vaccine.
- 211 has worked well.
- Worcester is designated as one of twenty equity municipalities

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Bolen.

Planning for virtual film screening and discussion of Crip Camp

Question was raised was film audio described. Director Turchek will confirm. The Commission agreed the planning for this film should proceed. Commissioners who had seen the film said the content was excellent.

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

Amended Notice of Action:

- Docket #V20-214 Commercial Building 1098-1102 Pleasant St

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

None stated

Announcements:

- Mayor's Mental Health Taskforce Working Group March 17, 2021, 10am-11am. Contact: Kelsey Hopkins hopkinsk@worcesterma.gov
- WRTA Advisory Board Meeting March 18, 2021, 8:30am, Contact: tsebastian@therta.com
- Transportation Advocacy Coalition (TAC) Meeting March 18, 2021, 4pm, Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87293070940>
- Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting: April 20, 2021, 4:30pm

Adjournment:

Commissioner Fitzroy moved to adjourn and Commissioner Larrivee seconded.
All approved at 5:36pm

*Material can be viewed at the Human Rights & Accessibility Office upon request.