

**City of Worcester Accessibility Advisory Commission
Tuesday September 20, 2022, 4:30 PM Meeting Minutes**

Virtual meeting with WebEx platform
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/video-on-demand>
ASL interpreters provided

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bureau, James Delage, John Finn, Jr., Darya Karuna, Jully Khattar, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Christina Parissi, Stephen Stolberg

Staff: Jayna Turчек, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Diana Rawles, Worcester Emergency Preparedness
Emmanuel Andrade, Brian Kuhn, Marc Perras representing Quinsigamond
Community College, 670 West Boylston Street
Nathan Thomas, Joe Igoe representing the Cove, 64 Green Street

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau requested Director Turчек provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. She also introduced a new feature that includes a language choice for closed captioning. Commissioners then introduced themselves. A unanimous roll call vote was taken to start the meeting at 4:36pm.

Approval of August 16, 2022 minutes*

Commissioner Karuna moved to approve the August 16, 2022 minutes as written. Commissioner Parissi seconded the motion. Unanimously approved by roll call.

The next item was taken out of order to accommodate the presenter's time commitment.

September Emergency Preparedness Month: Emergency preparedness update

Diana Rawles, Worcester Emergency Preparedness staff member. Speaking this evening brings two of her loves together of work on emergency preparedness and working with people with disabilities. She informed the commission through a

PowerPoint and additional information specific to issues related to persons with special needs.

The PowerPoint included the following for Access and Functional Needs Communities.

1. CMIST Framework

- a. C-Communication
- b. M-Maintaining Health
- c. I-Independence
- d. S-Safety, Support and Self-Determination
- e. T-Transportation

2. Physical Accessibility

- a. All emergency shelters have been screened for accessibility and compliance with ADA criteria
- b. Warming and cooling centers available for extreme temperature conditions
- c. Also compliant with ADA criteria service animals included in all planning for emergency service locations
- d. Pet sheltering co-located with regular shelters as well as over-flow animal sheltering
- e. Developing partnerships to assist with replacing prescription medications lost in emergency

3. Cache

- a. Supplies are available for individuals separated from their durable medical equipment
 - i. Wheelchairs
 - ii. Walkers
 - iii. Bariatric and Accessible Cots for sheltering
 - iv. Portable wheelchair ramp
- b. Generators and Portable AC to maintain power and livable conditions in the event of emergency (more likely used for congregate settings.)

4. Food Restrictions

- a. Salvation Army and other feeding partners work with the City to provide various options to those impacted by emergencies:
 - i. Allergies

- ii. Kosher/Halal
 - iii. Vegetarian/Vegan
 - iv. Low Sodium
 - v. Soft or Liquid
 - vi. Others as we are made aware
5. Mental Health and Emotional Health Accessibility
- a. Police has Crisis Intervention Team that is trained on specific procedures to de-escalate individuals experiencing a mental health crisis
 - b. OpenSky and other mental health providers are partners in the event of emergency events/sheltering
 - c. CERT Volunteers and EM staff trained on trauma informed care
 - d. Developing plans with partners for alternatives to city-provided housing when clients need additional support refraining from prohibited activities
6. Procedures-Language Diversity Accessibility
- a. Language Translation Line utilized in Dispatch Center for emergency callers with limited English proficiency, as well as staffing with bilingual call-takers
 - b. Emergency site signage translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Vietnamese, and Twi
 - c. All Emergency Management staff, including CERT volunteers have access to language translation line as well as “Show Me” Booklets
 - d. Utilize various modes of communication to reach a broad range of communication needs:
 - i. Mail
 - ii. E-Mail
 - iii. Text
 - iv. Phone
 - v. TV
 - vi. Radio
 - vii. WEA-Scrolling messages on bottom of news programming
7. Alert Worcester
- a. Allows registrants to sign up for emergency alerts directly from the City
 - b. At time of registration, participants may select one of 23 languages to receive messages in
- Allows registrants to sign up for emergency alerts directly from the City

8. Transportation

- a. Emergency Management bus has wheelchair lift and capacity to transport 4 wheelchair users safely
- b. WRTA houses Ambubus which is available in event of emergency and can provide immediate medical care on scene
- c. WRTA also partners with city to provide busses for emergencies and maintain service during extreme conditions

9. SMART911

- a. Allows residents of Worcester to create a profile only accessible when a call from a phone registered to that profile calls 911
- b. Profile can include:
 - i. Languages spoken
 - ii. Special considerations for interacting with residents, ie behavioral and mental health and other accessibility requirement

10. Preparedness saves lives – Disasters don't plan – YOU CAN

- a. Help may not be able to get to you immediately during an emergency situation.
- b. Being prepared can help you and your family-
 - Stay Safe
 - Adapt
 - Recover

11. 1 – 2- 3 READY

- a. Make a plan
- b. Build a kit
- c. Be Informed

12. Make a plan

- a. Things to consider:
- b. Disasters specific to Worcester.
- c. Different needs and accommodations for each household member.
- d. Considerations for pets/service animals.
- e. Who will be involved in your emergency planning?

13. Family Communication Plan

- a. Collect
 - i. Household Information
 - ii. Important Contacts

- iii. School/Caregiver Emergency Plans
 - iv. Meeting Locations
 - b. Share
 - i. Every household member should have a copy.
 - ii. Emergency Contacts uploaded to mobile phones.
 - iii. Inform everyone who is involved.
- 14. Practice the plan
- 15. Building a plan
 - a. Three days at LEAST, but two weeks is better!
 - b. Easy to carry bag/ container with wheels.
 - c. Customized for each member of the household.
- 16. Building the kit
 - a. Food and Water
 - b. Medical supplies
 - c. Other recommended items
 - Flashlight/Extra Batteries, Whistle, Wrench/Pliers,
 - Can Opener, Maps, Clothing, Battery-Operated Radio
 - Blanket, Important Documents, Hygiene Items,
 - Pen and Paper, Personal Items
- 17. Be Informed
 - a. Local Radio Stations
 - FM:**
 - 96.1- WSRS
 - 104.5- WXLO
 - AM:**
 - 580- WTAG
 - 1310- WORC
 - 1030- WBZ
 - b. Social Media
 - www.worcesterma.gov/emergency-communications
 - www.facebook.com/WorcesterEmergencyManagement@WorcesterEM

Comment from public – There is no information about the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. Response: The language line has ASL interpretation. Ms. Rawles will look into whether universal sign language interpreters are available.

Director Turchek provided information that the city was in the process of on boarding additional interpretation providers including Partners Interpreting and other technologies to improve communication access acknowledging there is more demand than interpreters available to meet all the requests across the state.

The Mass. Commission on Deaf and Hard of Hearing is starting up the after-hour interpreting service again.

Ms. Rawles say that those people that prepared for emergencies have better outcomes than others.

Concern was raised about having two weeks on medicine available. Would insurance companies pay? Suggestion was made to have a copy of the medication(s) available for filling if needed. If the medication is lifesaving the Emergency Room can arrange the filling of the prescription. Other prescriptions can be filled through the doctor and evidence that the person has been involved in an emergency. The insurance will pay.

The question of a care giver and explanation of how the MassHealth PCA Program works (no win situation) was raised. Ms. Rawles will be more familiar with this program but has little power to change. She suggested the person needs to have a well thought out plan. Shelters well allow a caregiver to give the necessary care to clients. Director Turchek will connect Ms. Rawles with Jeff Dougan of Mass. Office on Disability on this issue.

It might be good to keep emergency packs by the door most exited or in car depending on the resources available.

Thanks yous were exchanged.

Inclusionary zoning proposed ordinance

Commissioner Steven Stolberg reiterated that Worcester needed more accessible and affordable housing. He has been working with a team of city housing advocates including Center for Living & Working, Inc.(CLW) and Central Mass. Housing

Alliance, Inc. on ways to achieve this kind of housing. An inclusionary zoning ordinance would be one way to achieve this outcome. This evening City Council will be considering a proposed inclusionary zoning ordinance. Housing complexes would require a certain number low and moderate income units. CLW would like to see a number of these units be accessible for people with mobility issues. The team is proposing the rate be 60% of the Worcester's median income. The city is proposing 80%. These percentages are not part of the ordinance and if passed will be negotiated at a later time.

Member of the public, Joe Prochilo reminded all that before he left the Commission, he led the Commission in making recommendations to the city through the Housing Director to request that all new construction have "visibility" features, which means all public spaces in the facility be accessible. This needs to be put in ordinance form and passed by City Council. AARP has done this in other jurisdictions. Results were dramatically different: on a mandatory basis 30,000 units verses 1,000 units voluntary basis.

Tonight's proposed ordinance focuses on affordability. There are people with disabilities who have incomes that are too high for Worcester Housing Authority apartments and too low to afford a market rate apartment.

The Commission will continue to advocate and members are encouraged to watch the city council meetings when this is discussed.

Discussion on future Commission recommendations for FY24 sidewalk/street resurfacing program

The links below were provided as education on accessible public rights of way from Jeff Dougan, staff of the Massachusetts Office on Disability. These links address the current federal regulations. Massachusetts regulations may be slightly different. We will have guests helping the Commission understand these prerecorded videos at a future meeting. Final federal regulation (PROWAG) is yet to come. These will be helpful in understanding what is now in place and best practices when making FY24 recommendation on sidewalk/streets in Worcester.

Director Turchek encourages the Commission members to be familiar with these regulations and best practices because in this and future years the Commission's work and advocacy will have substantial involvement with the ADA Transition Plan and Sidewalk/Street Resurfacing Program here in the city. Traditionally the Commission has had input into these program/plan.

One of the functional changes in the city is the planning and design work that was done at the Department of Public Works (DPW). The street maintenance and contract work will remain at DPW. Transportation planning and design is now in a new Department of Transportation and Mobility. This will allow the Commission to have greater input on accessibility issues before projects get started. She expects the Chef of this Department will meet with the Commission within the next few months to discuss how we can collaborate.

There was concern raised that replacement of curb cuts is often done without design review. Replacement is in kind. Director Turchek reminded the Commission, it met with DPW Commissioner Fink in January. At that time the request was made that the Commission receives a list of the AAB exceptions when apex curb cuts are indicated as part of the resurfacing program. She spoke with Commissioner Fink last week and his staff are reviewing request.

Accessible Public Rights-of-Way (4/1/2021)

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ao/archives/110913>

Accessible Public Rights-of-Way: Open Question & Answer Session (6/6/2019)

https://accessibilityonline.s3.amazonaws.com/transcripts/AO_Accessible_Public_Rights_of_Way_June_6_2019.mp4

Accessible Sidewalks, Shared Use Paths, and Street Crossings (2/7/2019)

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ao/archives/110700>

Transportation Facilities (7/12/2018)

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ao/archives/110661>

Accessible Shared Streets: Notable Practices and Considerations for Accommodating Pedestrians with Vision Disabilities (4/5/2018)

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ao/archives/110658>

Vehicles Final Rule (4/6/2017)

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ao/archives/110591>

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (5/5/2016)

<https://www.accessibilityonline.org/ao/archives/110492>

Review of AAB notices and applications: No City owned properties

Variance application:

- 670 W. Boylston Street (QCC Suprenant Hall, Herbert Auditorium)
- 85 Green St, The Cove

Notice of Action:

670 W. Boylston Street (QCC Suprenant Hall and Herbert Auditorium)

Presentation on 670 West Boylston Street was made by Emmanuel Andrade (Project Manager), Brian Kuhn and Marc Perras. The building is one of many at Quinsigamond Community College. It was built in 1965 and the aim of the project is to make the building fully accessible. There are two variances. One involves parking and the other toilet rooms. The Architectural Access Board has approved both variance requests with the requirement of a sign on the 2nd floor men's room saying this room has maneuverability issues, there is a fully accessible room on the first floor.

Gender neutral bathrooms were not chosen, because it takes a lot of room due to plumbing code requirements. In Massachusetts it is very difficult to build in an existing building.

Associate Commissioner Delage make a motion to support the variance request and Associate Commissioner Katter seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioner Myska recusing herself because she is a member of the Architectural Access Board.

Presentation on 85 Green Street – (The Cove) was made by Nathan Thomas and Joe Igoe.

This will be a new residential building behind Polar Park with residential units on floors 2 thru 7. 5% of the units are 2A units by the AAB and the balance will be designed as group 1 units. The variance is related to the sink depth in Group 1 kitchens. The sink bowl cannot exceed 61/2 inches. The proposal is to put sinks that exceed that depth of 62/3 inches to allow for normal activities with a mitigation that upon request a replacement sink of 61/2 inch depth would be installed. This would be written into the lease agreement at no cost to the lease holder. This aligns with the new proposed AAB regulations.

Commissioner Karuna make a motion to support the variance request and Commissioner Larrivee seconded the motion. The motion passed with Commissioner Myska recusing herself because she is a member of the Architectural Access Board.

White Cane Day planning update

Commissioner Myska is organizing the event again this year on Saturday, October 15. This year, she will have nine “dignitaries” from city employees and community leaders begin at separate locations rather than starting at a single one and will end at a single place. She was intentionally mysterious on more specifics. There will be seasoned sighted guides to assist. There is a plan to listen in on Eye/Audio Radio and recorded. The theme is “Walkability”. She needs to know who is interested in attending by September 24th.

Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine

- **Walk-in Equity Clinics for COVID 19 vaccines Wednesdays & Saturdays at the Worcester Public Library, 3 Salem Sq.** Need an ASL Interpreter? To request interpreter/ accommodation call Michelle at 774-303-6976 or email mortizocasio.socialwork@gmail.com
- **Vaccine clinics and vaccine information:** <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>

Notice: For information and the latest updates related to monkeypox, please visit mass.gov/monkeypox or cdc.gov/monkeypox

Suggestions for upcoming agenda item

A concern about a play by play description of a Polar Park game for a visually impaired person. Director Turchek will connect with the park.

Request for a bus shelter at the Walgreens on Lincoln Street. Assistant Commissioner Delage volunteered to bring this request to the Worcester Regional Transit Authority.

There is not a date for an October meeting. There are three holidays on the October Tuesdays. The Chairperson suggested the fourth Tuesday in October.

Announcements:

- **Commission sponsored stroll/walk, Saturday September 24, 2022 - 10:00am**
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting: October TBD, 2022 - 4:30pm**
- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group Wednesday, September 21– 1-2:30pm**

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 7:01 pm by a roll call vote moved by Commissioner Larrivee and seconded by Commissioner Myska.

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