

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes from May 20, 2014, 4:30PM  
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr.

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Francesca Abbey, Rachel Shannon Brown, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Herbert Cremer, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Stephen Stolberg, Susan Swanson, Lynne Towler

**Members absent:** Charles Hiamah, John Nah

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek, Pamela Callahan, Dawn Clark

**Guests:** Eric Batista, City Manager's Office; Vincent Lombardi, Audio Journal

**Members of the Public:** Terri Dotson, Jackie Norton, Scott Ricker & others

**Call to Order**

The Chairperson welcomed guests and commission members. Each member introduced themselves. Associate members Paul Keister and Susan Swanson were raised to member status for the meeting. The Chairperson requested that the agenda be taken out of order to begin with the Elm Park Bridge presentation.

**Presentation: Elm Park Bridge Design**

Eric D. Batista of the City Manager's office presented the design plans for the red wooden footbridge at historic Elm Park. The original red, pine bridge was built around 1890 and many wedding photo/family occasions have memorialized this bridge since. In the winter ice skaters would skate under the 8 foot bridge. In 1973 the bridge received a post reconstruction. Over the past forty years the wood has degraded and rotted at connections and is not ADA compliant for issues such as steepness of slope and safety. The bridge had to be closed to the public.

In 2013 the City of Worcester, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Worcester Technical High School partnered to design and build an ADA compliant bridge. (There was a choice either to do a replica of the bridge or to have a ADA complaint bridge.) They worked with Ms. Turchek, the AAB and others to meet ADA compliance. They wanted to keep the integrity of the original bridge as well. The bridge is wood, red in color and will allow space for skaters to pass below. The slope will not be as steep as the original bridge. There are abutments at the ends of the bridge which include railing extensions to provide adequate access. Landscaping brought grade up to the abutments. Stones are added to help erosion from occurring. The length is about fifty feet and twelve feet wide. The bridge is 1 on 12. Railings will go along the length of the bridge and beyond on both ends. Stone pillars at the entrances to the bridge serve to prevent vehicles from illegally traversing the bridge with width for a mobility device to easily maneuver.

Material is being ordered and students will build this bridge on site. The project will be part of the student's curriculum and they will have a chance to engage with the community and able to say for the next forty or so years, "I was part of build the bridge". They hope the bridge will be done by the fall of 2014.

The Park's Committee will meet to determine to whom the bridge will be dedicated.

### **Approval of April 15, 2014 Minutes**

Motion with amendment was made and seconded. Yes-7, No-0

### **Public Comment Period**

Michael Kennedy, Center for Living & Working, Inc. requested an update of accessible taxis. He also noted that there was no sign of a drop-off area at the DCU Center Arena entrance and again voiced his concern for one.

Terri Dotson, resident of Millbury, is interested in gathering a few people with the Mass. Office on Disability to discuss the accessibility of

the DCU Center and invited the Commission to be involved. She will follow up with the Office on Disabilities with date. This issue was not on the agenda to be discussed; however, Ms. Turchek indicated that the accessibility of the DCU Center has been addressed in the past by the Commission. The Commission asked if possible to have a person from Dept. of Public Works and/or the DCU Center give a status report at a future meeting.

Scott Ricker requested review of adequate accessibility for people with disabilities at the “Cars of Summer” event to be held at Greenhill Park in July. He noted that there had been some issues last year. He asked that it be an agenda item for the June Commission meeting.

Jackie Norton stated it was important for the Commission to keep abreast of the status of the accessible cabs.

### **Conversation: Audio Journal “Accent on Ability”**

The Chairperson welcomed Vincent Lombardi, Executive Director of the Audio Journal, a radio service for people with vision impairments and other challenges as well. Audio Journal is on on-line and television Channel 12. Audio Journal is interested in collaborating with the Worcester Office and Commission on Disability as the Audio Journal seeks to reinvigorate a program called “Accent on Disability”. Audio Journal reads newspapers twice a day and has a variety of general interest shows.

Mr. Lombardi has invited Ms. Turchek to be co-host at Audio Journal for “Accent on Ability”. The program will begin on June 10<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. The show is planned to run live on the second Tuesday of the month and repeated on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month both at 5pm. Then on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday the program will run throughout the Commonwealth at 5pm. They have planned topics for the first half of the year. Specific topic ideas are public accommodations, disability etiquette and general and restaurant friendly etiquette, fair housing and disability discrimination, LGBTQ issues, Citizens Advisory Council and how to get involved in

the city boards and commissions, and the emergency preparedness registry.

With regard to the Commission, there is a space to report the outcome of the previous Commission Meeting and what's on the agenda for the next meeting. In the event Jayna is not able to make a program Commission members would be invited to be the co-host for the program.

This program is a great opportunity for the Commission to have wide exposure. Commission's input for possible future topics is welcome.

**Informational: "Puppets in the Park" Disability Puppet Show, Hudson, MA**

The Office came upon a resource via a Community Access Monitoring Training attendee. The ADA Committee of Hudson, MA has for the past few years worked with their High School drama team to perform a disability puppet show for the Hudson Public School Kindergarten classes. They use puppets with various disabilities teaching the students about the abilities each has. We were given a DVD of the show and it is available from the office for viewing. The interesting piece is that some of the puppets used are loaned from the Worcester Public Library.

The show's developer is Frank Noyes. He would like to see the idea happen in other communities. If this is an idea that we wanted to do in Worcester, he would be glad to provide us with support.

This year's puppet show is on Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> at Hudson High School with two showings, 10AM and 1PM. The Commission is cordially invited.

Pam Callahan pointed out that this is an excellent way to help prevent bullying of children with disabilities. She asked if there was a way to collaborate with the Worcester School Department to do something like this.

## **Review of AAB notices and applications**

540 Massasoit Rd. – Honey Farm, service counters reportedly too high – Mr. Ricker reported that he felt they should have an ADA Coordinator and an education program for them might be helpful. Honey Farms is a local business with 36 stores throughout Central Mass. and has been in the area for 40 years. There was a discussion about whether Ms. Turchek should pay Honey Farms a courtesy visit to provide technical assistance regarding accessibility concerns. Because this is already in the hands of the AAB the Commission will wait to see what results. Commission members will take note of issues when visiting the stores.

455 Main Street – City Hall, railings along steps – Parks Division has consulted with the architect

39 Irving Street – Variances requested

134 Country Club Blvd. –Lincoln Village Community – Seeks relief from the distribution of Group 2 Dwelling Units. Michael Kennedy from Center for Living & Working, Inc. read a letter he sent to the AAB.

## **Announcements:**

- Jackie Norton noted that Broad Brook Meadow Conservation Area is now fully accessible and encourages visits to enjoy the weather and area.
- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**  
May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1-2:20pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- **REDD (Rights, Equality, and Dignity for the Disabled)**  
June 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5pm, at the Worcester Public Library.
- Next Commission on Disability meeting: June 17<sup>th</sup>, 4:30pm.

## **Adjournment**

Chairperson made a motion for adjournment. Stephen Stolberg seconded. Unanimous