

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes from June 17, 2014, 5:40PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Francesca Abbey, Rachel Shannon Brown, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Herbert Cremer, Charles Hiamah, Paul Keister, Stephen Stolberg , Susan Swanson

Members Absent: Elizabeth Myska, John Nah, Lynne Towler

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Dawn Clark

Guests: Thomas Hopkins, Director of the Architectural Access Board;
John O'Dell, Worcester City Director of Energy and Asset Management

Members of the Public: Terri Burke Dotson; Jo Hart; Michael Kennedy; Vince Lombardi; Jackie Norton; Scott Ricker & others

Call to Order

The Chairperson welcomed guests and commission members. Each member introduced themselves. The Chairperson requested that the agenda be taken out of order to begin with the AAB reviews while our guest Mr. Thomas Hopkins, Director of the Architectural Access Board is with us.

Motion made and seconded to take agenda out of order; approved unanimously.

Review of AAB notices and applications

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. Thomas Hopkins, Director of the Architectural Access Board to the meeting. He had presented a training on the Architectural Access Board's requirements and process to Commission members just prior to this meeting and looked forward to

his assistance with respect to process and information as the Commission reviewed AAB notices and applications on the agenda.

1. 39-41 Irving Street – This was a rooming house that had burnt down. The request for a number of variances did not have information for how meeting the building code would be either not technologically feasible or a financial hardship. Mike Kennedy for the Center for Living & Working, Inc. indicated that the Center had written a letter to the AAB recommending that the requested variances not be approved.
2. 1281 Grafton Street – Penuchos Pizza & Variety – HP Parking, signage and path of travel issues. He noted that every complaint had a docket number and suggested that members might want to keep a file on each complaint as the process for each proceeds thru completion for the record. By law the Board is required to send all correspondence on complaints to the local Commission/Committee on Disability, the Independent Living Center that covers the particular city/town where the complaint (property) is located, and the respective building commissioner/inspector. This notice is informational and no action is needed.
3. 29 Sunderland Road – Price Chopper- no painted access aisles at HP spaces -this is a first notice. The docket number is C14 044. The C meaning complaint; 14 is the year; 44th complaint of the year. Mr. Hopkins indicated the lawyer for this property emailed him this morning for time to develop a plan for compliance and August 1 was set for the date of completion. Again, this notice is informational and no action is needed.
4. WRTA Hub – Railings have been installed on the back stairs.

Ms. Turchek shared that arrangements have been made to have a city building inspector present at future commission meetings to assist the

commission with information for taking possible action. Commissioner Brown asked if there was a procedure in place for communicating with the AAB variances. Ms. Turchek suggested a new process would be developed.

Last fall there was a case when the Commission did make a response. In the instance as an advisory body the City Manager's Office was notified of the Commission's concern. This process allows the Manager to consult with inspectional services which is the enforcement arm of the city.

5. 21 Salisbury Street- Voke Lofts - request for variance submitted by Winn Development – Salisbury Street entrance not wheelchair accessible – underside of nosing and riser not angled. Mr. Hopkins stated that this variance was just received and will be put on the track by staff today. Sometimes architects request approval of jurisdiction. AAB approves Mass building code not ADA or any other laws or guidelines. As the process proceeds any incorrect reference to statute will be changed. This request will be adjudicated on June 30th.

Mr. Hopkins expressed his gratefulness for being invited to do the training and visit the Commission. He said this was the third time coming to Worcester and indicated that the city has come a long way. The Chairperson thanked him for coming.

Presentation: Plans for Union Station Taxi Stand

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. John Odell, City of Worcester Energy and Asset Manager. Mr. Odell explained that Union Station is managed under the Worcester Redevelopment Authority with staffing done by City of Worcester employees. Union Station is one of the City's assets managed by his Division.

The background is taxis were lined up in front of Union Station, which created issues ranging from aesthetic to emergency access. We had two instances where ambulances could not get through. Changes to the location of the taxi stand are necessary for safety.

The plan is to put a taxi stand on Harding Street under the railroad overpass as one enters Washington Roundabout. Right now it is very dark. Plans include a lighting upgrade to make the area friendly and accessible for all who use the area. City Council is expected to approve the project in a week or two.

There is room for five to seven taxis. There will be signage directing users to the taxi stand. Taxis were using the front of Union Station as a hub. The plan is to move this hub as it were. Taxis can still pick up and drop off in front of Union Station but cannot park there by statute. There will be a five minute parking limit during train arrivals.

Commissioner Keister asked if a disabled person wanted a cab, the person would have to walk to Harding Street to catch a cab? Mr. Odell explained four options for getting a cab. One is to use the Harding Street ramped exit. Second is to call for a cab to meet the person at the front of Union Station. The third is to ask Security to have a cab brought forward from the new taxi stand to the front entrance and the fourth is what Mr. Keister described.

Responses to questions from the Commission & public:

- Signage is not currently present. This is part of the work that is needed to be done. The Taxi Stand is scheduled to be in operation by September.
- The five minute enforcement is a challenge. There is already underway an effort to curb a line up of taxis in front of Union Station. There is an encouragement to use the unfinished taxi stand area to be used, but cannot enforce. The security guards ask taxi

drivers who have been standing five to ten minutes before and after train arrivals to move. There has been a direct outreach to the taxi cab owners. Compliance has been good on the whole with a few exceptions.

- Private vehicles are also a challenge. Once the five minute time limit is in force, security guards will be on duty for the first two weeks perhaps three weeks and will taper off. They will be there when trains arrive as they do now.
- The pathway distance is once and a half from the trains to the taxi stand then to the front of Union Station. Mr. O'Dell described how one would go from the train to the taxi stand by way of the side ramp (with stairs) and lift. He noted that the lift was not optimal and would look for resources to make a continuous ramp to replace lift and stairs.
- A suggestion was made to ask a person with a disability to review as part of the project's development.

Approval of Minutes: March 18th and May 20th, 2014

Associate members Francesca Abbey and Susan Swanson were raised to full member status for the meeting.

Commissioner Stolberg moved to approve the March 18, 2014 and May 20, 2014 minutes. Commissioner Brown seconded. Vote passed; Yes-6, No- 0, Abstention-1.

Information Communications

Ms. Turcek noted information on the following were included in the Commissions packet:

- Red Cab Accessible Taxi Statistics for September 2013 –April 2014. The owner of Red Cab has been invited to the Commission's July meeting.
- Response from Head Librarian, Christopher Korenowsky re: questions about accessibility issues at Worcester Public Library locations in Public Schools.
- Notice regarding 2014 City Hall Tours for People with Disabilities

- Additionally she repeated what was previously stated, the installation of the railing at the WRTA Hub is complete.

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Meeting**
June 18th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**
Taking the summer off
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** July 8th, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/> (replayed on July 22nd 5pm)
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** July 15, 4:30pm.

Meeting was adjourned.