

City of Worcester
Accessibility Advisory Commission
Tuesday, July 20, 2021, 4:30 PM Minutes

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

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bureau, James Delage, Philip Economou, John Finn, Jr., Nancy Garr- Colzie, Darya Karuna, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

Member Absent: Fitzroy Hall

Staff: Jayna Turчек, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Madison MacLean, John Snow Inc., consultants for the Worcester Division of Public Health
Joanne Clarke, Ethan Belding, and Amber Krasinski
Age Friendly Worcester Core Team

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order at 4:30pm and requested Director Turчек to provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves.

Approval of June 15, 2021 minutes*

Commissioner Linda Larrivee moved to approve the June 15, 2021 minutes as written. Commissioner Stolberg seconded the motion. All approved.

Feedback for City of Worcester Community Health Assessment*

Madison MacLean, John Snow Inc. (JSI), consultants for the Worcester Division of Public Health thanked the Commission for having her. JSI is a health research group working with partners: U Mass and Fallon Health on the Community Health Assessment (CHA). This assessment is done every three years and seeks to catalog health related issues and health care in Worcester and surrounding communities. Health in this case includes a wide range of areas like housing and transportation and other social determinants that help people live happy, healthy and effective lives. The partners use the information in the CHA to develop their own individual plans which are required to be on their websites. Ms. MacLean does not work in this area so was not sure how updates or achievements are done.

Much goes into this assessment including data from the Census Bureau, State Dept. of Public Health and local sources. In addition they conduct focus groups, do one on one interviews with stakeholders, and conduct a local health survey. The goal is to understand the lived experience of the different segments of the population. The CHA is a public document and fulfills reporting requirements for UMass and Worcester Dept. of Public Health and is helpful to other groups when doing their planning and grant efforts. The CHA report should be published this Fall.

Question: Are senior citizens better represented in this CHA than the last? Yesterday there was a focus group with the senior group that came from Worcester Together. Meetings with other groups serving seniors have also been done. So there should be more about that population in this new CHA.

The Commission reviewed the June 19, 2018 notes of the Commission's last focus group. Commission members and public offered the following suggestions and comment to be part of the next CHA:

- The Deaf Community needs to be identified
- In both the CHIP and CHA "disability" is never mentioned and should be. People with disabilities are about 15%-25% of the

population. The last assessment missed many health issues of a significant population of the city. Ms. MacLean is working on the CHA not the CHIP and read the 2018 notes. She acknowledged the Commission's concern.

- Suggested a survey of people with disabilities and seniors that could be attached to the next CHA. Ms. MacLean explained there is a larger group that decides what goes into the CHA. She is willing to take this idea to the Steering Committee.
- There needs to be recognition of people having dementia.
- All agreed to have the June 19, 2018 focus group notes to be incorporated in the new CHA. The issues are the same with little improvement.
- Lack of sensitivity of disability among all types of health providers and public school. This continues to be a concern. Commissioner Myska is working to bridge the gap between providers and people with disabilities. There needs to be help from the disability community. Three years is too much time between the CHAs. Hands on experience is excellent educational learning method.
- Adaptive medical equipment is still needed. Persons with disabilities can not be properly examined or offered testing when the medical equipment/furniture is not adaptable. Very little has been done. Getting medical service is difficult.
- People with mental health and psychiatric conditions are not considered, particularly in emergency room. Many put in isolation or restrained with long wait time. 50% of population have these conditions as a result of CoVID. Deaf persons being put in positions of being restrained do not have hands to speak. Education needed. Suggestion: talk to the Director of Genesis Club in Worcester for CHA input.
- All aspects of the CHA process should be available to the public for review and feedback.
- Housing continues to be a critical issue – affordability, access, availability.

- Transportation in Worcester and beyond is a huge need for people with disabilities. The Zero Fare service WRTA has been offering for the past two years needs to be extended indefinitely.
- Economic insecurity- out of pocket costs for healthcare is too high and is primary burden of middle income population (those that make too much for public aid but not enough to cover all bills/expenses). Worcester Community Connections of YOU. Inc. affiliate of Seven Hills is doing good work in this area.
- Summit provided services however, ASL interpreters were needed. In the end, it was discovered if they could get a critical mass these services were available. It is worth the effort to be involved and advocate for the need.

Ms. MacLean's role ends here and she will share today's notes with CHA Steering Committee. The Commission thanked her for listening to our concerns and recommendations.

Conversation with Age Friendly Worcester Core Team*

Joanne Clarke, co-chair, Ethan Belding, chair and Amber Krasinski, co-chair of Age Friendly Worcester Core Team part of Central Mass. Area on Aging. Their planning principle is what is good for one group is good for all. Example ADA compliant sidewalk are good for everyone. The hope is issues affecting all sectors from eight years old to eighty years old will benefit.

In 2006 the World Health Organization noted that the population was aging rapidly and moving back to the cities. AARP got involved and began the concept of Age Friendly Communities. By 2034 there will be 77 million older adults and 76.5 million children. This will be the first time in US history older adults will outnumber children. By 2030 cities will see the 65 and older population more than double compared with 2010. Those 50 and older have 80% of the wealth and Corporate America has taken note.

A PowerPoint produced by AARP and adapted for Worcester was reviewed by the Commission. It can be found at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tws1b88Jo3VAIIHsDt80xkvxeHnpoLNY/view>

The formal designation of Worcester being an Age Friendly Community will bring support from AARP. This program brings together many of the city's groups to identify service gaps in the city.

Slides include:

1. A livable community is one that is safe and secure has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and has supportive community features and services. Once in place, those resources enhance personal independence; allow residents to age in place; and foster residents' engagement in the community's civic, economic, and social life.
2. An Age-Friendly Community is one that is free from physical and social barriers and is supported by policies, systems, services, products and technologies that: promote health and build and maintain physical and mental capacity across the life course; and enable people, even when experiencing capacity loss, to continue to do the things they value.
3. People want to live in the community they call home. 8 out of 10 50 years and older want to stay where they live. 77% Strongly agree with the statement, "I would like to remain in my community as long as possible. 76% Strongly agree with the statement, "I would like to "I would like to remain in my current home as long as possible.
4. Millennials and Baby Boomers want walkable mixed-use neighborhoods: Age doesn't define us. – Well maintained, safe walkable streets – 80%; conveniently located grocery store-82%; Safe Parks-85%; well-maintained health facilities-87%.
5. Millennials and Baby Boomers want activities-53%; volunteer activities-61%; participation by older people in decision making who have a disability-62%; equal opportunities to work, regardless of age-66%.

6. Are Communities ready? American homes have traditionally been designed and built for abled bodied 35 year olds. For the past 50 years communities have developed around motor vehicles as the principle form of transportation.
7. Developing an age friendly community: the process. 1. Enrollment; 2. Year 1: Conduct a survey and listening sessions; 3. Year 2: Create an action plan; Year 3-5 Implementation; Year 5: Progress/Status Update.
8. What makes a great community to live in? 8 domains of livability. 1. Housing, 2. Outdoor spaces and buildings, 3. Transportation, 4. Communication & Information, 5. Civic Participation and Employment, 6. Respect and social Inclusion, 7. Health Services and community supports, 8. Social Participation. Other Areas: Emergency Preparedness, Elder Abuse, Public Safety, Dementia Friendly

Remaining slides: Each domain is addressed. Livability Index, Proposed Worcester Age Friendly Logo, Community Profile and contact information.

Invitation was made to members of the Commission to join the group and the Commission thanked the guests.

Debrief WooSox stadium tours (June 28 and 29)*

Members of the Commission and others visited the stadium to review accessibility issues. About 35 issues/areas of concern have been identified and shared with the WooSox staff. The issues are being worked on particularly related to ticketing and closed captioning. Navigating for the blind community is also a concern.

The staff is very receptive to helping people with disabilities. There was encouragement to attend the games so the staff attentiveness will continue.

Debrief Main Library tour (July 7th)

Head Librarian, Jason Homer guided the groups through the building for the two tours. Construction had not been completed including the new door at Franklin Street entrance. Sliding doors can be an issue for people with are blind. There was a concern about automatic doors and where door motion detectors are placed. The teen room door was problem the way it was situated.

From a mobility standpoint they have done good work. Once things are finished it will be “quite the showplace.”

The renovations are expected to be complete be end of July. A ribbon cutting is planned for Thursday, August 12th and a Block Party on Salem Street and Library Lane on Saturday, August 14th. All are welcome.

Yellow Cab WAV update

Two accessible vans are now on the road and the drivers have been trained. A flyer has been prepared so all can use to promote the service.

Reflections on ADA 31st Anniversary (July 26, 2021)

Short audio video was shared of Justin Dart sharing about the ADA. Commissioner Stolberg and others shared how the ADA benefited them.

Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine

- **Walk-in Equity Clinics for COVID 19 vaccines Wednesdays at the Worcester Public Library- Need an ASL Interpreter?**
Please call Michelle at 774-303-6976 or email mortizocasio.socialwork@gmail.com to request an interpreter or reasonable accommodation.
- **Vaccine clinics** <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>
- **Homebound vaccination program** www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-homebound-vaccination-program

Review of AAB notices and applications:

Second Notice:

- 1160 West Boylston St, (O'Connor's Restaurant) #C20-071

Notice for upcoming agenda items

- **August: Service animals and guide dogs conversation**
- **September: Worcester Master Streets Plan/ADA update**

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group, No Meeting in July and August**
- **MA Architectural Access Board (AAB) request for feedback on AAB forms and applications:**
<https://www.mass.gov/news/aab-forms-and-applications-feedback>
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting: August 17, 2021, 4:30pm**

Adjournment:

Commissioner Larrivee moved to adjourn and Commissioner Stolberg seconded. All approved by roll call at 7:18 pm.

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