

**City of Worcester Accessibility Advisory Commission
Tuesday, September 21, 2023, 4:30 PM Meeting Minutes**

**City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber (3rd floor)
Hybrid Meeting**

ASL interpreters onsite and video

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MTJhNDdmNjQtMGZlMy00ZWVlLThhZWQtZiQ0MjVhMjBhNTVh%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22f25998dd-1be6-42c6-a44c-8785f3e6deb6%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2202af705d-5ebe-4000-83cf-64efc45b8c33%22%7d

Meeting number: 271 185 130 443 Password: SEg7KZ

**Join by phone: 469-998-7682 Access code: 397 384
563#**

Attendance:

**Members Present: Robert Bureau, James Delage, John Finn, Jr.,
Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg**

Members Absent: Darya Karuna, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska

Staff: Victor Perez, Dawn E. Clark

**Guests: Steve Rolle, Chief and Assistant Director Todd Kirrane of Transportation & Mobility Department
Sandy Dunn, DCU General Manager, ASM Global**

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau requested Director Perez provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. A unanimous roll call vote was taken to start the

meeting at approximately 4:51pm. Chairperson Bureau raised Associate Commissioners James Delage and Joseph Prochilo to full members for the meeting.

Approval of July 18, 2023 meeting minutes

Commissioner Delage moved to approve the July 18, 2023 minutes as written and was seconded by Commissioner Bureau. The motion was unanimously approved on roll call.

Conversation with Steve Rolle, Chief of Transportation & Mobility and Assistant Director Todd Kirrane – ADA Transition Plan for Public Infrastructure

The Transportation & Mobility Department is new and just celebrated one year anniversary. The year was spent gaining understanding of the infrastructure in place and building capacity. The Department is now fully staffed. They are responsible for the planning and design of the transportation & mobility network. They work with other city departments and mainly the Department of Public Works, which is responsible for implementation and maintenance. The Dept. is conducting projects including a long-range master plan “Now/Next” - coming to a conclusion shortly. The Mobility Action Plan has just been initiated, which focuses on transportation and mobility in the city. A grant was received for a Vision Zero Plan, which focuses on all the actions the city can take within the city departments with the aim of eliminating auto crashes and incidents that result in death or serious injury.

Mr. Rolle acknowledged the Commission’s interest in the ADA Transition Plan. Many years ago, the City completed a Transition Plan related to the city buildings or the built environment, but did not do one applicable to streets and sidewalks or public rights of way. The Department is entering an agreement with a company that does large scale projects and is hoping to do an inventory of streets and sidewalks this fall. This is being done in conjunction of a pavement inventory of the streets. The inventory will include pavement condition, the sidewalk condition and width, location of curb cuts and other items. On a large scale for the first time, the city can know where the deficiencies are. The next step would be to put together an ADA Transition Plan for Rights of Way beginning in the Fall.

Commissioner Prochilo: Will this mapping system identify the various types of curb ramps?

Mr. Rolle: Yes. There is the capacity to do sub-ramps which identify a need to go out and do a field review. Staff has been working with DPW to review resurfacing projects this summer. Traditionally curbs cuts have been replaced with what was there before. This field work, staff had been doing is upgrading this process to look carefully at each curb cut and its direction and compliance, so people are not being put in harm's way.

Commissioner Prochilo has conducted wheelchair strolls since 2014 and prepares a list of needs. He is finishing up a Master List. He also put together a document on accessible practices. Mr. Rolle said the Department would be interested in receiving both.

Commissioner Delage: Bay State Road has been worked on and the sidewalks and curb cuts are torn up for a month waiting to be completed. It looks like apex curbing is being put in rather than parallel curb cut. Dangerous drop offs have been left with no indication people should be aware or go around. The entire street is in this condition.

Mr. Rolle: Both Steve and Todd have been out to Bay Street Road and have talk with the contractors. He was surprised the situation is as has been described. Parallel curb cuts are supposed to be installed. Mr. Rolle sees this as an opportunity to work with the Department of Public Works to develop guidelines around curbs cuts being replaced.

Commissioner Delage: Stop signs were suggested due to blind spots and location of schools in the area.

Mr. Rolle: City Council were responsible for locating stop signs and suggested that a petition be sent to City Council by interested parties.

Chairperson Bureau: He invited Mr. Kirrane to speak.

Mr. Kirrane: He is the Assistant Director, and he worked for Brookline for nineteen years before coming to the City. He told the Commission this street

inventory would also identify the type of pavement that exists on the streets. Another project being undertaken is a review of the city's traffic signal system. One of the benefits will be to make the signals have accessible equipment as well as countdown timers. The Department is in the process of upgrading many guidelines related to the transportation area. They are working with Commissioner Myska to do White Cane Walks to train staff. A fall walk is planned for the parking enforcement staff to help them to understand the importance of the public right of way.

Commissioner Prochilo: Will the Traffic Signal inventory include the audible signal?

Mr. Kirrane: Yes. Often the audible signal is too low or not activated. A local organization identified some locations on Grafton Street with such issues, and the signal was turned on and made to be sufficiently loud. Tests were run to make sure someone could hear the signal behind and in front of them when they are being guided across the street.

Commissioner Stolberg: Will you speak to businesses parking vehicles on sidewalks?

Mr. Rolle: This is an item on tonight's City Council Agenda. There is no circumstance in which parking on the sidewalk is acceptable. Anecdotally this has gotten worse. The Department is recommending more education and better enforcement. They want to make line markings sufficiently clear. Even if only the tires are on the sidewalk the width of the sidewalk may be obstructed to those using the walkway. The Chairperson has agreed to speak at the City Council meeting tonight.

Resident: She asked whether there was a particular area being discussing in relation to not parking on the sidewalk. When the Polar Park games are held there are a lot of cars parked on the new sidewalks on Laramie Street and it is hard to see when cars are coming by. She requested that the city review these issues so residents can be safe when coming out of their driveways etc.

Mr. Rolle: He is confirmed that the street is Lamartine. He agreed that they

need to evaluate this neighborhood on the off season for signage and regulation compliance. He suggested that the resident follow up with his office by calling 929-1300 ext. 49500 or emailing at mobility@worcesterma.gov.

Commissioner Delage: A lot of times road signs including bus signs are left on the side of the road after construction, which makes transportation for both vehicles and pedestrians difficult.

Mr. Rolle: Staff is aware and the Department needs to develop policies/guidelines for contractors and others to prevent that. Staff have met with the new WRTA coordinator, and they look forward to working with the new administration to make this service accessible and safe. Please call 311 to report a sign down so there is a written record.

Polar Park Accessibility Update: Conversation with Coordinator of Marketing & Fan Engagement George Lorin

This item was tabled.

DCU Center Accessibility Survey: Introduction to Sandy Dunn, General Manager, ASM Global

Ms. Dunn welcomed the survey offered by the Accessibility Advisory Commission. The DCU is a city owned building and the arena is closed right now the replace seats. She and her staff do the day-to-day operations including the bookings. They also operate the oval on the common. Ms. Dunn began working at the DCU since 1983 minus a few years about 10 years ago and understands the history of the building. The Commission has done many walk-throughs over the years. The DCU welcomed the AAC's input.

Commissioner Prochilo: What area of area of accessibility are you asking the Commission to review?

Ms. Dunn: We are hoping all aspects of accessibility will be reviewed. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, three groups came in to review. There are four types of seating that they would talk about: wheelchair seating, limited mobility – one step or two step help, hearing impaired seating, and sight impaired seating.

We have put in a quiet area for those people with Autism and others.

Chairperson Bureau: Is this quiet area and other accessibility features advertised?

Ms. Dunn: Not the quiet area. However, we are improving the Website for the DCU Center, which should be available in the next month. It is and will be smart phone accessible. They welcome feedback on updating website.

Commissioner Delage: The DCU may want to make the quiet area (room) permanent. Polar Park has one with TV so people can watch the games, etc. A visit may be helpful.

Ms. Dunn: We would like to if we had the space. Currently they use her office. We will put this on the capital improvement list.

Commissioner Delage: Are all staff trained?

Ms. Dunn: Our staff are trained as to their roles. Staff know who to call when there is a question/concern beyond their training. We are having difficulty finding staff and running the events, up to three trained temporary staff per event. Full-time staff are at the deaf ticket counter and probably are the most knowledgeable and can get help quickly.

Resident: What form is the survey going to take? Deaf people may not be familiar with the DCU Center. What is the staff's relationship with the Deaf? Deaf, hard of hearing, and late-deafened individuals are very different and have different needs. Just a piece of information hearing impaired is an antiquated term and is no longer used. Deaf or hard of hearing is what is used. A deaf person probably knows American Sign Language (ASL). A hard of hearing person may use closed caption and have some form of hearing.

Chairperson Bureau: The Commission will be doing the survey with input from the deaf community.

Resident: She requested that an ASL Interpreter is present as well as a person that is hard of hearing.

Introduction to Interim Executive Director of Human Rights and Accessibility Victor Perez, Esq., discussion of future agenda items with members, and discussion of the City's work to change the Executive Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to the Executive Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

The commission welcomed the Interim Executive Director of Human Rights and Accessibility, Victor Perez. He began his career with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination as an investigator. The vast amount of his cases were related to disability discrimination. He came to the city about a year and a half ago as Lead Investigator of internal issues and now has taken on the role of Interim Executive Director of Human Rights and Accessibility. He seeks to be as supportive as possible to the Accessibility and Human Rights Commissions.

Both roles fall under the new Department of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. There have been discussions with the City Manager about adding Accessibility to the name. In March or April, the Manager formed a yet to be named group of people working on the formation of this new Department. The way the Department would be set up: the Chief Equity Officer would oversee the Director of Human Rights and Accessibility, the Lead Investigator and the Coordinator of Training with a subset of staff supporting the respective roles. There would be one person holding the combination of Human Rights and Accessibility areas. Dawn Clark on the accessibility side and other staff for the Human Rights side. There would be another position to advance DEI.

The location is slated to being on the first floor accessible to the public and close to Human Resources. The Chief DEI position was posted on September 15th on HR.gov website, but not on the Worcester Website. The DEI would have 9 total positions, which likely would be filled after Chief is hired.

The Chairperson was concerned about the continued use of DEI without the A. Mr. Perez confirmed the A is not in the Departments name or the job title for the Chief Equity Office, but it is in the job description. Assistant Commissioner Prochilo brought up the job description posted and said there was no mention of accessibility background or knowledge of the ADA or 504. The Commission is mentioned.

The Chairperson summarized his understanding that the old job description was posted, and the Commission needs to speak with the City Council as they want to have accessibility included in the reorganized Department name and the Chief Equity Officer job description. The request is to send the hiring firm the version that the Chairperson carefully edited, and the most recent version be posted. The City Manager has the ultimate responsibility for having the job posted.

Mr. Perez agreed to compare the description that was posted and the one the Chairperson edited. He would also speak with the Manager and the group formed to help this Department of any discrepancy between the two job descriptions.

Updates from the meeting with City Manager Eric Batista on July 26, 2023 regarding changes to EODEI(A), and Bob Bureau's subsequent review of the Chief DEI(A) Officer's Job Description

Chairperson Bureau, Commissioner Larrivee, Ms. Turчек, Mr. Perez met with the City Manager and Assistant Manager around several accessibility related matters, including the Chief Equity Officer's Job description as reviewed previously. The Chairperson noted that the Federal Administration has included the A when DEI was addressed and offered to the Manager as an example for support for including the A in the Chief DEIA officer's job description title. The Manager agreed with the idea that the Chairperson could provide edits to the job description and offered this same opportunity to the Human Rights Commission.

The Chairperson Bureau thought the meeting was cordial and respectful. The Manager agreed that this Commission would have a seat at the Search Committee for the Equity Officer. He also agreed that two Commissioners would be on the Hiring Committee for the Director of Human Rights & Accessibility.

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

Variance applications:

- 36 Upsala Street - No action taken.

Associate Commissioner Prochilo has just been appointed as a member of the AAB. Congratulations Joe. You will be a powerful force on this board that benefits people with disabilities and others.

Announcements:

- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission meeting:** October 17, 2023 - 4:30pm
- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group -** Wednesday, September 20, 2023– 1-2:30pm

The WRTA Advisory Board has hired a new Administrator.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Prochilo moved to adjourn, which was seconded. All approved by roll call.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:24pm.

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