



City of Worcester
Department of Health and Human Services
Disabilities Division

James G. Gardiner, Acting Commissioner
Health and Human Services

Lawrence M. Raymond
Director, Disabilities

City of Worcester
Commission on Disability

Type of Meeting: Regular
Date and Time Convened: November 12, 2008
Place Where Convened: City Hall, Conference Room 310
Members Present: Dawn Clark, Grace Clark, John Cronin,
Jacqueline Norton
Associates Present: Jill Swerzenski
Members Absent: Rachel Brown, Daphne Phillips, Joseph
Sinasky
Staff Present: Michael Galvin, Larry Raymond
Public Present: John Bird, Mike Kennedy, Debbie Malone,
Megan Webber

1. Call to Order and Introductions. Meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m.
2. Acceptance of Minutes. Motion to accept minutes for October 8, 2008 by Grace Clark, seconded by Jacqueline Norton.
3. Communications and Reports.
 - a. Chairperson's Report.
 - i. Dawn stated that Debbie Malone and Megan Webber would like to be considered for membership to the Commission on Disability, however, the Citizens Advisory Council does not have enough members to accept the nominations. She hopes this matter is resolved quickly so that Debbie and Megan can be considered to join our Committee.
 - ii. Dawn then discussed this past election. She stated that some polling sites in Worcester reported problems with accessibility and the new Automark Voting Machines. Dawn stated that the Election Report would be forwarded to the committee members once available.
 - b. Director's Report
 - i. Snow Ordinance. Larry stated that a snow removal ordinance has been presented to the City Council and the

Department of Public Works. Larry dispensed copies of the Department of Public Works and the City Manager's recommendations to the City Council to amend the existing snow removal ordinance. This ordinance would also increase the penalty fine to \$75 for failure to remove snow from the owner's sidewalk. Larry also stated that he, along with Health & Human Services, have been researching how seniors and the disabled can acquire assistance into shoveling snow off their sidewalks. Junior ROTC and various youth centers have been contacted to arrange for paid shoveling. Larry has stated that they have yet to find volunteers. Larry has requested an opportunity to discuss the potential concerns regarding the new snow removal ordinance with the City Council Public Works Sub-Committee and would like some members of the Commission present to discuss the disability aspects of the ordinance.

- ii. Health & Human Services Relocation. Larry also informed the Commission that Health & Human Services, which includes the Office on Disabilities, would be moving from 25 Meade Street to City Hall. The move date and exact location is not definite, however, the office will likely be located on the fourth floor. Larry stated that the Human Rights division sent a letter of appreciation to Mr. O'Brien for the recent move back to City Hall. The letter also outlined the office's essential needs in consideration of an office space. Dawn recommended that the Commission on Disability send a similar letter to Mr. O'Brien acknowledging and supporting the Office on Disabilities' essential needs, including the accessibility, space, and design. A consensus of the Commission was reached and a letter would be drafted.

4. Transition Plan, Accessibility, and Access Board Issues.

- a. Updates on City and School Dept. There were no updates on the City and School Dept. during this Commission meeting.
- b. Sidewalks, Curb Cuts, and Chirpers.
 - i. List of Chirper Locations. Larry stated that a list is not yet available but would be distributed at the next Commission meeting.
- c. HP Parking Fines. The statistics of the HP Parking fines from October 2008 were distributed. It was noted that in the month of October, there were 93 parking violations and 12 violations for

blocking handicap ramps. It was noted that these numbers are much higher than in previous months. It was noted that the fine for the above violations is \$200.

- d. Access Board. Mike Kennedy briefly explained that the Architectural Access Board's (AAB) task, if the Commission and its guests were not aware, is to develop and enforce regulations designed to make public buildings accessible to, functional for and safe for use by persons with disabilities. Mike Kennedy gave an update on two buildings in Worcester. One was on High Street and involved renovating an existing building to convert into studio-like residences. Variances were granted as the developers were working with an existing, old building and compliance would not have been feasible. The building project on Sherman Street was also discussed. Mike Kennedy explained that the developers also asked for a variance request, however, this was denied, as there needs to be a vertical access. Mike Kennedy also wrote to the AAB in opposition of the variance request. He stated that as veterans would likely be residing in the residences on Sherman Street, there needs to be handicap accessibility as more and more veterans are becoming disabled.
5. Transportation and TPAG
- a. Buses and Para-transit. Larry announced that Wendy Steinhilber has been hired to assist TPAG. An operations director was also hired. It was noted that TPAG's meetings would now be held every other month. Debbie Malone of REDD stated that her organization wrote a letter to TPAG expressing their concern of the meeting decrease and believed it should be reinstated to a monthly basis and to change the meeting time to evenings, so that more people could attend. Currently, TPAG meetings are held during the day. Debbie stated that it is difficult for concerned citizens to make it due to limited TPAG transport and voice their concerns. Dawn, who is on TPAG, stated that she has also recommended for monthly meetings, but the same issues come up every month and new business is limited. Larry also reminded the Commission that WRTA's rates would be increased effective January 1, 2009.
 - b. Taxicab Statistics. There were no taxicab statistics for this meeting. Larry reminded the Commission that the statistics are only required to be dispensed on a quarterly basis.
6. Emergency Preparedness

- a. Local Registry. There were no updates regarding the Local Registry during this Commission meeting. Recommendations from the Office on Disability will be made shortly regarding this issue. Dawn stated that once the City of Worcester initiates a Local Registry, surrounding communities would likely follow suit.
7. Old Business
- a. UMASS Valet Parking. Larry spoke with a liaison from UMASS and is in the process of scheduling a meeting with Rachel Brown, Mike Kennedy, Mike Galvin, UMASS head of security, and valet parking to address the lack of handicap accessibility. The Commission will be receiving a report regarding this meeting in December.
 - b. Federal Square Plaza Renovation. The City of Worcester's Office of Economic Development has yet to issue a contract to a design consultant for the Federal Square Plaza renovation. Once a decision has been made, the Commission will be informed so they discuss in further detail.
 - c. City Hall Plaza Stairs. Larry stated that he wants the Commission on Disability and the Department of Public Works to meet with the Commission's taskforce regarding the Commission's concern about City Hall Plaza's lack of handicap accessibility. This would likely be the first week of December.
8. New Business
- a. Mayor's/Administration Walk. It was recommended that the Mayor and Administration travel around the City of Worcester to address accessibility issues. The walk would likely be contained to the City Hall vicinity. Larry recommended that we also invite the Department of Public Works on the walk as well to gain a better understanding on how to improve the accessibilities issues.
 - b. Handicap Parking Formula for Businesses. It was noted that as handicap parking has become a premium in the denser areas of Worcester, the handicap parking formula for businesses should be reevaluated. However, this would require a zoning ordinance. It was suggested that Joel Fontaine, Planning Director, come to the next Commission meeting and discuss this issue in further detail.
9. Adjournment. Motion to adjourn at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ms. Jill A. Swerzenski, Secretary