

Minutes from September 17, 2013 Commission on Disability Meeting
Union Station WRTA Bus Hub, 3rd Flr Conference Room
4:15PM

Attendance:

Members Present: Rachel Shannon Brown, Herbert Cremer, Charles Hiamah, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Lynne Towler,

Members absent: John Nah, Stephen Stolberg , Susan Swanson

Members of the Public: Jo Hart, David Johnson, Jackie Norton, Scott Ricker & others

Staff: Pamela Callahan, Dawn Clark, Jayna Turchek

Guests: Robert Antonelli, Joseph Borbone, Timothy Boucher, James Delage

1. Call to Order:

4:25 PM. The Chairperson welcomed guests and commission members; each member introduced themselves.

2. Minutes: The vote to accept minutes of the July, 2013 meeting was tabled.

3. Public Comment Period:

- Scott Ricker questioned the surface material being used on the renovated playgrounds particularly Vernon Hill playground. Questioned whether the handicap parking on Foster St. is accessible. The Chairperson referred him to the Office for exploration and suggested these matters could be placed on a future agenda. Requested an interpreter for future meetings. He could hear but had difficulty understanding some people when they talked. Ms. Turchek indicated she would consider requests

for reasonable accommodations and that he could follow up with her. It was unclear what kind of interpreter he was seeking.

- Jo Hart announced the City Council was meeting today at 6PM rather than the usual 7PM. Suggested public comment time was not enough time to address WTRA issues. The Chairperson noted that the meeting was held at the Hub for the Commission to tour the facility prior to the meeting not to address all WRTA issues. She encouraged disabled and elderly people to raise concerns like the need to transfer at City Hall and the long wait for their bus to come, etc.
- David Johnson from Greenwood St Medical Clinic: In response to Scott Ricker's comment, suggested Providence Street Playground as an alternative to Vernon Street Playground.
- Another speaker questioned about whether the WRTA bus shuttle was permanent. She was concerned about the Bus Rt. 18 route. Referred to WRTA.
- Jackie Norton questioned how to get items on the agenda. Ms. Turchek explained that the agenda is drafted in consultation with both the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. Anyone who wishes to have an item on the agenda should either contact the Office directly or speak to a member of the Commission.

4. WRTA/Para-transit Service Update:

James Delage, Operations Manager was introduced. Para-transit has expanded to 11:30-12:00PM because some bus service has expanded to this later hour. Seven routes run this late hour and include Rt.3, Rt. 7, Rt. 3. The other 4 are on the web-site. The process has essentially remained the same for the past 20 years. Para-transit is available $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile beyond a bus route. WRTA works with cancer and dialysis patients when urgent care is necessary followed by the paperwork to see if riders are eligible for full ADA service. The director has resigned and Mr. Delage is working with the general manager and administrative office during this time without a director. He has worked with ADA service including travel training for the past 23 years.

- A question about fixed routes was raised. Mr. Delage is not involved in that area and was not able to address the question.
- What happens when a ride does not arrive? Please call the PBSI office or the provider. PBSI providers are able to track all vehicles.

5. Review of Red Cab Accessible Van Statistics

This material was provided as requested by the Commission.

Chairperson agreed to consider having WRTA Hub issues on the Commission's agenda in the future.

Because the Commission was ahead of schedule a motion made, seconded to take agenda out of order and carried.

6. Review of AAB Notices and Applications

Paul Keister raised concerns related to the continued lack of a functional accessible elevator at Bancroft Commons, 50 Franklin Street and the conflicting statements in the paperwork eg. replaced vs. refurbished. Another concern was that the \$1,000 a day fine has been suspended. He feels the Commission should provide input into this situation. Because the Commission is advisory, a comment would come from the City Manager who would likely want to have the input of Inspectional Services. Commissioner Brown moved to ask Paul Keister work with the Office to generate comment on this AAB issue for the City Manager's consideration with the Commission's blessing. Motion was seconded and carried.

7. Design Review: Winthrop St. Transportation Improvement Project (DPW&P)

Ms. Turchek introduced Mr. Joseph Barbone, Director of Engineering for the City of Worcester who will speak to this agenda item. Thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present this afternoon. This is a rather simple transportation project on Winthrop Street location near Girls, Inc. The plan is to improve three intersections along the Winthrop Street Corridor. The main work is to be done at the intersection of

Providence and Winthrop in front of Girls, Inc. and the old St, Vincent's Hospital. Also work at the bottom of the hill where it intersects with Vernon Street. The third area is east at the Granite Street intersection.

At Winthrop and Providence Streets turning lanes will be added to alleviate the backups and congestion causing a high number of vehicular accidents. It is difficult for pedestrians to transverse the intersections well. Along with the addition of the turning lane there will be additional islands created. A piece of the Girl's Inc. property will be taken for a right turn. All new signalization and a countdown light with audible signals for people with visual issues will be provided.

At Winthrop and Vernon Streets there will be changes to a couple of the lanes making the intersection a little wider, moving the ramps and crosswalks away from the intersection to make shorter and safer walks to cross the streets.

At Granite and Hayward Streets, the plan is to re-grade and signalize the intersection including countdown and audible signals. This intersection gets busier and busier with the new high school, recycle (junk) yards, and the small business along the street. In the future the city expects there will be more houses on Granite Street effecting this intersection.

This is a TIP Project which means the city designs the project and the state does the construction. The project is not listed on the TIP and therefore may be a long time before the work is done, but is at the 25 % design phase and public comment is appreciated.

Questions and responses:

- Will the yellow plates at ramps be used? Yes
- Will bricks be used? Didn't think so
- Would you reconsider moving the crosswalk at Vernon by the Honey Farm and Chinese Restaurant? Good suggestion, will take under advisement.

- Does it make sense to make square at Winthrop and Providence so people can cross? The signals will be such that all traffic will stop for pedestrians to cross.
- How will a pedestrian get across to the church across from the Honey Farm? The street will not be widen, but would move the current crosswalk so drivers would see pedestrians. Now drivers are looking up the hill rather than the crosswalk. There would be a new crosswalk to the church added.
- Will there be lights at the bottom of the hill? No. There will be lights at Providence and Granite Streets. This intersection does not meet the federal guidelines for signalization.
- Would you consider signalizing at Winthrop and Suffield Street rather than at the intersections of Heywood Street and Granite Street regardless of federal guidelines? Understand the issue of turning from Vernon to Suffield Streets and vice versa.

8. Design Review: Lake Park Toilet Rooms Ramp (Parks Dept)

Ms. Turchek introduced Timothy Boucher, Parks Director and Assistant Commissioner of Parks, Robert Antonelli. Mr. Antoneli thanked the Commission for the opportunity to come in and discuss this item. Lake Park is a historic restroom built in the late 1930's, early 40's. Currently the restrooms are not accessible at all. This program will give a route to the restrooms from the parking lot and will do additional work inside to make accessible restrooms.

The ramping route is from the parking lot, across the street, across the parking lot to a walkway and into the building. Included along this walkway is seating area that overlooks the field. There is a lot of ledge that tiers up. The plan includes a viewing area, and 2 HP spots out of 13 spots and accessible access into the restrooms.

Questions and responses

- Design of restrooms need to be done. Target for restrooms to be available for use is next spring, April or May.

- Noted need for adequate space for people using mobility devices to get in and out of vehicle at the HP spaces. A vehicle may need to back into one of the HP spaces depending on the need for space.
- Above ground signage is planned for both HP spaces. A vehicle with HP placard or plates can park in either van or auto HP space.
- There is a smaller space at the end perhaps not big enough for a car. Consider moving all spaces over and giving more room for HP spaces.

9. Planning for Disability Etiquette video premier: October 16th

The Commission took part in taping a series of videos in August. All actresses and actors were thanked. Steve Stolberg was a co-director. City Cable Services is in the process of editing the videos. One idea that came out that day was to hold a community premier inviting the actresses, actors and community to have a discussion about etiquette. The Senior Center is tentatively reserved for October 16, 2013 at 2:30PM. The Elder Affairs Commission may be interested in collaborating in this effort. Ms. Turchek asked the Commission about its interest in having such a program. The response was positive. Ms. Callahan offered to share the videos to the different city departments.

10. Upcoming Events:

- Complete Streets Training: September 23rd, 2013 – This event is particularly relevant to the Commission. This program is aimed at designing streets so they will be safe for all users. They also look at the environmental impact on the location.
- Presentation by the Worcester Regional Medical Reserve Corps, Worcester Senior Center, September 30th, 2013 – The Chairperson has asked that this program be taped and aired. Ms. Turchek has passed this request on to the Worcester Regional Medical Reserve Corps who is the meeting convener.
- Advocacy Leadership Training: October 2nd, 2013 – The Arc of Massachusetts will be conducting this training. This agency works with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. They

train professionals and allies to be advocates to impact state and federal laws that affect the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Clark