

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes from August 19, 2014, 4:00PM  
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr.

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Rachel Shannon Brown, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Herbert Cremer, Paul Keister, Susan Swanson

**Members Absent:** Francesca Abbey, Charles Hiamah, Elizabeth Myska, Stephen Stolberg

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek, Joseph Sansoucy, Dawn Clark

**Guests:** Joseph F. Borbone, Worcester Director of Engineering

**Members of the Public:** Michael Kennedy, Center for Living & Working, Inc.; Jackie Norton; Scott Ricker

**Call to Order**

The Chairperson welcomed guests and commission members. Each member introduced themselves. Associates Nancy Garr-Colzie, Paul Keister, and Susan Swanson were elevated by the Chairperson to the status of full member for this meeting. Chairperson Cremer announced that at 5:45PM Paul Keister and Susan Swanson will leave to attend the City Council meeting to be voted to become full members on the Commission. Given this he stated the agenda would be taken out of order to accommodate item 6.

**Approval of July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014 minutes**

Commissioner Brown moved to approve the July 15<sup>th</sup> minutes with Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconding the motion. Unanimously approved as written.

There was a request to put a hyperlink to video of the hearing and attach the power point that was presented at the ADA hearing August 12<sup>th</sup> to

the on-line minutes. Staff was not sure this was technically possible, but would check. If this is not technologically feasible Director Turchek said she would do a cover page directing people to the site.

Swanson moved to approve, with amendments discussed, the August 12<sup>th</sup> minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Swanson and all approved.

### **Discussion: WRTA Waiting Riders Notification (Paul Keiter)**

Commissioner Keister described an incident where he was left standing at a bus stop after his bus departed without him despite a person telling the driver he was coming. Mr. Keister is quite sure he is not the only disabled person that this has happened to and is interested in seeking a technology solution. Commissioner Swanson found a report on “An Interactive Wireless Communication System for Visually Impaired People Using City Bus Transport.” She will share the link with Ms. Turchek to pass on to the Commission members. The Commission recommended this be brought to the WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Council. Mike Kennedy from CLW agreed to raise this as an issue at that meeting tomorrow.

### **Conversation: Sidewalks repair request process – Joseph Borbone, Director of Engineering (DPW&P)**

Please note: Any concern or idea can be shared by calling the city’s customer service number at 508-929-1300 or email [dpw@worcesterma.gov](mailto:dpw@worcesterma.gov)

Director Turchek introduced Mr. Borbone. He was invited by request of Commissioner Stolberg to help the Commission understand how a cracked or deteriorating sidewalk/curb cut could be fixed. Mr. Borbone outlined the following process:

- File a complaint with the City Clerk
- Complaint is forwarded to DPW for investigation

- Engineer investigates, determines the solution and cost for fix
- When the complaint is posted on an agenda this information will then go to the City Council Public Works Committee and DPW staff will provide the Committee with the information gathered in the investigation.
- Typically the Committee will approve the recommendation and it will go on an approved list that is unfunded. The list is very long.
- The City gets about \$600,000 a year for city sidewalk repaid work. Usually in October this list is divided into districts. Each District City Councilor is given their district list and they make the decision about which sidewalks/streets are to be repaired in the upcoming construction season. Each Councilor has approximately \$120,000 to work with. This list is always much longer than the money for the district. The Councilor makes his/her decision and is brought back to the Committee.
- Over the winter DPW staff develops proposals for contractors to bid. Those who receive the contract will then start their work when weather conditions allow.

DPW is allocated a small amount of money from tax levy which is used to improve accessibility. This money is rolled into the resurfacing budget with which 30 to 50 streets are done a year depending on length. Sidewalks and ramps are upgraded with these streets. This year 37 Streets are being resurfaced. The handicapped ramps will be brought up to standard on these streets. This means that corners that have no ramps will have ramps when finished.

Mr. Borbone explained that there is some room for recommendations for prioritization. If the Commission identified a specific situation that was not on the resurfacing list or was not chosen by one of the Councilors, DPW staff would review the location identified and do the repair.

Money is limited and DPW wants to work with the Commission so if a location affecting the disability community is identified DPW may likely be able to fix the problem.

Information gathered as a result of questions from the Commission:

- Staff identifies the condition of street/sidewalk to help a particular street from not being repaired year after year. Staff also encourages residents to talk to their Councilor about the need for a repair.
- Staff does not always know a person with a disability is the one making a request or complaint. One way to gather this information is to ask the City Clerk to have the petitioner include this information. Another way might be to have the staff doing the investigation garner this information.
- The Public Works does not have a set of criteria for approving a street/sidewalk to be repaired to Mr. Borbone's knowledge. People have different ideas of what needs to be repaired. Staff consider trip hazards and deterioration for their recommendations. Former Commissioner Moylan would suggest using the "Grandmother proof" idea. Meaning if one's grandmother would have difficulty traversing the area, than the area should go on the list.
- Staff get many calls where sidewalks are heaved due to tree roots. These are trip hazards and get put on the list by staff. In the meantime DPW will go out and try to alleviate the hazard in the best possible way. The city just does not have enough money to fix all the issues identified and can once identified take as much as 18 months to fix.

After discussion about the north side of Cedar Street some 200ft. from West St. where the sidewalk is heaved due to tree roots, is impassible by persons using a mobility device and the site of at last one fall that caused bodily harm, the Commission voted to request DPW to investigate this

site to understand the sites current status. Commissioner Swanson moved the motion and Commissioner Brown seconded. Commissioner Keister will confirm at the next meeting whether the site is still in need of repair.

The commission thanked Mr. Borbone for such a great presentation.

### **Follow up conversation on ADA presentation and Transition Plan Draft Report**

Director Turchek reported that the hearing is now available on the city website as is the survey. We have the survey in paper format as well. Staff are in the process of contacting sites that may be interested in distributing surveys. The Center for Living & Working has already requested hard copies. There are hard copies on the table this afternoon if commission members would like to take some to distribute.

The following is a summary of Commissioner's comments on the draft plan and future steps:

- Appreciation of Ms. Fletcher's comments that this is the opportunity for programs, services and buildings to be accessible to all beyond the ADA/AAB laws.
- Welcome information in writing or in training to help the commission take the next steps.
- While prioritizing the next steps can be complicated (Tier 1 etc.), this is the time to correct the "low hanging fruit" for example: putting adhesive on the weather mats to prevent tripping/falling, moving a hand sanitizer. These may be relatively inexpensive and can be done quickly even though they might not be the 1<sup>st</sup> priority.
- Ms. Turchek explained further about the complexity of prioritization by using the consultant's example. Older buildings,

(in this case the water operations building) can be the biggest barrier to bring up to code and at the same time the most costly. Money would not be well spent to try to fix the architectural barriers because it is so costly and the public rarely need to access this building. The city can make the services in the water operations building accessible by posting signs, for example, that the service can be provided at the building next door.

- Concern about people with disabilities not being adequately involved with emergency planning. With the recent water emergencies around the country, the suggestion was made that people keep 2 5gallon jugs of water available in their homes for emergencies because people may not be able to get to an emergency water site.
- There needs to be more work on getting people to sign up for the emergency preparedness registry.
- It was suggested that a list of pharmacies open all night be available by the city for someone who may have an emergency.
- It was also recommended that the city have a list with hours open and a map of accessible restrooms available in the city.
- Mr. Turcek suggested the Commission might want to work on a “Know Before You Go” guide for each facility. The guide could be posted on the city’s website and list the amenities in each of the buildings as well as other helpful travel hints. A commissioner suggested that a college intern may take this on as a project.

### **Approval of FY 14 Annual Report to the City Manger**

Commissioner Brown moved approval with amendments. Commissioner Swanson seconded. All approved.

## **CAM Training Registration Fee Account Balance**

Ms. Turchek reported that there is a balance of \$244.90 in the account that is available for the Commission's use.

The Chairperson asked for a change in the agenda by taking the AAB business before the public comment period. Commission consented.

## **Notice and Review of AAB notices and applications** (as listed on the agenda)

See below for actions taken on City properties.

### **Variance applications:**

- 100 Institute Road

### **First and Second Notices:**

- 95 Prouty Ln., Docket #C14 059
- 683 Pleasant St, Docket #C14 060
- 455 Main St., Docket#C14 062
- 255 Park Ave., Suite 602, Docket #C14 071
- 102 Russell St., Docket # C14 069
- 2 Washington Square, Docket #C14-073
- 1059 Grafton St., Docket #C14-074

### **Responses:**

- Spillane Field, City of Worcester, C14-059
- Newton Hill/ Elm Park, City of Worcester, C14-060

### **Decisions and Hearings:**

- 39-41 Irving St., Docket #V14-106
- 134 Country Club Blvd., Docket #V14-093
- 14 Walnut St., Docket #V14-173
- 100 Institute Rd., Docket #V14-173
- 21 Salisbury St., Docket #V14-150

### Orders:

- 20 Winthrop St, Docket #C14 065
- 134 Providence St., Docket #C14 064

### Resolutions:

- 29 Sunderland Rd., Docket #C14 044

A decision was made to only review the issues related to the city own properties.

These properties were:

- 455 Main Street City Hall, Docket#C14 062
- Spillane Field, City of Worcester, C14-059
- Newton Hill/ Elm Park, City of Worcester, C14-060

The City Hall railing concern is in the design process with no completion date available. Joe Sansoucy said that there will be a third railing put up along with the two on the ends due to the length of the stairs. The Commission would ask in writing that Mr. Antonelli, Assistant Commissioner of the Parks Dept. be asked to consider a third railing on the front steps of City Hall with a cc to the AAB.

Related to the parks – groups other than the city often use parks for events. The city Parks Department responded to the AAB complaints with the Temporary Event Use guidelines. Accessible porta-potties are requirements for permits to use city properties. The limited staff to follow up on compliance with the permit guidelines may fall to a complaint driven process. The Commission raised whether it was possible to do spot checks for compliance.

### **Public Comment Period:**

-Good to see a DPW staff here

-In response to whether the city plans to put out a Request For Proposal (RFP) for the horizontal aspects, Ms. Turchek stated that an RFP for



ADA horizontal study (sidewalks and streets) of Worcester city owned properties has not gone out because funding has not been allocated. Ms. Turchek is working with city departments and DPW in particular to identify smaller projects that the commission could work on. This might be able to be done working with colleges as well. A study like this involves more than the assessment piece. It remains to be seen if an overall horizontal study will be cost effective. When an RFP goes out it will be on the City's procurement website page.

-Consider solar powered street lights

### **Announcements:**

- WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting  
August 20th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)  
No meetings in the summer.
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** September 8th, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/> (replayed on September 23rd, 5pm)
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** September 16th, 4:30pm

### **Meeting adjourned**

Motion was made and seconded. All approved.