

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes for January 19th, 2016, 4:30PM  
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr.

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Herbert Cremer, Nancy Garr- Colzie, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Douglas Russell, Jr., Stephen Stolberg

**Members Absent:** Francesca Abbey, Robert Bilotta, Robert Bureau, Susan Swanson

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek, Dawn E. Clark

**Guests:** Jackie Martinez & Colin Killick, Disability Policy Consortium; John Stewart, Coes Zone

**Members of the Public:**

Rachel Brown, Michael Kennedy, Sue Philip, Scott Ricker, Evelyn Rosario

**Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions**

Chairperson Paul Keister welcomed commission members and the members of the public present.

**Approval of December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Minutes**

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved to approve the minutes as written. Commissioner Stolberg seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

**YES Health (Your Experience: Speak up for better health care) Presentation (Jackie Martinez and Colin Killick, Disability Policy Consortium)**

YES Health (Your Experience: Speak up for better health care) is funded by the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).

Yes Health is:

- A community of One Care enrollees with physical and mental health needs across Massachusetts who qualifies for both Medicare and Mass. Health (Medicaid)
- A conversation with practices and providers about the perception of YES Health members about the services they receive in One Care
- Unique opportunity to achieve change through advocacy in action that will grow over time

Why Yes Health

- Providers often lack understanding of the needs of people with disabilities coming from a pure base perspective
- People with disabilities lack “voice” in the medical setting

Yes Health Goals

- Better understand “quality” from the consumer perspective- including long-term services and supports (LTSS) and peer support
- Impact care provided by sharing real-time feedback and stories from people with disabilities
- Determine feasibility of a bridge between enrollees, providers and practices that effects positive change

Definition of Change

- Increase ability of YES Health members to voice their needs
- Build community and common agendas among members

- Increase knowledge of healthcare and community service priorities of members

#### Yes Health activities

- YES Health ambassador outreach (two in Worcester)
- Yeshealth.org website
- Facebook group
- Email
- Voicemail
- Surveys (quarterly)

#### Connecting with providers

- Practice reports
  - Different than typical quality measure reports
  - Brief and to the point
  - May include interesting anecdotes
  - Profiles of YES Health ambassadors
  - Create a dialogue between consumers and providers

YES Health (Your Experience: Speak up for better health care) is a diverse group of disability advocates working to improve One Care. In celebration of its launch, the first 250 people eligible to join YES Health and complete a 5 -10 minute survey about One Care will get \$10.

YES Health can be reached at 617-307-7374; by email at [YEShealth@DPCMAA.org](mailto:YEShealth@DPCMAA.org); visit [YEShealth.org](http://YEShealth.org)

Information is confidential and feedback is anonymous.

YES Health is asking that this information be share with One Care enrollees and their allies. They hope people will see this as a way to advocate for better health care for people with disabilities. They hope this will be a model for other states as the project progresses.

Additional information as a result of questions:

- YES Health is working with the research of Mass. General Hospital to compile the data generated. Mass. Commonwealth Alliance and Tufts have One Care Programs in Massachusetts that covers One Care enrollees.
- About one third of those who have signed up to be part of Yes Health receive emails and newsletters. This is one option of many given the cost of technology such as a computer.
- Request the Commission invite the ambassadors to share their outreach plans for the Worcester area.
- Access to accessible diagnostic equipment is difficult. Mass. Health is working with hospitals to mitigate this situation. This project will help in working with hospitals meet equipment, but also to help ease the inadequate care received by people with mental health.
- There were listening sessions conducted last year about One Care through the Mass. Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH). Access to communication was a significant concern raised. Has anything been done related to this concern? Mr. Killick was not aware of these listening sessions and will have to get back to the Commission on this request.

There is a monthly first Wednesday conference call with Commissions on Disability to discuss policy issues and members of the Worcester's Commission are invited to join in the call. Right now Boston, Lynn, Newton, Somerville and Pittsfield are involved.

## **Follow up regarding MBTA passes for riders with disabilities**

In November, Commissioner Myska had brought to the Commission that people who were visually impaired had to go to Boston to receive a free Blind Access Charlie card and felt there should be a way to get a pass in Worcester. Director Turchek provided the following information about how people associated with the Mass. Commission for the Blind could obtain a free Blind Access Charlie card.

There is a two-step process to obtain the card:

1. A Massachusetts resident who is blind or legally blind can apply to the Mass. Commission for the blind. They will receive a state wide identification card which allows people to a number of benefits.
2. Once they have received this card, they then apply for the transportation card by going to the MBTA office which is in Boston.

Another option is to have a local Council on Aging or other entity host an event and invite people who have their Mass. Commission for the blind ID and want a Blind Access Charlie card to attend. Host will then verify the person's eligibility by having the person present a copy of their Mass. Commission for the Blind I.D., have an additional photo taken and complete a one page application with their demographics. The host agency will then mail this information to the MBTA office and that office will then mail the prepared cards back to the host group for distribution.

The Commission may want to host an event like this with the Area Agency on Aging(AAA) or local Council on Aging(COA) and other collaborative partners. There also may be an opportunity to have a mini travel training for applicants at the host event.

The following concerns were raised by members:

- This information came from a conversation with the MBTA office and Mr. Plank who forwarded Ms. Turchek to Laura Brelsford, MBTA Assistant General Manager, System-Wide Accessibility.

Concern was raised about what documents people need to bring to be accurate. When this same information was brought to Boston by a Commissioner there was more asked for and application was deemed incomplete and denied. Ms. Turchek was told she would be sent a packet for hosts in which the required documents will be in writing.

- Would the travel trainer be knowledgeable about local setting? The trainer's contract is soon to be up and may not be available. The trainer speaks mainly to how to access the MBTA system. We do have local trainers that we might have access to as well.
- Center for Living & Working, Inc. would be willing to be a partner in hosting an event such as this.

### **Report back on emergency shelter site review**

Weather prevented the Commission's representative from attending the emergency shelter review last week so Director Turchek is reporting the review results after speaking with Worcester's Emergency Communication's Director Richard Fiske.

The local Red Cross and the Emergency Communications staff visited the Vocational Technical High School, the city's primary emergency shelter. The shelter's last review was in 2008 just after the building was completed and found the building in compliance. This recent review found no significant alterations and the building to be in compliance with ADA and Red Cross shelter standards. There will be a check list available in a few months so the Commission will be able to see what was reviewed. There are double doors, elevators are on generators, showers & rest rooms are accessible and HP parking available on the same level as the shelter area to name a few areas that were reviewed.

Comments from the Commission:

- There was the task force representing people with different disabilities review several shelters and prospective shelters about 2011 and offered multiple suggestions for improvements.
- There should always be more than one person when reviewing shelters for the perspective of disability.
- There needs to be communication access for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

### **Coversation with John Stewart on behalf of Coes' Zone Task Force application for a beach wheelchair**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. John Stewart of Coes's Zone who spoke to their application for a beach wheelchair for use at John Binienda Memorial Beach and requested the commission's support for the proposal.

The Blackstone Headwaters Coalition will apply for grant on behalf of Coes Zone for funds from Bay State Savings Charitable Foundation for a beach wheelchair for John Binienda Beach on Mill Street (Coes Beach). They are collaborating with smilemass.org on procurement of a beach wheelchair through group purchasing power of smilemass.org.

The grant request is to be \$2,000 to furnish and deliver beach wheelchair for Binienda Beach. Binienda Beach Bathhouse is currently out to bid to be refurbished and will be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

The beach wheelchair will improve access to the sand and water for individuals with disabilities. The addition of a beach wheelchair will make the beach a more inclusive place and improve accessibility for individuals with disability. The goal is to furnish and install an accessible beach wheelchair in June 2016 for the use of beach goers during the 2016 beach season at Coes Pond in Worcester.

The application collaborators include: The Blackstone Headwaters Coalition, [www.clarku.edu/bwhc](http://www.clarku.edu/bwhc), which strives to engage citizens, businesses, environmental organizations, and state and municipal officials in the active stewardship of water resources in headwater streams of the Blackstone River. Coes Zone Task Force, [coeszone.com](http://coeszone.com), is a Worcester-based, grass-roots community group. The Coes Zone Task Force envisions improved stewardship of the ponds, streams and parklands in the “Coes Zone”. The Coes Zone Task Force also envisions significant economic and societal benefits that will result from this improved stewardship. Small Miracles in Life Exist ([smilemass.org](http://smilemass.org)) is a 501 C3 non-profit organization dedicated to providing happy, healthy memories to families living with children or adults with disabilities.

Information gathered from Commissioner’s questions:

- There are different types and modalities of beach wheelchairs. They will work with [smiles.org](http://smiles.org) to discuss best type for this beach and may try a couple of models to see which works best. The mat system is more likely to be the one purchased which would assist a person using a chair to reach the bath house to transfer the beach wheelchair which would then take the person to and into the water.
- A good example of a matting system and beach wheelchair is at Regatta Point Beach right here in Worcester operated by the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation.
- The city has been awarded a State P.A.R.K. grant for a multi-generational/accessible playground expected to be completed in about 18 months. This proposal for a beach wheelchair is to secure the wheelchair so it will be available this spring 2016. It is unlikely the P.A.R.K. grant could be used for equipment.



## **Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold**

Variance Application: 40 Water Street, Docket # TBD

Second Notice: 51 Myrtle Street, Docket # C15 082

Correspondence: **2 Washington Square, Docket# C14 073**

**In order to dismiss a complaint which is being requested here a variance request needs to be submitted.**

## **Suggestions for upcoming agenda items**

- Review and vote whether or not to endorse Coes Pond universally accessible/ multigenerational park/playground project
- Vote to recommend installation of video cameras at Coes Pond
- Receive update on the installation of CCTV cameras in other parks
- Review update on snow removal
- Continue discussion on the two tiered sidewalks around City Hall and future plans for Main Street
- Change COD meeting space for duration of work on Main Street

## **Announcements:**

- WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting  
January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled) February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, 4:00 – 5:30PM, YWCA, Members Lounge
- Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program: January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- Next Commission on Disability meeting: February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
4:30pm.
- Regional Disability Commission meeting: Worcester City Hall,  
Wednesday March 9<sup>th</sup>, 11am-2pm (Open to members)

- Architectural Reading Training: Worcester City Hall, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, 3-5PM (Open to the public-RSVP needed)
- Reporting Disabled and Elder Abuse Training: Worcester Senior Center, May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016, 1-3PM (Open to the public- RSVP)
- Emergency Preparedness Meeting: May TBD 2016 at 8:30 am, Parks Department, 50 Skyline Drive

Emergency Preparedness Tip: People with disabilities may want to consider having several gallon containers of water per person at home for emergencies.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:25pm.