

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes from March 17, 2015, 4:30PM  
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr.

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Francesca Abbey, Rachel Shannon Brown, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Herbert Cremer, Sue Fahlbeck, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg, Susan Swanson

**Staff:** Jayna Turcek; Dawn E. Clark

**Guests:** City Parks Staff: Robert Antonelli, Assistant Commissioner; Cesar Valiente; Tim Boucher; Bill Richard; Jeff Tomaino; Center for Human Centered Design Staff: Eileen Feldman; Willa Crolius

**Members of the Public:**

City Councilor Gary Rosen; City Councilor Philip Palmieri; Michael Kennedy; Jackie Norton, Scott Ricker; Tom Shields

**Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions**

Vice Chairperson Rachel Brown welcomed commission members and the members of the public present. She invited members of the public to sign in. After the meeting was called to order, the commissioners introduced themselves. Associate Commissioners Abbey and Prochilo were elevated as Commissioners for this meeting.

**Approval of January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Minutes**

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved approval of amended minutes. Commissioner Abbey seconded. Motion was approved.

## **Presentation on Parks Construction Improvement Updates**

Robert Antonelli, Assistant Commissioner of Parks, was introduced and he presented plans for both construction projects and general upgrades to city parks.

**Burncoat Playground:** This playground is on the corner of Burncoat with the backside on Button Street next to the Burncoat Prep School up by the summit. A playground is being upgraded on the right hand side and on the left side, the basketball and tennis court has been rehabbed with new nets and hoops. An accessible walkway has been added on both ends into the facility with a surface of hard scape. There are picnic tables, some with accessible features. It is expected to be opened up in late spring of this year.

Additional work is anticipated, not budgeted yet. This work would include improvements with a new surface for the playground.

**Coes Beach:** This facility is on Mill Street. There is access to the beach. The Master Plan calls for upgrading the parking area and accessible spaces. Currently, the Parks Dept. is working to upgrade the building, both inside and access to the building. The building will house three bathrooms, men's, women's and family (fully accessible) and storage area for first aid etc. The doors will be widened and made accessible. It has been 30 to 35 years since work has been done on this building. The roof will be redone. Over the years there has been break-ins. Security will be upgraded as part of the improvements for this facility. The building is structurally sound, however, needs to be upgraded to code.

A future plan for this beach and for all city beaches is to have a beach buggy available for persons who need this type of device to enjoy the water, going from the building to the water. The plan is that this amenity would be available while life guard is on duty. Details are still being

worked out, but currently the doors on storage building are not big enough to house the buggy.

**Crompton Park:** A pool was built five years ago at this facility. Phase 2 consists of handball & tennis courts meeting standard regulation, and a new parking lot with dedicated accessible HP spaces. The small parking lot is being removed for safety of the children playing in this area.

**Elm Park Red Bridge:** The original red bridge has been removed and a new bridge is being built with the assistance of Worcester Poly Technical Institute and Worcester Vocational Technical School. When completed this bridge will have handrails and will meet accessible codes. Effort is being made to replicate the original bridge. The exception will be the depth of the arch. Granite markers will be installed to prevent vehicular traffic from using. Completion date is expected to be October 2015. The city is working with the Army Corps of Engineers on issues related to the south mere.

**Grant Square:** Located at the corner of North Hampton and Windsor Streets in the Greenhill area near Catherine Street. The new playground with corded surface (rubberlike) and basketball court is built. The grade change has been woven into the playground by using equipment such as a slide. Accessible walkways are being built and will be extended up the hill as additional work is done. There are two accessible entrances to the park. Seating at the basketball court and picnic tables is accessible. A HP space has been provided. This facility is on a grade that makes accessibility difficult. Completion anticipated in late spring/summer.

**Green Hill Farm Phase II:** This farm is in Greenhill Park between Belmont Street and Lincoln Street. This is the design phase for two buildings that need to be replaced, one for restrooms and the other for storage at this time but could be a shop with souvenirs in the future. New

foundations being put in and maintenance work is being done. A new walkway and ramping system is being built to allow people to get into the barn. The hope is that the FY'16 Budget will include further work on these buildings and design.

There will be additional play areas, a couple of shelters and maintenance area for staff parking storage, etc. Eventually the plan is to open the barn on a more regular schedule and having more exhibits and animals.

**Hadwen Field:** This field is located off of Heard Street. The plan is to upgrade and design the current building to include two accessible restrooms and a concession stand. Additional parking would be built. HP spaces would be provided.

**Harrington Field – Phase I:** Located by Harrington Way and Grafton Street. This Little League field has been redone and HP Spaces have been built. A zig-zag accessible walkway has been completed from the newly renovated Lake Park Field House to the ball field. An accessible walkway will be installed to get to a future playground. Plans include a walkway around the entire field.

**Lake Park:** The Field House has been completed. This is one of the city's polling locations. The entrance way has been upgraded and a couple of HP spaces are provided. The city no longer has to rent a portable ramp on election days. A gate has been placed at the top of the stairs for safety. Gate opens inward.

The plan is to make the restrooms accessible. Restrooms are only open when staff is available or the one requesting a permit ask them to be opened. This is true with all park facilities.

**Ty Cobb:** Located on the corner of James and Lauier Streets. The back area, an old t-ball field, is being renovated. Accessible walkway is being put in along with bleachers with accessible seating.

**Worcester Common Phase 3B Update:** The current phase of work is 98% complete. Back and entire perimeter of City Common has been done. The slope was too great to put in an accessible pathway at the back so a small wall was put in to help people move easily as well as assist in the plowing of snow. At present the back ramp is closed due to railing issues and heaving of the walkway.

New hand rails to be installed at the slopes entering and leaving the garage as well as extending the rails at the bottom of the steps going from the back of City Hall to the common.

In the front of City Hall there are new railings by the steps.

**Elm Park:** Currently under contract, the two buildings are being rehabbed and restrooms will be accessible with a June/July completion date. Restrooms will be open Sunday thru Thursday 7:30AM to 3:30PM because staff will be present.

### **Comments & Questions from the Commission and Members of the Public**

- The city will begin with one beach buggy and add to that one as appropriate storage is available at beach sites. Will need to work with the Conservation Commission. Probably not a fee but may be a first come first serve basis. The vehicle would not be motorized.
- The Parks Department in working with different groups on walking trails including Worcester Land Trust. One idea is connecting parks. Another is to do trail work. This might be done through purchase or leasing of property, working with the Conservation Commission or by other means. The City's Public Health Dept. CHIP has identified walking as important for health

and is recommending priority walking paths. In parks there are walking markers for example Worcester Common and Elm Park. There is a trail being built behind Walmart.

- Cameras have been placed in many parks with the ability to be viewed by police. Some parks do not have access to transfer data. When parks are updated cameras and data transfer ability is part of the contract. Since the last park discussion Greenhill, University and Elm Park have installed cameras.
- The ice cream truck often parks in the HP space in Greenhill Park across from the farm. The Parks Department welcomes this information. Please call the city Customer Service number (508) 929-1300 to report. This year two security guards have been hired while they cannot be everywhere but does give more security; they can issue parking tickets.
- Lake Park restrooms are useable however, only open for elections. The first priority was to be able to get into the building. Now that this has been accomplished, the restrooms can be rehabbed.
- The Department will review the need for railings at Compton Park pool. There is a lift at that pool.
- Concession stands at Hadwen Park will be wheelchair accessible.
- Some work has been done on Swartz Field, More work needs to be done, but is not on the agenda at this time.
- Councilor Gary Rosen, District 5: Councilor Rosen informed the Commission about the work of the Coes Pond Task Force formed nine months ago. The task force intends to address issues all along the coast of Coes Pond, but the upgrade of the beach house is very important to anything else done on the beach. The Task Force plans to replace the sand. They are meeting with the Conservation Commission on many issues. On April 11, 2015 they will be working with a group of 120 students from The College of the Holy Cross to volunteer their time on this project. The Task Force is putting up a new sign and on the sign. One of the future projects is to turn the small park into a universally accessible Park and Playground. This will be very costly. They will be seeking best

practices from around the nation and seek input from residents, businesses, the community and the Commission. This process is expected to take place next year.

### **Presentation of the Polling Location Survey (Institute for Human Centered Design)**

Willa Crolius and Eileen Feldman were introduced. The survey report is available on the city website and their presentation was presented via power point and is attached to these minutes. This presentation and hearing was also video-taped and is on the city website.

### **Public Hearing on Draft Polling Place Draft Report**

Commission and public comments/responses

- Past poll worker training by Commissioners and office staff has not always resulted in proper placement of the Automark or other requested accessibility features. Suggestions made: have group trainings, update manual for poll workers to include accessibility issues; have workers sign pledge that they have read manual and agree to follow procedures and include police officers working the polls as well; gather a group of leaders that would develop a check list for poll workers.
- Sometimes voting by absentee ballot is more desirable. Some issues identified: polling places may not be accessible by public transportation; HP is not always controlled by police putting a person with a disability in danger; security screen not available or offered; unfriendly poll workers. These issues limit the best practice of having people with disabilities seen at the polls voting. Staff concurred changing the culture is important. Training needs to be continuous keeping the issues of accessibility up front and meeting the issue of turn-over.
- One town has developed a specific checklist with places to mark the items off when setting up a polling place. There is a person responsible for signing their name to the checklist.

- On the Worcester website there is an e-training for poll workers. It might be a good exercise to go through this and see if accessibility is integrated into this training.
- When the Center for Living & Working, Inc. did a review of polling placing most Automark machines were facing out so public could see how a voter was voting. Consultant added the machine also should be plugged in.
- Sometimes poll workers will defer to police officers, it is important that poll workers know and carry out guidelines given to the poll workers.
- Perhaps the Election Commission might consider having a curtain available to pull for privacy when the Automark is being used.
- Problems were presented: No room to let people off when using vans; inadequate lighting; workers discouraging anyone but the disabled person from using the Automark when Automark can be used by anyone. All polling precincts have an Automark machine.
- For the public's information "How to use the Automark" video is on both the state and city web sites.
- The Commission developed a "Script Card" on "How to use the Automark" to be put out on the polling check-in tables but they have not been visible in recent past.
- Encourage the next generation to be poll workers

Chairperson Stolberg thanked the consultants and in turn they thanked the Commission and members of the public for their support and comments during this hearing.

The hearing ended.

The following appeared on the agenda for the Commission's information

**AAB notices and applications:** No city facilities to review

Variance Application:

- 64 Beacon Street

Responses

- 222 Harrington Way (2), Docket C14 131

#### Notice of Hearing

- 55 Lake Avenue North, (Decision) Docket V14 353

#### Decisions and Resolutions:

- 1059 Grafton Street, Docket C14 074
- 222 Harrington Way, Docket C12 026

#### Announcements:

- Save the date: Saturday July 25<sup>th</sup>, 12 – 4PM  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the ADA at Union Station  
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/ocm/disabilities/ada-celebration>
- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Committee**  
March 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**  
April 7<sup>th</sup>, 5-6:30pm, Worcester Public Library –Banx Room
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** April 14<sup>th</sup>,  
2015, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Next Commission on Disability Meeting**, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015  
4-6:30pm.
- Local Emergency Planning Committee Meeting, Tuesday  
May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 8:30AM, 50 Skyline Dr.  
**Emergency Preparedness Tip:** People with disabilities might  
want to consider having several gallon containers of water as home  
for emergencies.

#### Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm