

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes from September 15, 2015, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Francesca Abbey, Robert Bilotta, Herbert Cremer, Nancy Garr- Colzie, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Douglas Russell, Jr., Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: Paul Keister, Susan Fahlbeck, Susan Swanson

Staff: Jayna Turchek and Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Robert Para, Project Architect, Lamoureux and Pagano; Richard Fiske, Jr., City of Worcester Director of Communications and Emergency Preparedness

Members of the Public:

Ahmed Al Rubaye, Terri Dotson, Michael Kennedy, and Jack Peacock

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Vice Chairperson Nancy Garr-Colzie served as Chairperson for this meeting and welcomed commission members and the members of the public present. After the meeting was called to order, the commissioners introduced themselves. Assistant Commissioner Prochilo was raised to Commissioner for the meeting's business.

Approval of August 18 , 2015 Minutes

Commissioner Abbey moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Myska seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Presentation and review of Nelson Place Elementary School:

Robert Para, Project Architect From Lamoureux and Pagano presented plans for the new Nelson Place Elementary School. These plans will replace the current school building. The original Nelson Place Middle School off Grove Street and Holden Street on Nelson Place was built in 1926 with additions added in the 1950's and 1960's and renovations done in the 1970's and 80's.' The current student capacity is about 500 students.

Because of its poor condition, this school was reviewed by the City for replacement. After a year and a half review process including looking at different sites, behind the current school was determined to be the best site option. This school will remain a neighborhood school with about a 600 student capacity. Construction has begun at the site.

This school will be fully accessible. This school will house the quadrant's Autism Program. The school is designed to meet the Autism and Special Needs Program's student need. Students pre-k thru 6th grade will attend the school.

The school has three major building blocks:

1. On the left side at the upper site there will be the pre-k and kindergarten;
2. The middle core contains the administration areas on the left side and on the right side the media center which will be integrated into the one-library program. This middle core will also include a cafeteria/stage, kitchen and gymnasium;
3. The right upper side of the building will house 1st and 2nd grade and the lower level will house grades 4, 5, and 6. The building is served by two elevators: one for the kindergarten block and one for the upper-level

block. The restrooms for students and teachers will be accessible. The single stall restroom in the kindergarten block will serve as a changing room with a Hoya Lift.

Each wing has a room for occupational and physical therapy. There is a ramp to the stage. The back of the stage is closed off so most of the time the area behind can be used for the music program. There is another ramp for this area when being used. The classrooms run along the outside of the building for light and ventilation.

This is a challenging site to build on. There is a 24 foot difference in ground grade level. Currently material is being removed from the site making the site more level. There is a teacher parking lot in the upper area and an area for student drop off and pick up accommodating up to 3 buses at a time. There is a separate area for the special education program (SPED) drop off and pick-up activity. Parent pick up is at the back by the cafeteria and gymnasium area.

There are about 147 parking spaces and one more HP space then required. HP spaces along the front of the building, by the SPED drop off are van spaces and others throughout the parking area.

There are three accessible appropriate grade playgrounds planned along with a basketball court and half size soccer field. To encourage students to walk and ride their bikes there is an accessible path from the street to the school.

The schedule is to remove as much soil as possible before school started. Rock crushing into November, no work over the winter and begin construction in the spring with occupancy fall 2017. The existing building is to be taken down summer into fall 2017.

Responses to questions:

- The surface of the playground will be engineered wood fiber underneath play equipment as fall protection. Other areas will be paved. The AAB does not allow engineered wood fiber as a surface for paths of travel.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Para for his presentation.

Commissioners Updates:

- **Voting Locations** – The Chairperson invited Michael Kennedy Access Coordinator at the Center For Living & Working, Inc. to come forward to address the updates on Worcester’s polling places identified as needing work in the report done by The Institute for Human-Centered Design. Mr. Kennedy and others attended an Election Commission meeting when the Report was discussed and heard the remedies the Commission recommended. Then Mr. Kennedy visited the polling sites on September 6, 2014 (Primary Election).

The first polling site he revisited, Friendly House, has gone from worst to first and has made significant improvements to meeting the ADA accessibility guidelines. The polling place was in the gymnasium rather than in the small room. Signage was good and although the parking lot of uneven gravel had not changed there was a HP space, path of travel was flat, there was a lot of room in the gym and the AutoMARK was faced to protect privacy.

The second polling place addressed was South Worcester Neighborhood Center. The promised work had not happened. Signage led to a flight of stairs. Accessible door was locked. Upon

returning to his car the police officer brought him to the now unlocked accessible entrance and was brought up on a lift through a dimly lit hallway. Once into the room where voting occurs things were good. The AutoMARK was adjusted a bit for complete privacy.

The third polling place reported on was Quinsigamond Community Center. This polling place will be moved to the Blackstone Visitor Center once open.

A forth visit was to Lincoln Village Tenets Association which was a change from the Pool House in Lincoln Village. Staff was the same which was nice.

Lastly, Greenwood Terrace was moved to Bethlehem Covenant Church. The only issue was the temporary HP spaces were not fully up to code: parallel parking; no signs; and no access aisles.

General comments:

- There are two spaces at each polling location that accommodate mobility devices such as a wheel chair: The AutoMARK and a booth at a lower height.

- Privacy for the AutoMARK can often be achieved by turning the AutoMARK to face a different direction.

- Concerns should be brought to the City Clerk. Jayna Turcek gave an update saying two Commissioners had a concern about the privacy of the AutoMark and reported it to both the City Clerk and her the day of the election. The elections Commission and City

Clerk want to know about issues on Election Day so the situation can be dealt with immediately. She read a correspondence from the City Clerk, David Rushford. Privacy screens for the AutoMARK machine have been ordered. They had not seen used before because he felt they hindered the light for reading the screen.

Chairperson Garr-Cozlie thanked Mr. Kennedy for his report.

Emergency Preparedness Update/Emergency Preparedness Month

Director Turchek introduced Richard Fiske, Jr. Worcester's Communication Director to give an update on emergency preparedness as September is Emergency Preparedness Month.

Emergency Preparedness Month is a way for the government to remind people to be prepared for all types of emergencies: September of course is in the middle of hurricane season and the winter months which can bring snow and power outages.

On January 26th, 2015, during the big blizzard in the area the Governor declared a state of emergency as did the City of Worcester. The Department of Public Works was able to keep needed roads and shelter opened. The power was not lost. The City never closed in the 100 foot record snow year. Mr. Fiske extended great praise to the city employees who worked to keep the city running.

Outreach is being done by the Communications Dept. on Tuesday, September 22nd and Friday, September 25th at the Senior Center, Library and Medical Center at different times. Staff will be giving away emergency preparedness material and promote the Worcester Alert Program which is a reverse 911 system giving people information via phone or text related weather emergencies or city events. This is different than state or other notification systems. There will be a trivia

game at these outreach events with a win leaving with an item for the person/family go-kit. In emergencies people need to be prepared and able to live for at least 72 hours, giving first responders the time to get set up to help.

Turning to the ADA Transitional Study done by The Institute on Human-Centered Design in November 2014, he has been working with Ms. Turchek. Persons with disabilities must have equal access to goals and services provided and this is true with emergency preparedness. They understand that at least 50% of the population may need additional assistance during an emergency. He knows that each situation is unique and he and his staff do their best to understand each need. However, addressing each person specially requires resources not available so they establish an overall plan which takes as many of these needs into account as possible.

The Worcester Vocational School is the primary shelter and is reviewed annually. The Red Cross is also involved with the shelter training and review process to keep the shelter in compliance. There are other places around the city as back up for smaller emergencies such as the need for warming centers. His staff attended a training on shelters and learned that a small horse was a service animal. The city is responsible for sheltering service animals and pets. He admitted sheltering a small horse would be a logistical challenge.

The Volunteer Emergency Registry has been reviewed and people contacted for current information. These people have been added to the ALERT Worcester Program and added to the 911 state system if there is an emergency the individual's information comes up when the call is answered. He wants to work with a private vendor to have this method work with cell phones when the resources are available.

He is working with the fire department to have floor plans red lined with evacuation plans in all city and school buildings.

Mr. Fiske wants to include the Commission on Disability in the education/training process. He understands the Commissioners are experts in regard to the needs of people with disabilities related to emergency preparedness and would like to know these needs through Ms. Turchek. A plan can be made, but if it does not meet the need he says it is an exercise in futility. He is asking the Commission in the next couple of months to identify five (5) strengths or weaknesses with emergency planning and/or preparedness in the city knowing the city's resources and ways to make them better. He is sure there are more than five areas. He wants 5 five areas so they can be evaluated and included in the city's plan. This is a small start and once these are evaluated in six to eight months the Commission can offer another five ideas and we can go from there.

Additional information gathered as a result of questions asked of Mr. Fiske:

- A go-pack can be a back pack or any sturdy container that holds the items a person needs for 72 hours in an emergency which may include a loss of electricity. There is a list of basic items for a go-pack on the city web-site under emergency management.
- Periodically there are free webinars on emergency preparedness for people with disabilities on line through ADApacific.org with MEMA/FEMA. Mr. Fiske will have his staff review for possible inclusion on the website.
- Commission members are welcome to walk through the Vocational School, primary shelter, when the Red Cross, Emergency preparedness staff and school representative do their annual walk

through for Red Cross Certification. This is a twenty to twenty-five minute process.

- A private life alert system monitoring system would relay the person, in need of emergency, medical data when making the call to the particular first responder unit.
- Private and public housing facilities are responsible for their own emergency planning. For example escape routes, aware of people needing assistance, etc. If an emergency occurs and people are not able to get out than the building management would alert first responders who needs help evacuating and would be evacuated by the first responders.
- There was a state-wide emergency planning & preparedness forum at the DCU this past spring.

Chairperson Garr-Colzie thanked Mr. Fiske for his presentation.

Review of AAB notices and applications: No City Facilities

Decisions and Resolutions:

- 14 Walnut Street, Docket # V14 173
- 17 Dean Street/34 Institute Road, Docket # V15-132

Suggestions for Upcoming agenda Items

- The Commission work to come up with five areas of emergency planning /preparedness strengths and weakness with ideas for improvement. Ms. Turchek asked the Commissioners to funnel their suggestions through her rather than on email to be careful there is not a quorum deliberating on Commission business when there is no duly called public meeting which may violate the open meeting law.
- Have a member attend the November 10th Worcester Emergency Planning meeting to share the Commission's top five priority areas.

- Request the Worcester Police Department provide snow removal/enforcement plans for the upcoming winter season
- Update on Coes Pond project/isolated location concern for a universal park

There is a greeting card for Susan Fahlbeck who will be moving out of the area.

The following announcements were on the agenda and not presented to the Commission verbally.

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
September 16th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**
October 6th, 5 – 6:30PM, Worcester Public Library, Banx Room
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** October 13th, 2015, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** October 20th, 2015 4:30pm.
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** November 10th, 2015 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 at home for emergencies.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:56pm.