

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for June 19th, 2018, 5:00PM
Levi Lincoln Chamber (3rd fl.)
Worcester City Hall

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bureau, Robert Bilotta, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Fitzroy Hall, Joseph Prochilo (via phone), Lindsey Silva, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: John Gleason, D. Karuna, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska,

Staff: Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Jerri Roach and Haley McCullough, WPS Transition Program; Russell Adams, Assistant Commissioner, Worcester Public Works

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Lindsey Silva, Vice Chairperson called the meeting to order. Commissioners introduced themselves. Commissioners Fitzroy and Stolberg were raised to full members for the meeting.

Approval of April 24th, 2018 Minutes

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved approval and Commissioner Bilotta seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the May 15th, 2018 minutes with an amendment of a typo.

Presentation from WPS Transition Program

Ms. Roach, WPS Transition Coordinator and Haley McCullough, Transition Specialist presented the following information about the program. Ms. Roach oversees the Community Based Transition Program for individuals with disabilities aged 18 to 22 district wide and consults with transition needs and topics.

The Transition Program started in 2001 at South High School. WPS received a federal grant called the 2Cs (Community College Connection Grant.) The grant focused on individuals with significant disabilities who were not going to receive high school diplomas. Previously these students stay in the classroom until their 22nd birthday with little or no transition work done. This grant was called the

Community Opportunities Program providing transition services before transition became the law. In 2004 the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was passed which mandated a better education forcing Worcester to provide service for people with significant disabilities who were left behind.

In 2001 there were 3 students in the 2Cs Program. Staff worked with these students to develop a vision for their life focusing on employment. Students that were chosen seemed to have the strongest abilities with connections to the community and families who were supportive. Today WPS has a Community Transition Program for non- diploma students aged 18 - 22. In the fall of 2018 the program is expected to serve up to 70 full time students. When the program began the emphasis was to serve people with intellectual disabilities. Over the years WPS grew the resources to work with the other students sitting in the classroom until 22.

The Transition Program is now serving students with a variety of abilities and disabilities; some have significant medical needs, and some have social/emotional needs, some are working on a high school diploma and getting a driver's license, some are learning to live independently and finding their voice to speak for themselves. There is an effort to have students work in a community setting such as the YWCA or learning how to use the para transit. The program went from looking at employment services to looking at the whole person and providing the services to do this.

As the program grew collaboration with other funding sources such as Mass. Rehabilitation Commission, Mass. Commission for the Blind, Department of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Mental Health. Now there is a monthly team meeting with these partners and sometimes students and families to work on systemic transition issues and individual needs which helps develop the Individual Educational Plans (IEP) for the student.

One of the challenges for students and families is there is no set schedule as there has been before going into the Transition Program. The student arrives at the Fanning Building, welcomed and then asked what do they want to do. This question leads to the development of an IEP. This is done by showing a Power Point and hearing from other students about their past experiences. Staff will then make comments. There is a flip chart with five places where a student could choose to learn more and they put a name tag against that community place. Then the students

does an informational interview visit to the five places with staff and students who have worked at these places. Thus creating mentors for their younger peers. The students reflect on this experience and an IEP is created with staff assistance. Ms. Roach then takes these IEPs and creates a schedule and transportation plan. This process takes about two months. These IEPs are reviewed and adjusted according to the students input.

In 2004 students were being picked up at home drop off at school and an hour later they were picked up at school and dropped off at their internship program and in the afternoon the reverse occurred. This was confusion for everyone. Students were living in two different worlds with two different sets of rules. In 2008 this changed. At age 18 students were given a certificate of achievement, walked with their peers at graduation signifying their high school days were over and they were not going back unless they were going to share their story with high school students. Now Transition Program participants on the first day are welcomed to the adult world.

Here are some of the great things that can be done, but also here are the responsibilities of being an adult as well.

This Program is based at the Fanning Building with satellite space in a classroom at Assumption College. Examples of educational classes include: at Assumption there are seminars on safety and living skills; at Fanning Building– cooking skills. Students spend time in the community as interns gaining work experience.

Worcester is the first community in the state using this Transition Program model. Most communities are still using the high school model. The students drive the program and every day there are new things to learn. Laws changes, new intern opportunities and new students, etc.

A video was presented prepared by students and staff. Ms. Roach pointed out that collaborations with colleges have been developed. One program is Spanish at the College of the Holy Cross. On Friday students go to the college where Holy Cross students learn Spanish from Transition students. Students are going to the Mass. School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences to learn about making medical appointments, etc which interns are getting experience with their skills and working with people with disabilities. They do get eye and dental care free. The collaborative with UMass has interns coming to Fanning taking student's blood

pressure etc. and in the spring the students go to UMass and shared who they are and what they might need from a physician with the medical students.

Another collaboration is with Worcester State Theatre group. Every year transition students attend theatre class with WSU students; they write the script and perform the play together for the community.

The Commission asked what the Transition Program needed. Ms. Roach immediately responded the need for updated, more and accessible space. While the building has a lot to be desired the location is ideal; close to a multitude of resources with which the program works.

Another challenge is independence. Families are concerned about losing the disability check. Staff explains the rules related to how much a person can work without losing the check and still there is great concern on parents' part. Some students may have not taken jobs do to this concern. She suggests the program needs to do better with this. Perhaps have individualized meetings with families.

Other challenges include: to have families feel safe about transportation and have students to gain their voice and know who they are and what they need and want.

One way to keep families engaged is to be welcoming. This is not always easy and takes time to build a relationship. The problems faced by families can and do go far beyond the education and goals of the transition program. The program has become the "jack of all trades". It was easier when the program was serving 20 or 25 students. Sometimes parents come with fears and need to be pointed in the helpful direction.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Roach and Ms. McCullough for the presentation.

Announcement: Coes Pond Beach Wheelchair opening Day

The Commission has been following this project. The new matting system has been installed and July 1st is the scheduled day for the launch of the Coes Pond beach wheelchair.

When additional information about the day is know it will be shared with the Commission. Come and try it out. All amenities at Coes Pond playground are accessible. This beach wheelchair will be a great addition to this park.

John Stewart from Coes Pond Task Force thanked the Commission for its support for the Beach Wheelchair. He also indicted that youth working at the park will receive free bus transportation to the park this summer provided by WRTA.

Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold

Amended Variance Applications

- **170 Belmont Street, Docket #V17-203**
- **120 Granite Street, Docket #V17-202**

Mr. Russell Adams, Assistant Commissioner Public Works Department spoke to the two properties above, both are public schools. The city is seeking CMR 521 AAB variances. The cost of the work tripped what is known as the 30% rule. An entire structure must be made accessible when the cost of improvements being proposed is 60% or greater than the assessed value of the property. The work they are proposing is to replace windows and doors. The city is partnering with the Mass. School Building Authority (MSBA) with these projects. If the project qualifies, MSBA pays 80% excluding AAB requirements. These projects did qualify and there are AAB requirements that need to be addressed at these schools from which the city is seeking variances because they do not have additional funding at this time to put into the buildings. An accessible entrance, accessible restroom and a water fountain are included in the projects. The AAB hearing is scheduled for July 2nd. The City has received approval from the Historical Commission and Mr. Adams is seeking the support of the Commission on Disability.

The Commission voted to support the variance request for 170 Belmont Street (School) and 120 Granite Street (School) with 1 no vote.

Correspondence

- 8 Humboldt Avenue, Docket # V18 060

Decision and Notice of Hearing

- **549 Lincoln Street, Docket # V18 126**
- **30 Thorndyke Street, Docket # V18 127**

Follow-up from May Commission meeting

Estimated cost for variance request

- **549 Lincoln Street (Lincoln Street School)**
30 Thorndyke Road (Thorndyke Street School)

Mr. Adams previously spoke on these two projects and provided estimated cost for variance request; he came before the Commission asking its support indicating the process followed a similar process presented earlier in this meeting. The AAB hearing is scheduled for July 2nd for both of these schools.

The Commission voted to support the variance request for 30 Thorndyke Street (School) and 549 Lincoln Street (School) with 1 no vote.

Mr. Adams thanked the Commission.

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

Update on the ADA Transition Plan

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
June 20th, 2018, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)** July 3rd, 2018, 4:00 – 5:30pm, YWCA, Members Lounge
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** July 12th, 2018, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** Nov 6th, 2018 at 9:00am at National Grid, 939 Southbridge Street, Worcester
- **Picture Medical Justics- A Group Exhibition & Forum**
The theme is the state of the health care system in the U.S. and its effect on the overall health of the nation. The Sprinkler Factory, 38 Harlow Street July 8th-29th Sat. & Sun 1-4pm. Artist Reception July 7th, 5-8pm. www.healingfibersart.com
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** July 17th, 2018 4:30pm.
- **Commission on Disability 40th Anniversary Meeting**
Thursday October 11th, 2018

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.