

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes from May 19, 2015, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Francesca Abbey, Robert Bilotta, Rachel Shannon Brown, Herbert Cremer, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: Susan Fahlbeck, Susan Swanson

Staff: Jayna Turcek; Dawn E. Clark

Guests: John O'Dell, Director of Energy & Asset Management, Robert Antonelli, Assistant Commissioner - Parks

Members of the Public:

Michael Kennedy; Scott Ricker; Tom Shields; Kathleen Hylka

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

The Chairperson Steven Stolberg welcomed commission members and the members of the public present. He invited members of the public to sign in. After the meeting was called to order, the commissioners introduced themselves. Associate Commissioners Abbey was elevated as Commissioners for this meeting.

Approval of April 21st, 2015 Minutes

Commissioner Brown moved to approve the minutes as amended. Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconded. Motion passed. (Y- 6 A -1)

Presentation of Union Station bathroom updates (John O'Dell)

For the first time since the renovation of the building in the 1990's, the restrooms are in the process of being renovated and updated with new and more durable fixtures. A new set of restrooms will be constructed near the rotunda and the current restrooms off the foyer on the first floors will be renovated to accommodate both

men and women. The dual use will occur only when private parties using the Station's restaurants request the same.

Commissioners and public's comments:

- With the opportunity for both men and women to use the facility there were safety concerns raised.
- Review related to accessibility met the code.

Presentation of Parks Master Plans (Robert Antonelli)

The Commission received details on the Master Plans of the following city parks. These are concept plans for the future. Some are not anticipated to be acted on for up to ten years. Others are three to five years out. Not all plans will happen. The Parks Department is currently implementing Master Plans from 1998 and updating for new code, standards and public input. These plans are meant to be guidebooks.

Burncoat Park

Located between Burncoat Street, North Parkway, Lincoln Street, and Rt.290 access ramp. Currently there is a baseball and a softball ball which needs renovation. Plans include putting a small parking area in, two large rectangular fields to be used for football, rugby, softball lacrosse. These would be general open fields. A small skate park, a playground and a walking path along the pond are planned. All paths would be accessible with the exception of a steep slope in the middle of the park to continue as a sledding area which was requested by the neighborhood. Work would be done on both the large and small pond to accommodate a fishing pier.

The park would have lights for walking the paths. The parking lot would have appropriate number of HP spaces. Trying to connect with school so there would be additional parking available when school is not in session. The aim is to have a more consistent use of the park to minimize the miss use.

Crompton Park

Plan to redo parking area, put in two new tennis courts and handball courts along with walking paths to and from the building. The current pool access will be moved for better use of the pool and playground, easier access into the building and to get

from parking lot to pool. Construction will probably begin in August and finish next year.

The pool is accessible with a zero depth entry to the pool and a chair on the exterior side of the pool at the pool's 4ft. depth. There are outdoor showers at the pool. By state law people are supposed to shower before entering a public pool. HP spaces are by the building which has full size accessible restrooms with multiple stalls and two family use restrooms. Family use rooms have been built in the newer facilities through the parks system.

Grant Square

Work has been and is being done here. Phase II in the corner of Mount Vernon and Windsor Streets is community gardens. The lower section includes a walkway, playground, basketball court is currently under construction and all accessible. When finished there will be three accessible access points to the park which addresses the 18' grade level at the edge of the playground. Hopefully the facility will be open for use sometime in July.

The community gardens have fencing and the dept. is partnering with the Regional Environmental Council, Inc. to implement gardening. In the future new fencing will be installed to prevent vandalism and animal access. Accessible gardens will be included with raised beds etc. All facilities are being accessed for camera coverage as plans move forward. There are no plans at this site currently for that coverage. There will be in the future.

Harrington Field

Located on Harrington Way and Franklin Street, some parts of this plan is under construction and other parts will be done in the future. Accessible walkway provides access from parking lot down to the ball field and over to a future playground. Previously the grade had prevented this kind of access for people with mobility issues. A wall has been put in at the corner as preparation for this playground. The current softball field will be moved back to meet standards. The current playground will be moved to the new area allowing space to be opened up for general play. Parking lot will have HP spaces and accessible walkways will run throughout the field.

Plans for playground equipment have not been finalized. There would be both upper and ground equipment. Surface material may be poured in place however the dept.

continues to research the best products for the safety of the fall height or the “hit”. Bleachers, companion seating and benches are currently available and as the plans are built out the seating will follow.

Responses to questions included:

- Restrooms are in the concession stand and will need to be upgraded to code once the accessibility to the field is determined.
- Dug outs are accessible
- Compliment came for not using engineered fiber. There have been numerous complaints from around the state made to the AAB about the product.
- Fencing needs for “flying balls” will be reviewed as the different features are completed. Netting or higher fencing will be used if necessary. Issues at the t-ball field is not expected.

Holland Rink

Off Lincoln Street, Bates Ave. and Rt. 290 Access Ramp, this facility houses a Little League Field, basketball courts, handball court and softball field. The goal is to move the courts and field to the corner opening space for general use. The plan calls for removing the playground equipment that is there and building a new playground. Parking has been put in to lessen that impact on the neighborhood. Hopefully these changes will bring more use of the facility. Accessible walking paths provide accessibility to all amenities. There is one access point that is not accessible due to the grade level. There is accessible parking provided.

Indian Lake Properties

There are four properties three of which were presented. 149 West Boylston was not included at this time which allowed continuing with the three.

Shore Park

Currently there is a bath house built circa 1950's. The city purchased the property in the 1980's as a public park through a grant process and has been managing since then. This park is in need of updating both in terms of accessibility and general use. The city has been working with the YMCA and the Bancroft School to look at

upgrades. Through the Y, Hanover Insurance has provided a \$500,000 grant for these upgrades.

Plans include removing the building and replace further back on property with life guard area, restrooms, storage; a second building would serve as a storage area for canoes, kayaks and other equipment; an accessible walkway to the front of the beach, volleyball and tennis courts; a new parking lot design for easier flow; eventually looking at general access to the beach thru matting systems or specialized chairs. Full access to the park is expected including HP spaces. As appropriate storage is available at beaches one beach buggy/cart or options would be purchased for each beach.

Like many northeast water bodied Indian Lake had a problem with blue/green algae. Worcester took two actions: 1. hired a vendor to treat the algae with Dept. Environmental Affairs assistance and 2. This year at Indian Lake the pond level was reduced. The winter would kill the debris. The city will continue to work with partners on these issues as well. Construction is planned both short and long term to stop debris from coming into the pond.

Morgan's Landing

This facility is on Grove Street. There is one access point for two amenities. One being a tennis court the other the water. Plans are to remove the tennis court and put two at Shore Park. The boat ramp would be moved so there would be easier flow of boats going in and out of the water. Moving the ramp would also alleviate the squeeze of space between the shore and Sears Island. This would open space for more parking and reduce the parking on Grove Street. A ground level gazebo, benches and a couple of piers for fishing will be added. HP spaces and accessible walking trails going from Forest Grove Street to the corner of Holden and Grove Street is planned.. Longer parking spaces are for trucks with trailers hoping to minimize the need for three point turns. No permeate restroom is being proposed, but the use of porta potties are being suggested. There would be one or possibly two accessible toilets in each cluster. They would be put into some type of a shelter for the sake of appearance. When planning out facilities, safety is a consideration. Zero level shelter is planned for when a sudden storm comes along. Shelters can be used for resting, picnics, etc. No tables would be provided but tables could be set up and removed by facility user. Picnic table will be on the exterior along the pathway with fencing along the water.

Suggestions from public:

- The Department will take under consideration to have an access isle at one of the trailer parking spaces to assist people with disabilities.
- Port-a-potties are planned for ground level.

Indian Lake Beach

Located between Stowell and Sherburne Avenues - this is a very challenging facility. The goal is to renovate the entire facility. The building needs to be upgraded to include accessible restroom. There is a steep grade requiring a long walkway. There have been security issues in the past. So a gating system is being considered. Provide parking for police and general staff when the gates are closed. This beach is at two levels and all is at an incline. There is a wall that will remain. As time determines the need, concerns will be addressed as they get closer to the water. There is accessible parking. This is a well hidden facility.

Mulcahy Field

Located between Arthur Street and Grafton & Dorchester Streets - City owns two pieces but not the middle piece of the field. The goal is to move both the baseball field and the softball field and redo the playground. Netting will be used as necessary and light the field for evening use. Worcester Police Dept. has worked with the Parks Dept. on issues in the area and anticipate continued collaboration as the park sees more use as a result of these renovations. There is a HP space at the top of the grade. The rest of field is accessible. As funding allows the building will be upgrade with accessible restrooms.

Oread Castle

Off of Castle Street, a private road and King Street and Eli Street – Plans are to rearrange what is currently there: playground, basketball court, handball court, and tennis court to put the active sports to the side and put the playground in the center with the ideas of bringing families in and making the facility visible. Looking to remove the handball courts completely and keeping the soccer field where it is. This facility is very hilly. A walkway is designed to go around the facility so the activities will be accessible. There two places where the walkway would not be accessible because of the grade. The city only has an easement and does not own the entire property. The Dept. will work with the neighborhood to determine playground amenities as well as benches etc. Oread Castle was one of the first

women's colleges in Massachusetts and the county so there is a lot of history. Looking at old photos, the college looked like a castle.

South Worcester Playground

Located corner of Camp and Cambridge Street – Currently on site is baseball field, Little League Field, handball court and basketball court. At one time there was a pool. There is a parking lot and playground. The plan is to put all parking in one lot and expand the playground to include more amenities and separate the age range of children. There will be a small parking lot with a handicapped ramp going into the front door of the building. Where the pool was there will be community gardens. The Department is working with a group to begin the gardens this spring. Rectangular spaces have been put in for use such as volleyball. The playground surface will be poured in place or the tiled system. Funding for this facility is not available at this time.

- Community gardens are allotted by contacting the Parks office who will put interested parties in touch with the group assisting with the project. There has not been a problem matching those interested and available land.

With the completion of Mr. Antonelli's presentation the chairperson and Commission thanked him.

Discussion: UMass Memorial request for parking plan support

The data on how the number of HP spaces were calculated requested at the last meeting was received and reviewed. Chairperson Stolberg asked if the Commission wanted to provide a letter of support for the UMass parking plan.

The Commission stayed with the decision made last month to submit the January and April minutes to the AAB as evidence of the Commission's thinking.

Informational communication: Website accessibility review

Ms. Turcek informed the Commission that the Institute for Human Centered Design, Inc. has been chosen by the City to review the city's website.

Review of Commission on Disability FY15 annual report

A draft of the FY15 annual report was reviewed and approved for submission to the City Manager.

Thank you to Rachel Brown for her years of service on Commission (Today is her last meeting)

The Commission thanked Commissioner Brown for her two terms of service during which she served two years as Chairperson. She has provided much to the Commission with her leadership and knowledge. Rachel will be missed.

The Commission was asked to stay a few minutes after the meeting so a group picture could be taken.

Election of Officers

The City ordinance calls for three Commission officers: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. With the loss of Commissioner Brown on the Commission, a Vice Chairperson needed to be elected.

Both Commissioners Garr-Colzie and Abbey were nominated for the position of Vice Chairperson. Nancy Garr-Colzie was elected Vice Chairperson.

The election of a Chairperson and Secretary was postponed.

Announcements

The following announcements appeared on the agenda for information:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
June 17th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**
Tuesday June 2, 5-6:30pm, Worcester Public Library
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program: June 9th** <http://www.audiojournal.net/> th, 2015, 5-6pm.
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** June 16th, 2015 4:30pm.

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

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.