

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes from June 16, 2015, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bilotta, Rachel Shannon Brown, Herbert Cremer, Susan Fahlbeck, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Douglas Russell, Jr., Stephen Stolberg, Susan Swanson

Members Absent: Francesca Abbey; Nancy Garr Colzie

Staff: Jayna Turchek; Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Deputy Chief Sean Fleming, Worcester Police Department; Ellen Dalbeck, City of Worcester Customer Service

Members of the Public: Michael Kennedy; Scott Ricker

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. Douglas Russell was introduced as a new Associate Commissioner. Associate Commissioner Prochilo was elevated as Commissioner for this meeting.

Approval of May 19th , 2015 Minutes

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

Presentation on city side walk snow removal (winter '14-'15)

At the Commission's request the following is a report on the winter '14 – '15 city sidewalk snow removal. Ms. Dalbeck of the Customer Service (Department of Public Works [DPW]) reported 1,900 complaints received and 18% cleared by a contractor. Just under 250 properties were cited and 722 sidewalks cleared by owners after warned. This number doesn't reflect 60 City owned sidewalk complaints. A report was sent one or two times daily to Worcester Police Department (WPD).

WPD is responsible for going out and looking at the property complained about and they report back to DPW. Ms. Dalbeck felt given the snow we had this past season the process went smoothly. Last year there were 1,500 complaints.

Deputy Chief Fleming from the WPD then spoke confirming the good working relationship between DPW and WPD. Where the breakdown came this year was with the contractor and so much snow; the system was overwhelmed (equipment breakdown and just getting to the property needing clearing).

Information gathered through questions to Officer Fleming:

- There is every effort made to have contractors clear and sand the sidewalk properly 4ft. wide, snow off curb cuts and HP spaces, melt and refreeze can be a problem. This year the task was more difficult. This was a problem particularly on Main Street. Deputy Chief Fleming acknowledged the problem and intends to keep a focus on Main Street.
- The problem area of the corner of Franklin and Main Street was identified. WPD was aware of the troubled spots and attempted to get a contractor to the spot. He asked the Commission to alert Customer Service when a sidewalk needs to be cleared so it can be addressed in a timely fashion.
- Another property mentioned was the sidewalk by the Elm Street Garage is rarely if ever cleared. This is a city owned property. A city contractor should be doing this property and if not needs to be reported to the DPW customer service.

- Contractors are asked to take a picture before clearing and after clearing. Curbs cuts are included in the job. This year locating the curb cut was a little difficult for the contractor given that amount of snow. (Pictures help when there is a contested citation fine.)
- One office oversees the process. There is a core group of four or five officers involved with this project.
- Volunteer snow clearers were active this past year. The list is on the city website; a copy is sent to residents who ask; the information is sent to the various media outlets in the city. A copy will be sent to the Director to be shared with the Commission before each season.
- An officer who helped a commissioner through the unclear sidewalk at Franklin and Main Streets was commended.
- The Treasurer's office has the fine collected information.
- The Customer Service number is 508-929-1300.

Goody bags with DPW phone number and other information were brought for Commission members and the public.

Response from UMass: withdrawal of AAB variance application

Director Turcek announced that the University of Massachusetts Medical School had withdrawn its AAB variance application for handicapped parking.

Election of Officers (Continued from May)

The City ordinance calls for three Commission officers: Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. Chairperson is responsible for conducting Commission meetings and setting the agenda. The Vice Chairperson acts as Chairperson when the Chairperson is unable to perform his/her duties and assists the Chairperson whenever needed. The Secretary writes the minutes and keeps attendance records.

A strong suggestion was made that Co-chairs were put in place. Chairperson Stolberg agreed to include the Vice Chairperson when developing the agenda and other matters related to his duties.

The election of a Chairperson and Secretary was postponed until more commissioners could be present.

Review of AAB notices and applications: no city facilities this month

Variance Application:

- 670 West Boylston Street, Docket TBD
- 34 Institute Road, Docket TBD

Mr. Cremer asked if a chair lift could be used. Mr. Kennedy said this would not work.

Responses:

- 601 Grafton Street, C14 076
- 255 Park Avenue, Suite 602, (2) Docket # C14 071

Notice of Hearing:

- 55 Lake Avenue North, Docket # V14 353

Member of the public, Scott Ricker was concerned that long-range plans for a cat-walk from Parking garage to the Benedict building would eliminate the Benedict parking lot making HP parking in the garage putting HP spaces further away for disabled people.

Mike Kennedy, Center for Living & Working, Inc., Access Coordinator indicated that the variance was withdrawn because the HP spaces were appropriately restriped when the AAB Compliance visited the site.

- 255 Park Avenue, Suite 602, Docket C14 071- Hearing Cancelled
Mr. Cremer was familiar with the Park Ave. property. HP Spaces are good. Mr. Kennedy said the contractor was coming back to restripe the parking lot.

Decisions and Resolutions:

- 255 Park Avenue, Suite 602, Docket C14 071
- 39-41 Irving Street, Docket V14-106

Mr. Kennedy spoke about the Irving Street property. The AAB reportedly told the owner that the variance was not approved and the

contractor has submitted plans that will have to be reviewed. This property seeks to provide additional housing in the city and the city needs housing for people with disabilities.

Mr. Cremer asked if the WRTA meeting was tomorrow. Mr. Kennedy said yes.

Suggestions for Upcoming agenda Items

Mr. Cremer brought in a list of free Friday activities to share with the Commission.

- Something should be in media about emergency preparedness; maybe about the importance of growing food locally and supporting local farm production. Emergency preparedness covers a lot of things.
- The Commission might want to look at the growing medical costs related to the disabled; Worcester is very expensive Baystate city according to a recent study it is fourth in its category.

Susan Swanson announced that the city was submitting a million dollar proposal for a universal park at the site of the old Coes Knife Factory on Mill Street. This would be a multi-generational park for people of all ages and mobility abilities. There will be two meetings. June 26th will be a walk through. Those people interested meet in the parking lot at the corner of Coes and Mill Streets at 5:00PM. The second meeting is a sub-committee meeting on June 17th at 6:00PM at The Hub Main Street, 912 Main Street. It would be good to have representation of those with a vested interest.

While the announcement of these meetings are great, the Director reminded the Commission if four members are present at a meeting other than duly called Commission on Disability meeting not to discuss Commission business. The Director will get back to the Commission whether the four members include Associate Members or not.

City Manager is thinking of hiring a Diversity Officer. We should meet this person about working to hire more people with disabilities. This position will work to hire people of all diversities including people with disabilities.

ADA Celebration on Saturday, July 25 parking for people with disabilities. The Committee is working on all aspects of accommodation including valet service. Announcements will be made as logistics are finalized.

Commissioner Russell suggested at a future meeting we look at what happens to people with disabilities once they turn 22 years of age.

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)**
No meeting until September
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program: July 14th** <http://www.audiojournal.net/>th, 2015, 5-6pm.
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting: July 21st, 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 at 5:40pm.