

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for October 18th, 2016, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber,
Room 309, 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Francesca Abbey, Herbert Cremer, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Douglas Russell, Jr., Lindsey Silva

Members Absent: Robert Bilotta, Robert Bureau

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Dawn E. Clark

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Chairperson Commission Garr-Colzie called meeting to order and Commissioners introduced themselves.

Approval of September 20th, 2016 Minutes

Commissioner Prochilo moved to approve the September 20th, 2016 minutes as written. Commissioner Elizabeth Myska seconded the motion. All approved.

Best Buddies Presentation

Best Buddies representatives presented on the Best Buddies Massachusetts program. Kara White, Director of Development explained Best Buddies is an international non-profit serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The Massachusetts program began in 1996 and serves over 5,500 people throughout Massachusetts. Anthony K. Shriver is the Founder and Chairman of Best Buddies International, which he created in 1989 to foster one-to-one friendships between people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). His vision is that someday Best

Buddies will go out of business because friendship and jobs will be common place.

There are three tiers to the program.

1. The One to One Friendship tier is in over 50 schools throughout Central Massachusetts. A student is matched with a peer student with the idea of establishing a friendship. This has proved to be very successful. Citizens Friendship is being started in Massachusetts so adults can have a peer.

2. The Jobs tier so people can have jobs, earn and be independent as much as they can.

3. The third tier is Leadership Development. This tier encourages being ambassadors and advocating for themselves with legislators and others. Participants take public speaking classes where they learn to write speeches and practice them in front of their peers.

Heidi, supervisor of the One to One Friendship tier explained that this tier is expanding very quickly in Worcester. Both Assumption College and Worcester State University are active with this tier and a new program at Burncoat High School just started. There are chapters at Clark University and Holy Cross. The chapter at UMass Medical School has been operating for about four years now. Participants are matched with students without disabilities with the goal of building a friendship.

Lisa and Rachel, Best Buddies faculty advisors from Oxford High School spoke next. They have been running the Best Buddies club for eleven (11) years. Both women enjoy advising the club. Members are active both in school activities and activities outside of school. Participants who would not be part of the school are now in the hallways

known by their names, students have lunch with each other, etc. The club is very important to Oxford High and part of the school community. The program benefits all who are involved.

Parent Tammy testified to the benefits of Best Buddies for her non-verbal son and herself. People know her son when he is in the community and calls him by name. She is known as Bry's mom. She thanked the Commission for the opportunity to share that Best Buddies is a great program. She is not sure what is in the future for her son but this program is a start to help people feel comfortable around people with disabilities as they should be.

Kara described a video of the friendship process development.

Andréa spoke about the job tier. They began this tier in 2015. Working with Mass. Rehab and others, participants learn to write a resume, interviewing and other job ready skills. In Worcester, participants have jobs at Five Guys, Price Rite, UMass, Goodwill, etc. They are always looking for new employers that are able and willing to hire participants. Once on the job, job coaches are provided as needed.

How to get involved: Halloween weekend event (Saturday October 29th) and walk to celebrate all the Best Buddies has done over the year. Funds raised stays in the community to support the programs and to boost the new ambassador program.

Information gathered as a result of questions from Commission and public.

- Sometimes people using wheelchairs are left out for a number of reasons: Chapters are encouraged to hold activities in accessible places and accessible transportation. Note: the walk event offers an on-site and short walk.

- Being a buddies is a one year relationship
- There is a real effort to offer services to adults
- Employment plans are put in place that is tailored to the individuals and well as the employers.
- There is a Best Buddies office in Boston and one in Amherst. The hope is to have an office in Worcester.
- Ideas are always helpful to sustain and increase programing
- The Video is on their website.

The Chairperson thanked the group from Best Buddies.

Commonwealth Connect Non-Emergency Smartphone

Application: <http://commonwealthconnect.io/>

Commonwealth Connect is equipping Massachusetts with the tools we need to efficiently report and respond to non-emergency issues. By uniting residents and local governments, Commonwealth Connect has helped identify and repair damaged public infrastructure, neighborhood blight, and storm damage across the state. Worcester DPW has the capacity to receive data; however, the life of this application may be limited.

Review of Commission recommendations for 2017 sidewalk Improvement (Vote needed)

- a. On the Master Street/Sidewalk list received last month, there were sidewalks identified as needing repair by residents that would affect people with disabilities.
- b. Dillon Street coming down Granite Street – cracks and ruts
- c. Massasoit Road –trees and other items
- d. Hooper Street – potholes

The Commission voted unanimously to forward the above street/sidewalks to the City Manager requesting that they be given priority for repair for the safe passage by people with disabilities and others.

Discussion of COD 2016 Emergency Preparedness Priorities

The Commission received a worksheet that identifies the priorities chosen in 2015. The Commission has been asked to select five (5) priorities for 2016, prior to the end of the calendar year that will address disability issues. They will be reviewed and included in the city of Worcester's Emergency Preparedness Plan by Emergency Communication Director Mr. Fiske and staff.

Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold

Reopened Complaint:

- **284 Highland Street, Docket C16 025**

There is a stipulated order in place and work needs to be done by November 1st, 2016. The city is adding additional supporting material because the ground was sinking.

Notice of Hearing:

- 274 Franklin Street, Docket # V14 314

Correspondence:

- 55 Lake Ave. N, Docket #v14 353

Decision:

- 274 Franklin Street, Docket # V14 314

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

- Learn about new recreational vehicle with large wheels
- Invite people who wrote article Worcester 150th in Accessibility for People with Disabilities.

- Explain SSDI/SSI

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
October 19th, 2016, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**
November 1st, 2016, 4:00 – 5:30PM, YWCA, Members Lounge
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** November 8th, 2016, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **White Cane Day:** October 19th (Gathering 9:45 – 10:00Pm – Noon)
- **AbilityFest:** October 23rd, 10am-4pm, Institute Park (We will be tabling)
- **Disability Employment Awareness Training for Employers:** October 24th, 2016, 12noon-1pm. RSPV: 508-799-8486
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** November TBD 2016 at 8:30 am, Parks Department, 50 Skyline Drive or if Department is moved, meeting will be at 2 Coppage Drive.
- **Emergency Preparedness Training with Massachusetts Office on Disability:** Wednesday, November 9th, 2016 – Levi Lincoln Chamber, 2:30-4:30pm (RSVP by October 31st, 2016 at 508-799-8486 in order to get a free emergency “Go Bag”.)
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** November 15th, 2016. 4:30pm

Emergency Preparedness Tips:

- Pack an emergency “Go Pack” with essential life-saving items and store several gallons of water/person at home. Click here for a list of items and other helpful tips: <https://www.ready.gov/>
- People with disabilities may want to consider having several gallon containers of water per person at home for emergencies.

- Fill plastic containers with water and keep in your freezer. If the power goes out it will help to keep food cool. As it melts you will also have potable water.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned.