

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for December 19th, 2018, 4:30PM
Levi Lincoln Chamber (3rd fl.)
Worcester City Hall

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bilotta, Nancy Garr-Colzie, John Gleason, Fitzroy Hall, Darya Karuna, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: Robert Bureau, Paul Keister, Lindsay Silva

Staff: Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Bart Harvey, Assistant to the Chief Officer and Thomas Quick, D'Agostino, Izzo, Quirk Architects, Inc. representing the Worcester Red Socks; Ruth Seward, Executive Director and Derek Lirange, Community Forester from The Tree Initiative, a program of Tower Hill Botanical Gardens

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Chairperson Bilotta called the meeting to order. Commissioners introduced themselves.

Approval of November 20th, 2018 Minutes

Commissioner Bilotta moved approval and Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the November 20th, 2018 minutes.

Worcester Red Sox – Public conversation for an accessible stadium

Mr. Harvey, Assistant to the Chief Officer of the Worcester Sox provided a artistic rendering of the stadium and indicated that the location would be at the Gordon-Wyman North property along Madison Street, McGrath Highway, Green Street extending into the Canal District where new businesses and housing are planned. Many amenities re being planned for the ball Park including a possible polling site. The property has a terrain with an uphill grade that will have worked with to provide accessible access for people with disabilities.

The Deaf community provided input related for the need for good signage and effective communication to be able to successfully traverse the stadium. The blind

and Commission also noted the need for effective audio description to understand what is happening on the field.

Both Mr. Harvey and Mr. Quirk were willing to come back to the Commission as the project proceeds to assure the Worcester Sox intention of making the stadium accessible for all.

The Chairperson thanked the presenters.

Worcester Tree Initiative Presentation (Trees and Accessibility)

Derek Lirange, Community Forester from The Tree Initiative, a program of Tower Hill Botanical Gardens made his presentation via a power point.

Worcester has lost a lot of trees in recent years many through the Long-horned Beetle infestation in 2008-09.

Trees provide a healthy environment. The leaves provide shade and the roots keep ground stable, moist and a good soil. At the same time the growth of tree roots can lift sidewalks making walking and the use of wheelchairs difficult and sometimes dangerous or impassible.

The Tree Initiative, over time, has developed a good working relationship with the City of Worcester. They are looking at different ways to increase the number of trees in Worcester while still being able for people to traverse the city sidewalks. One possibility would be to learn where trees can be planted on private property. They anticipate a long term collaboration with the city and appreciate ideas from the Commission.

The Chairperson thanked the presenters.

Transportation Initiative/Summit Update (Nancy Garr-Colzie)

The Transportation Summit took place on Friday, December 14th with about 100 people attending. The transportation Initiative is working with transportation providers to secure available, accessible and affordable transportation for people with disabilities. The new WRTA Director will soon be aboard and the group is hoping to continue the conversation about collaboration between Uber and WTRA.

Review midyear progress of COD FY19 goals

Goals for FY19:

1. **Transportation initiative-** participate in community advocacy for improved transportation options that are affordable and reliable. Explore accessible on demand pilot initiatives similar to the Boston Uber Coalition.
2. Advocate for **youth recreation opportunities and youth summer employment** for youth with disabilities
3. Plan an annual **ADA observance event**
4. Host **Disability Oppression workshops**
5. Advocate for **Accessible Housing**
6. **Accessibility review of restaurants** (complete pilot review of Shrewsbury Street)

This item was tabled.

Debrief White Cane Day event (Tabled from November)

White Cane Day took place on October 17th.

West Boylston Street Wheelchair Stroll Evaluation*

Commission Prochilo reviewed the evaluations. People participating found the experience informative and did not realize how hard it was to navigate the sidewalks using a wheelchair. Again this month he noted the need to replace/fix the truncated domes and chippers at street crossings for the visually impaired.

Confirm 2019 Commission dates:

January 15th, February 19th, March 19th, April 16th, May 21st, June 18th, July 16th, August 20st, September 17th, October 22nd, November 19th, and December 17th

Review of AAB notices and applications:

No communications received

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
February 5th, 2019, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)** January 8th, 2019, 4:00 – 5:30pm, YWCA, Members Lounge

- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** January 8th, 2019, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net>
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** January 15th, 2019, 4:30pm

Adjournment:

*Material can be viewed at the Office of Human Rights & Disabilities during normal business hours.