

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes from September 16th, 2014, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Francesca Abbey; Rachel Shannon Brown (late arrival); Nancy Garr-Colzie; Herbert Cremer; Charles Hiamah; Paul Keister; Elizabeth Myska

Members Absent: Stephen Stolberg; Susan Swanson

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Joseph Sansoucy, Dawn E. Clark

Members of the Public:

Anne Adam; Dena Johnson; Terry Dotson; Jo Hart; Jackie Norton; Scott Ricker

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

The Chairperson welcomed commission members and the members of the public. After the meeting was called to order, the commissioners introduced themselves. Associates Francesca Abbey and Nancy Garr-Colzie were raised to the status of member for this meeting. The Chairperson announced that the City Council was meeting at 5:30PM with the expectation of a large public attendance and he would try to shorten the length of the Commission meeting.

Recognition of passing of former Commission Member, Mary Healey

Director Turchek read the following:

“WORCESTER - Mary E. Healey, 57, passed away Tuesday, August 26th after a brief illness at UMass Memorial Healthcare. Mary leaves her daughter, Jennifer Healey Snaith of Georgetown, SC; her granddaughter, Stephanie Healey of Georgetown, SC; two great granddaughters, Allyiah and Hailey; her mother, Doris (Couming) Healey of Worcester; a brother, James Healey and his wife Patricia of Spencer; a sister, Anne M. Quinlivan and her husband Thomas of Worcester and many nieces and nephews. Mary was predeceased by her father, James "Red" Healey and her sister, Patricia Healey.

Mary was born in Worcester and attended Worcester Public Schools. She was an active member on the Commission for the Blind and Worcester Disabilities Committee. Despite being blind, Mary was a very independent woman and always made sure she was dressed to the nines. Mary loved spreading happiness, spending time with her family and going to the beach.”

Approval of August 19th, 2014 Minutes

Commissioner Myska moved approval of amended minutes. Commissioner Abbey seconded the motion. The Commission voted approval with 5 yes votes and 1 abstention.

Sidewalk improvement prioritization requests

1. Sidewalk on north side of Cedar Street, 60 or 70 ft. from West Street (commissioner Keister)

Mr. Keister said that he had fallen a year ago and sustained injuries because of an upheaved sidewalk due to the roots of a tree. The shade of the tree made it hard to see due to his blindness. Since then one side of the upheaval has been patched which helped. However, there is still a 16 inch drop to the ground and would be difficult for a person using mobility

devices to stay on the sidewalk. He brought pictures in just after the fall happened and the recent pictures show the situation is the same.

Ms. Turchek reminded the Commission of the conversation last month with Mr. Borbone about the commission presenting to the City Council a priority list of needs based on disability for their consideration. As of the last commission meeting issues relating to disability are not always part of the information collected by engineers and therefore not always known by a councilor unless a resident contact his/her councilor.

She recapped the resident sidewalk repair request process as follows:

- presented at City Council
- then to the Public Works Committee
- forwarded to an engineer
- back to the Committee
- each councilor is given a list of needs in their district and a dollar amount available to each
- back to the City Council for final decision on the work that would be done the following construction year.

There are two items on the agenda for consideration by the Commission at this meeting. One is Mr. Keister's who as a commissioner cannot vote on his request because it is a personal matter, but is still entitles to present the issue.

Mr. Keister thanked Ms. Turchek and said his issues did not need to go to city council or the committee. He said that last year the committee voted to repair it.

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved that the Commission determine if the issue was on Mr. Keister's district councilor's

list of streets and sidewalks for a repair priority. Chairman Cremer seconded the motion. Approved 4 Yes 2 Abstention.

Mr. Ricker spoke to the numerous access concerns between Russell Street and West Street. He suggested that the whole length of the sidewalk be considered for repair instead of a particular section. Mr. Keister did not know DPW priorities for sidewalk repairs and noted that the sidewalks on Linden Street and Elm Street to Park Ave were new and 4 feet wide and ADA compliant. They have not gotten to Cedar Street.

Ms. Turchek clarified that if a street is being resurfaced then sidewalks are repaired/replaced at the same time. She will follow through on the Commission's action and inquire as to the status of the project identified on the agenda.

The Chairperson requested the following comments Ms. Norton and Ms. Hart be included in the minutes:

Jackie Norton stated DPW may have said they would fix this problem and in terms of priorities it may take five years instead of 10 years. A good example is \$600,000 was given 6 years ago to fix McKeon Road. The project is just now being awarded. Sometimes streets are done according to monies appropriated. For example Lincoln Street was done with State money. She offered other examples as well. The city may have funds to do a project, but it may be five years down the road before the project is done.

The other thing is that there is money set aside every year for people with disabilities. This is put into the DPW account to do the curb cuts which was a federal requirement. Now they can put this money aside to due repairs such as Mr. Keister's.

Jo Hart submitted a petition within the past year and it was triaged. These kinds of situations need to be triaged. Putting an

issue on a list the needs to get fix is not helpful. Things need to get fixed right away.

2. Curb cut Ramp intersection of Catalpa/Bishop Avenue
(Anne Adams)

Ms. Adams began “I am disabled and it is horrible to down to Webster Plaza.” There is a sidewalk that has been there since she moved in with a hole in it and no curb cut at the end of Bishop Avenue. A curb cut would be helpful so she doesn’t have to use the rough road with her wheelchair. She cannot use the sidewalk. Ms. Adams’ worker, Dena Johnson said that Ms. Adams self-sufficiency is hindered because of the effort it takes to even get to the bus stop given the condition of the sidewalk and rough pavement on the street. They are asking for the Commission’s support to have this situation repaired.

The Chairperson asked Ms. Adams if she had spoken to her District Councilor. She had and Councilor Rosen said he would support her request. She indicated that they would follow up with the Councilor and tell him they spoke with the Commission and would ask that he support this project with the little bit of money the city gets for these kinds of requests.

The Chairperson explained the Commission is advisory and has no authority to make this kind of request happen. He asked that their comments be included in the minutes and would try to speak to the Councilor himself. He also will try to make a site visit of the problem area. He then thanked them for sharing their situation with the Commission.

Ms. Turchek has been working with Anne and Dena. They have filled a petition and it was on the August 19th council agenda.

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved to prioritize this project. The Chairperson seconded. Motion passed. 5 Yes 1 Abstention

Informational Communication: WRTA Installation of LED signs complete (Paul Keister)

Commissioner Keister said that thanks to work on a lot of people's part including Jayna Turchek and a new friend at Mass. DOT high level signs posting bus number and bay for buses are now up and in operation. Signs are updated about every three minutes. Repeats the large overhead signs and includes the bay number that the overhead signs do not have on it. There are two signs, one at each end of the platform. The one next to the fare machine is much easier to read. They were attached to the steel beams. The one on the other end faces out and the sun can make the sign difficult to read. These signs are all computer driven and easy to make adjustments. There have been a lot fewer complaints since their installation.

Discussion: White Cane Day: (Liz Myska)

In Massachusetts October 15th has been designated as White Cane Day in recognition of those who are blind and use a white cane. Each year there is a rally at the State House. The rally attendance has been small. She is on the Regional Mass. Commission for the Blind Advisory Board which has been asked to think of a multi-disability event this year in Worcester and co-join it with Disability Employment Awareness Month which happens to be October. They are planning a "Flash Mob" event on City Hall Plaza (rear) for the 15th at noon with a rain date of the 17th. Plans include having tap dancers and rope or ribbon to have people hold on to as a symbol of community and the embracing of each other recognizing each other's attributes.

Commissioner Myska is the liaison to the Commission for the event and would like to hear suggestions and ideas from the Commission. Again this event wants to include the young, middle aged and elders –all people.

The Chairperson mentioned that he had seen her on TV about another project. This is a course for couples facing chronic illness on Saturday

morning over the course of six weeks from 10 – 12 at the YWCA.

The following agenda items were tabled:

- Discussion: 25th Anniversary of ADA Celebration
- Review: Member absenteeism and vacancies
- Discussion Expansion of Commission from 7 to 9 members’
- Discussion of requesting Commission transition from Advisory to Executive status
- Election of officers

Review of AAB notices and applications City owned facilities:

The Commission heard comments on the following three City owned properties.

- 271 Franklin St, Docket#C14-037 (Order)
- Newton Hill/Elm Park, 683 Pleasant St, Docket #C14-060 (Resolution)
- Spillane Field, 95 Prouty Ln, Docket #C14-059 (Resolution)

Mr. Sansoucy reported that the fire hydrant at 271 Franklin Street will be moved to meet ADA requirement by November 1, 2014 with photographs to be sent to the AAB within 5 days of this date.

Mr. Ricker, complainant, reported to the Commission that he was satisfied with the resolution of his complaints related to Newton Hill/Elm Park and Spillane Field.

Review of AAB notices and applications Privately owned facilities:

The Commission did not review the following privately owned facilities:

- 255 Park Ave, Docket #C14-071 (2 Responses)
- 691 Grafton St., Docket #C14-076 (First Notice)
- 102 Russell St., Docket #C14-069 (2 Responses)
- 1059 Grafton St. Docket #C14-074 (Response)
- 134 Providence St., Docket #C14-064 (Response)
- 20 Winthrop St., Docket#C14-065 (Response)

Public Comment

Scott Ricker: He checked out Elm Park and found the port a potties all set. Spellane Field has been resolved. He is bothered by the current process for prioritizing sidewalk repairs. There is no way anyone can say when a person with a disability is going to use a sidewalk. He sees that sometimes sidewalks are repaired because of special interest that didn't really need repair and sidewalks needing repair or proper width go unrepaired cheating people with disabilities depending on where they live. He asked the Commission to consider this so that there would be an overall improvement in a timely manner. He said he spoke with Jayna three and a half years ago about a cross walk at Grove Street and Gold Star Blvd. There has not been a priority there. He hoped the Commission would consider this hazardous area for help.

Terri Burke Dotson-Millbury – Her interest in in making the DCU Center accessibly. She wanted to know what her next step could be in making this happen. Ms. Turчек did not know if Ms. Dotson had responded to the Community Accessibility that was on line. If she had not she may want to take it. This is where the city is to get community input on the draft plan that the Center for Human-Centered Design did for the city. There were also copies of the survey available at the meeting.

Once the data from the survey is collected, it will go to the Commission for its recommendations. The deadline for taking the survey is September 30th. The survey includes areas of importance such as entrance, access to goods and services, bathrooms, etc. for each city owned building. There is an additional comment section to add whatever one feels is important to that facility. Another way to share ones concerns is to provide testimony in response to the report. The Commission's recommendations will go to Council at a later point.

Announcements

Dept. of Public Health Hearing on Emergency Preparedness

September 30th at the Public Library

The Chairperson asked where we are on the transition plan. The Director responded that right now we are seeking participants to take the survey. There have been about 170 surveys completed. She hopes there will be more and encouraged Commissioners to have family member, friends and associates fill out a survey. There were hard copies available at the meeting as well as the survey being online.

WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting

September 17th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove Street

REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)

October 3rd, 2014, 5pm, Worcester Public Library

Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program: October 7th, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>

Next Commission meeting: October 21st, 4:30pm

Emergency Preparedness Tip: People with disabilities might want to consider having several gallon containers of water at home for emergencies. The Chairperson appreciated this announcement being on the agenda and reiterated his ongoing commitment to being involved with emergency preparedness for people with disabilities.

Adjournment:

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.