

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for February 21st, 2017, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber,
Room 309, 3rd Flr.

Videotape of meeting can be found on the City of Worcester's Website:
<http://view.earthchannel.com/PlayerController.aspx?PGD=worcema&Id=807>

Attendance:

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

Members Absent: Elizabeth Myska, Paul Keister, Robert Bilotta,
Robert Bureau

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Dawn Clark, Simon Elliott

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Chairperson Commission Garr-Colzie called meeting to order at 4:35pm and the Commissioners introduced themselves. Commissioners Douglas Russell and Lindsey Silva were elevated from associate Commissioners to full Commissioners for today's meeting.

Approval of December 20th, 2016 Minutes

Vice-Chairperson Abbey moved to approve the December 20th, 2016 minutes as written. Commissioner Prochilo seconded the motion. Unanimously approved as written.

Public Right of Way Training by Meg Robertson, Mobility Specialist from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

The title of Meg Roberston's presentation is "Designing for All, Pedestrian Access Issues For Individuals Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision."

89 million American Adults report experiencing vision loss, according to the 2010 census. Robertson defined different forms of vision loss, which exists on a continuum. **Acuity** is how clear or blurred one's vision is. **Field** is how full or constricted one's field of vision is. **Contrast sensitivity** is how clear or clouded one's vision is.

Legal blindness definitions are based on the best corrected vision in one of your eyes and related to field loss, and is defined by having a visual field of 10 degrees or less in the better eye, and a vision acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye. Major causes for vision loss: age related macular degeneration, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and cataract.

Robertson demonstrated, with images on her PowerPoint, how difficult it would be to cross a street with different visual impairments. Long canes, support canes, guide dogs or any combination of those mobility devices are commonly used for those with visual impairments. Robertson outlined some of the different orientation (knowing where you are in space) and mobility (the ability to move safely and efficiently across space) techniques that help those with visual impairments to cross streets, including.

In order to cross the street, one must: locate the edge of the street, determine where to cross, establish crossing direction, find out if there is a walk signal, decide when to cross, maintain alignment during crossing, recognize the end of the crossing and establish which direction to go at the end of the crossing.

There have been many advances in intersection design in recent years, further complicating street crossings. These features include rounded curbs, curb cuts (with or without tactile warnings), geometric design, blended curbs, intersection signalization.

Recently, many crosswalks are controlled by people needing to press the button for the crosswalk. Other recent issues include bicyclists, distracted drivers, quieter hybrid cars, crowded streetscapes and loud intersections.

Americans with Disabilities Act Title II requires equal access in all government projects, including streets, sidewalks, and intersections.

Including wide curb radii, that can often be deceiving as they are often designed unnecessarily for future larger vehicles. Robertson argues that a smaller curb radius is safer.

Accessible pedestrian signals (APS) only inform the pedestrian audibly what the walk signal normally does visual. All new construction work should include APS. The placement of such is important, as people ought to be able to tell where exactly to cross in relation to the APS.

Issues with APS include: being too loud, vibrotactile effects not being turned on, and the placement of APS on pole. Robertson gave an example of a recent construction, from January, that had installed the APS wrong, to demonstrate that many people are installing this technology with no attention to detail.

Detectable warnings inform individuals that they are at street crossings. Detectable warnings should contrast with the sidewalk, such as bright yellow against the sidewalk. Detectable warnings used to be required for driveways, but are no longer required.

Engineers are big proponents of roundabouts. However, those with visual impairments encounter challenges with crossing roundabouts. There are no studies to prove that roundabouts are safer for pedestrians outside of once an individual is hit, the car will be traveling a low speed.

Pedestrian barricades should not be cones and tape, but rather should be stable, continuous, non-flexible, and have a continuous bottom edge.

MUTCD (Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices) is not the only manual one should be looking at. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Draft Public Rights of Way Access also must be taken into consideration, as it is a federal regulation. Other resources to be referenced include: PROWAG, ADA, Mass Local Regulations, and Complete Streets. All cities and towns must have an ADA transition plan, which describes

the plan to make businesses, buildings, and the entire community accessible. Transition plans should address: sidewalks, parking lots, transit stops, parks and recreation facilities.

Sidewalk issues can be caused by sidewalks being made of brick, lack of repairs, overhangs, brush, and signage location. Sidewalks within parking lots should be defined so that drivers know to look out for pedestrians. Snow and ice removal must be done continuously so that there is access to street crossings, sidewalks, etc. Traffic sign height is important so that drivers and pedestrians both are able to see one another. Sidewalk furniture must be uniform within a town or city and should be contained within a defined space. Bump-out curbs allow the pedestrian to be more visible to cars. Worcester has a 311 number and an app on smartphones. You can text a photo and it will include the GPS location of the complaint so that it can be addressed.

The ADA requires that all pedestrian projects be accessible, regardless of the funding sources. Pamphlets and ADA informational brochures are available at the Office of Disabilities at the City of Worcester, City Hall, Room 101.

Information gathered as a result of questions from Commissioners and the public:

- There is no standard for the tones for APS. The signals in downtown Worcester are of the older design, which are overhead, and are therefore forced to be much louder to compete with traffic. The newer accessible signals are more localized and quieter.
- 26,000 to 28,000 visually impaired persons live in Massachusetts.
- At the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, there are mobility trainings, case managers, cooking services, and a variety of other trainings that allow people to stay independent.

- A simple field test would, in most cases, be able to determine if one has a problem with night vision.
- If the amount of time allotted for pedestrian crossings is an issue, you can always ask for the walk symbol to be longer, as there is no maximum time limit, although there is a time minimum.
- MASDOT has worked hard to push their “Complete Streets” initiative to recognize that streets are not the only important space when it comes to transportation.
- Parking lots ought to have dedicated pedestrian routes. There is no regulation, but parking lot transportation can be made to be safer if there are separate and dedicated routes for pedestrians to traverse the parking lot.

Deputy Chief of Police Sean Flemming Snow and Ice Removal:

Snow removal report for this season: There have been 553 complaints, 157 citations, 72 warnings issued, 37 times the City had used a contractor, 222 complaints had been cleared once investigated. The City is using the same procedures as have been in place for the last seven years, however, there remain problems with snow removal.

The Worcester Police Department is asking that community members call the DPW and complain, with as much detail as possible, as the procedure for snow removal is complaint-drive. The City of Worcester has a contract with a snow removal company, so that in certain cases where the property owner is unresponsive they are able to get the snow removed. The City attempts to be reasonable with residents and homeowners, finding some middle ground in difficult situations, although it is ultimately the property owner’s responsibility.

If you see anything that is obstructed due to snow or ice, contact the DPW with as much detail as possible as to the location and specific nature of the complaint: 508-929-1300 dpw@worcesterma.gov

Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold

Variance Applications:

- **455 Main Street**

Director Turchek informed the Commission that, as of last week, the AAB board will recommend that the contractor make the repairs necessary, although the City has yet to take action.

Decision of the Board

- 1183 Main Street, Docket # V10 028
- 222 Harrington Way, Docket # C14 131
- 119 Belmont Street, Docket # C16 057
- 104 Harding Street, Docket # V16 329
- 6 Brussels Street, Docket # V16 329
- 6 Brussels Street, Docket # V16 363

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

Director Turchek stated that Mr. Cremer's two outstanding requests, including the Quality of Life team appearing in front of the Commission, as well as the Emergency Preparedness Training, will be planned for future meetings.

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
March 15th, 2017, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**
March 7th, 2017, 4:00 – 5:30PM, YWCA, Members Lounge

- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** March 9th, 2016, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** March 21st, 2017 4:30pm.
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting :** May 10th, 2017, 8:30am, 2 Coppage Drive
- **Vacancies on Commission on Disability for Associate members to represent Districts 1 and 4**
Apply online: <http://www.worcesterma.gov/e-services/online-submit-forms/boards-application>

Disability Etiquette Tip:

- Want to help? Not sure what to say, always ask the person with a disability.

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/>

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41PM.