

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for March 20th, 2018, 4:30PM
Levi Lincoln Chamber (3rd fl.)
Worcester City Hall (2)

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bureau, Nancy Garr-Colzie, John Gleason, Fitzroy Hall, D. Karuna, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska , Joseph Prochilo, Lindsey Silva, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: Robert Bilotta,

Staff: Jayna Turchek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Mr. Lamar, Aids Project Worcester: Assistant Commissioner Parks, Robert Antonelli

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

The Chairperson called the meeting to order. Commissioners introduced themselves. John Gleason and Fitzroy Hall were raised to full member status for this meeting.

Approval of February, 2018 Minutes

Commissioner Hall moved approval and Commissioner Gleason seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the February 20th, 2018 minutes as written.

Review Aids Project Worcester's request for the use of Union Station Grand Hall for World Aids Day 2018

Mr. Lamar indicted that Aids Project Worcester celebrated World Aids Day two years ago at Union Station and is requesting the use of Union Station, free of charge, again this year for the celebration. The purpose of the celebration is to celebrate the work of Aids Project Worcester and to provide information about the work the agency is doing. The two and a half hour event will be free and is open to the public. APW has been in operation for 30 years and located at 85 Green Street.

Aids Project Worcester (APW) is a non-profit organization that supports people with HIV and Aids.

World Aids Day falls on December 1 this year. The request for the use of the Grand Hall at Union Station is Saturday, December 7th, 2018. This will be a banquet style with partner agency's present with information tables. This is mainly a sit down event with a speaker. Entertainment is mixed in as well.

Several Commissioners spoke to their experience of working with and the importance of having Aids Project Worcester services in Worcester, praising the quality of service provided.

Commissioner Hall moved approval and Commissioner Gleason seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the use of the Grande Hall at Union Station on Saturday, December 7th, 2018 for World Aids Day sponsored by Aids Project Worcester.

Parks update (Asst. Commissioner Robert Antonelli)

Asst. Commissioner Robert Antonelli presented the following information on various parks:

Construction Updates

Betty Price Playground – Fall 2018

The location is at the corner of Eastern Avenue and Laurel Street off Belmont Street. This is a complete rehab design including new playground structures pour in place safety surfacing and a redesigned back wall to hold the ground in place due to the steep incline of the surrounding area. There is a gazebo and fitness equipment. There is a small walking area for small children to ride a small vehicle and for those that find the sidewalk too steep to use. The lights are LED pedestal lighting, a dawn to dusk product. There are plans to put cameras in this park.

All parks are being done with poured in place rubber surfacing, accessible equipment – some, one rolls up to, some are overhead units and there is access to all components. There is no emergency phone station nearby. The work is currently under construction and is expected to open in late summer.

Downtown Dog Park – Summer 2018

This park is located at the corner of Franklin Street and MLK Boulevard (beside WRTA Hub). This work has been bid, awarded and will take a couple of months to complete. A fence will be erected and will have a few beaches and a grassy area with a double gate. A dog would go in and out the gated area leashed. There are no lights there. With the railroad wall there is shade.

Elm Park MHK Bridge Pathway Repairs – Spring 2018

This project has been before the Commission at other times. A large amount of Elm Park is built on peat. The walkways leading to the bridge keep sinking. A decision has been made to dig out the peat and replace it using piles. The work has been done and is waiting for the snow to melt so the slopes can be measured and AAB's approval of the design and slope measurements. In all, access to the bridge should be available in a month or two.

Holmes Field – Summer 2018

The slide provides the whole master plan. Presented for comment and present work to be done is at the bottom in the red includes a new accessible poured in place surface playground, two tennis courts and walking paths which will meet the less than 5% slope and less than 2% cross slope up to the baseball field. The future phase will connect the walkway to March Street The lighting is included in this phase. Conduit is in the system for cameras and the cameras are slated for the next phase. Construction has not begun as hoped. Plans are to have the work completed this summer.

Newton Hill Support Building – Spring 2018

This building is near the tennis courts on the Pleasant Street side. About 80% is for park storage and work space the other section will be three (3) single room restrooms accessible to the public when the park is open. The Friends of Newton Hill will use this building. This group of people helps maintain the park.

Canterbury Street School – Southgate Street Playground – Summer 2018

This is technically a school project. The City Manager asked the Parks Department to build this project. This playground will be built on a lot the city took over. A building was removed and the property cleaned up. The playground will have poured-in- place rubber surfacing, accessible equipment – some, one rolls up to, some are overhead units and there is access to all components. Once constructed the playground will become school property and maintained by the School

Department. This project includes a playground, half court area and asphalt game area. The Worcester Public School Department will determine when the playground will be open and if it will be open to the public outside of school times. This project has been bid, awarded and hope to be open by the start of the school year.

Design Updates

*** Farber Field – Renovation to Ex. Support Building

*** South Worcester - Renovation to Ex. Support Building

***The two projects above have no corresponding slide. These designs are to refurbish the support building both interior and exterior. Although South Worcester is in good shape and does not need much work.

Glodis Field – New Support Building (No Corresponding slide to view)

This will be the first synthetic field. Field will come with both sports and pedestrian lighting. Included in the design is an accessible walkway from the field to the playground, built in seating and the fence height will be lowered so the field activity can be seen easily. This will remain a soccer field. Plans include a small support building with two single use restrooms, storage area and concession stand.

Farber Field Soccer Renovations (No Corresponding slide to view)

This soccer field is on the city's west side at Mooreland and Camelot Streets. This will be the city's second synthetic athletic field. Over the years, experience has helped to learn ways to plan better, included is a small playground. The elements have not been decided on. This again will be a poured-in-place surface. The current building needs to be rehabbed to meet current regulations which would mean widening doors and redo restrooms, etc. In time, work is planned to connect the parking access the street with accessible parking, lighting and an easier route for everyone to get to the park.

Hadwen Park Phase I (basketball, playground, and parking access)

This project will be funded by a Water and Land Conservation Fund through the National Parks Service which is distributed to states to establish a response for proposals process. The City of Worcester submitted a \$300,000 proposal last July for the upgrade to this park. The city will match that in the range of \$650,000 to \$850,000. Plans include a new basketball field with sports lighting, a new playground with pour-in-place safety surface and accessible units, upgrades to the parking area and a vista view of the pond. The hope is the National Parks Service

will approve the grant and the city will hear in the next few weeks. If the grant is approved, the work will be done this summer and likely open next spring.

There was a request from a member of the public to place a plaque in this park in recognition of Jacqueline Norton's advocacy. Mr. Antonelli informed the Commission that a request like this would have to be approved by the Parks Commission.

South Worcester Phases 1 & 2

This is one of the larger projects for the Parks Department this year. Originally this was divided into two phases. Phase I and II included community gardens, redesign of the parking lot and access to the front of the building (on the park side) via a ramp. Some work on the roof, gutters to protect the accessible walkway and security cameras. A decision was then made to apply for a National Park Service grant through the state to redo the current playground and build a second one as well. The City was awarded the grant. To save time on the bidding side for the two phases and contractors pointing fingers at each other for errors, another decision was to combine the phases into one project. Phase I will be built first. The city is close to putting the bid out and the expectation is work will happen this summer with completion spring of 2019.

Green Hill Park – Renovations to World War I Memorial

Last year the sign to this memorial was inadvertently **toppled** by Parks staff, thus spurring on the plans already in place to upgrade this memorial. Back in the 1920's the city planted a tree for each Worcester soldier that was killed in WWI. Some of those trees have died and the space has been used for various activities. The plan is to bring this space back to a memorial setting to include the reworking of Greenhill Parkway putting in two accessible HP spaces on the street. (The terrain is very steep from the parking lot.) Tearing up the slate walkway that is cracked and putting in an accessible walkway. In the memorial 20 foot steel columns, (with 3 ft. of them into the ground) that is meant to rust will be erected each with a name of a soldier who died in WWI. Other war memorials have recently been redone now the WWI Memorial is being redone with a goal of dedicating it on 11-11-19, one hundred years since the War.

Institute Park – Pathways & Trails

Another big project is to build an accessible pathway from Grove Street to Park Avenue through the wooded back area of the park. It will include an asphalt surface and a decking surface over the wet areas with lighting. Plans include redoing the ball field and add some lights contingent on budget. The Conservation Commission has reviewed. There will need to be some borings made. The hope is to begin construction in July of 2018 with completion sometime in 2019.

Master Plan Updates

Great Brook Valley/Facoma Playground – Summited to City Council Subcommittee for review.

Great Brook Valley is off Clark Street- Currently there is a ball field and a rectangular field in poor condition. The plan is to upgrade the facility by rearranging the two fields and add parking. The active sports of basketball and hand ball at Tacoma will be placed in the Great Brook Valley Park which is a better space for these amenities. The Parks Department has been working with Worcester Housing Authority to find a way to get to this facility without having to get into a car. The proposal is to build a walkway from the housing to the field. This is not definite. The commitment to an accessible walkway still needs to be worked out; the grade level is very steep. Bicycles would have to be walked down because there would be switchbacks. Accessible parking would be dispersed throughout the facility on both sides close to the courts and fields. Conduits for lighting will be installed. Working with Worcester Housing Authority install cameras to feed into the Housing Authority police. A location has been identified to park food trucks and safely vend. Many softball leagues use the facility and food trucks already come to this park. Right now, there are no restroom facilities. There is potential for restrooms. Partners are needed to maintain such a facility. Short term there is a location for potable restrooms. Parks Department has 26 staff and 1400 acres of parks maintenance is difficult.

Tacoma Playground is on Tacoma Street. Ideally this would have synthetic turf multi use field of the right and a dog park on the left. The specifications for each amenity were given in previous park descriptions. In the middle would be the parking and the playground which is expanded with the moving of the basketball and handball courts to the Great Brook Valley Park. There is a dramatic shift in the topography of the land (100 feet higher) once into the woods. Accessible parking will be dispersed.

Hadwen Park - Submitted to City Council Sub-committee for review

The topography at this park is challenging to meet the needs of all people. Four areas have been identified:

1. To make the baseball field more accessible with picnic tables and new lighting.
2. Additional parking and upgrade the existing building.
3. Further down adding parking and redoing the playground and basketball area already discussed. Make Knox Street to Heard Street an accessible walkway keeping Knox Street cordoned off. Right now it is considered a road with hills and valleys. Not quite sure how this will happen.
4. The plan includes a small parking lot with community gardens and the other side an accessible walkway and seating for the view of the pond. All amenities will be accessible.

Hope Cemetery Master Plan

This is a 169-acre cemetery owned by the City of Worcester. Two areas have been identified for expansion for 1,100 additional burial sites this year. Upgrades and additional camera installations are being planned to increase security. There is space for about 250 years given the current yearly number of full burials. With the trend of cremation, this extends the cemetery's life cycle. Currently these plans are in the design phase looking to bid out next month with work being done this summer.

Request to review Bankshot Playcourt concept

Assistant Commissioner Antonelli is familiar with the Bankshot Playcourt concept and indicated the City would have to find a vendor for this product. Before doing anything, he suggested the Commission contact Bankshot Playcourt for a presentation and then consider making a request to the Parks Department. This

would then give the Commission and Parks Department an opportunity to better understand the product. Some of the questions he would like to ask are: How is the product made, how would it stand up in an urban environment such as Worcester, are there other urban centers using this product, where and how would it be best used in Worcester? Asking the standard due diligence questions.

This item will be an agenda item for a future meeting.

Accessible Recreation Project Assistance

At a prior Commission meeting the CHIP was presented. One portion of the CHIP relates to physical activity under the Recreation Committee and the effort to review 25 parks that would be accessible to all users. Worcester Poly-Technological Institute (WPI) students are doing a project reviewing park venues throughout the region which will feed into the recreation/physical activity component of the CHIP of identifying the 25 Parks. This is also a learning opportunity for the students to learn about the different aspects of accessibility. The students have met with Chairperson Prochilo and Director Turcek to update them related to the Worcester Parks and their accessibility. Chairperson Prochilo indicated the list of venues they want to review is extensive.

The students have also met with Commissioner Myska who is on the CHIP Recreation Committee and participated in one of her Wednesday morning Walk Fit (walks for people who are visually impaired and sight-guides) days at St. Vincent Hospital. The students were very excited about their experience of being blindfolded. Commissioner Myska and students discussed the possibility of taking this walking experience outdoors to the parks. Hopefully this will happen. Chairperson Prochilo will contact the students for an update.

Once the students have got some of their work completed they will be invited to share with the Commission at a future meeting.

Coes Park/Stearns Tavern update

Stearns Tavern at Coes Park is slated to open late summer/early fall. Last month we reported the proposal we submitted to Mass. Office on Disability for state funding to fund accessibility items in the tavern was not funded. Those items need to be funded as well as volunteers are being sought to meet this projected opening.

The Coes Zone Task force is looking at dates for opening the beach and other details to assure a safe and enjoyable first summer including the promoting of the beach chair for people with disabilities who would otherwise not be able to go into the water.

An audience member thanked Mr. Antonelli for securing the beach walkway that was open to the pond with big rocks.

Philip Niddre, coordinator of the Stearns Tavern Project, thanked the Commission and Director Turchek for the assistance related to accessibility. A lot was learned. It was discovered that the doors were not wide enough and applied for an AAB variance. Hinges were discovered in the process and now the doors are accessible.

FY'18 COD Annual Report: Identify Accomplishments July 2017 – February 2018

The Commission is three quarters through the year and is time to reflect on the achievements and to do list.

There were seven (7) FY'18 goals as follows:

Goal 1- The commission is working on. Questionnaires have been developed and people are visiting 3 identified restaurants on Shrewsbury Street.

Goal 2- Curb audit is coming slowly about 18% have been identified. The mobility strolls and white cane walks have identified issues and sent issues lists to Department of Public Works.

Goal 3 – Handicapped Parking – Confined to downtown and other commercial corridors, public lot and garage spaces. Based on a conversation with DPW, staff indicated residential HP spaces are changeable on every given week/month related to a resident's need. City is working to close the gap between petition approved and installation of a space so that the number of HP spaces can be known at any given time.

Goal 4 – Accessible Housing – This goal was not addressed.

Goal 5 – Be informed about the Worcester Public School Transition Program

Fitzroy Hall has a special interest and is interested in working on this goal. Community member recognized that the school on Grafton Street has been made accessible and suggested, it would be nice to recognize this fact as part of this goal.

Goal 6 – Continue to monitor and promote accessible ride sharing companies (ie. Uber, Lyft and others). The Commission has visited WRTA Hub and had a conversation with Johnathan Church, Administrator, about the discrepancy in the visual and audio signaling at the Hub. A second test was done in December with an 80% improvement over the previous audit. The Commission is partnering with Rights, Equality, Dignity for the Disabled (REDD) to work with Uber and Lyft to achieve more transportation for the disabled in Worcester. Steve Stolberg and Nancy Garr-Colzie are interested in working on this goal.

Goal7 – Plan dialogues around oppression and disability - Robert Bureau and Fitzroy Hall offered their time and knowledge to move this goal forward

Not on agenda - Item critical to people with disabilities concurrent with meeting/WRTA Rally on Proposed Cuts to public transportation services

Commission Garr-Colzie referred to this rally that is currently happening outside City Hall and said she had copies of the proposed cuts and hearing schedule. She said Johnathan Church, WRTA Administrator, says nothing is set in stone and has asked people to contact their state legislatures and the Governor to pass budget to include adequate funding for the operation of Regional Transit Authorities in Massachusetts.

Preparation for conversation with Director of MA Office on Disability

Mr. David D’Arcangelo, Director of MA Office on Disability (MOD) has been invited to the April meeting of the Commission. **NOTE: The April Commission will meet on April 24th which is the fourth Tuesday of the month.** Mr. D’Arcangelo will meet with the Commission either by phone or video conferencing from 4:30 -5:00PM. The request that went out to him from the Commission was the desire to learn how the Commission could be more involved with statewide initiatives related to issues related to disabilities. What role MOD was taking in coordinating such efforts and what assistance could be given to local Commissions.

In the past there were legislative advisories, which may have been done by former staff. That position may not have been retained. How can MOD help Commissions stay connected across the state with the larger issues? An example of this is our advocacy related to HR 620. This bill is now in the Senate was passed by the House of Representatives and has a good chance of passing in the Senate which would damage the civil rights of people with disabilities.

Director Turchek suggested that members develop questions to submit to Mr. D'Arcangelo prior to the meeting so he will be prepared to speak with the Commission.

A question was suggested:

If HR 620 is passed in the Senate and signed by the President, what can be done through the Massachusetts Legislature to protect its citizens?

2018 Summer Tours of City Hall & Allies – COD suggestions for group participants

2018 will be the sixth summer for this program held on Thursdays from 10AM -12 Noon with an invitation to join the “out to Lunch” concert, Farmer’s market and other activities on the common after the tour.

The tour includes learning how to engage the city’s governing process, viewing the architectural grandeur of City how and participate in a mock city council. Groups that have participated in past years include the Deaf, the visually impaired, Center for Living & Working, Inc., Genesis Club, Vietnamese, Briarwood, Worcester School Transition Program and Seven Hills family Services.

Staff requested the Commission suggest other groups to contact who may enjoy this opportunity.

Election of vice-chairperson

Commissioner Lindsay Silva was nominated and accepted the nomination as Vice Chairperson. Commissioner Silva was elected Vice Chairperson unanimously.

Planning for COD 40th anniversary

Director Turchek reported that there are no available Saturdays in October at Union Station Grande Hall which was when the Commission wanted to hold the

celebration. If the Commission still wanted to use Union Station as the celebrations venue, Thursday's October 11th and October 18th from 4 – 6 PM are available. The Commission voted to hold the celebration on October 11th from 4 – 6PM.

The Celebration Committee of D. Karuna, John Gleason and Steve Stolberg were asked to get together to determine speaker, entertainment and invitees for a report at the Commission meeting in April.

Update HR620 in the Senate

Members were encouraged to contact their legislators and spread the word. Concern was presented that the house has approved this bill and the Senate may follow suit.

Notice: AAB hearing on proposed changes: <https://www.mass.gov/event/public-hearing-on-proposed-changes-to-521-cmr-worcester-2018-04-12t083000-0400-2018-04>

Public Hearing on Proposed Changes to 521 CMR – Worcester: Thursday, April 12, 2018 - 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 PM - Worcester State University, May Street Auditorium, 280 May Street, Worcester, MA 01602

A public hearing is being held to solicit comment from the public on the proposed changes to 521 CMR. This will be the first major revision to the code since 1996, and includes a full reordering of the code, updating of all drawings, and a significant expansion of the Board's rules on recreational facilities.

As this hearing is specific to the proposed new edition, AAB kindly asks that participants review the proposed regulations in advance. AAB will be accepting written as well as verbal comments at the meeting. Written comments will be accepted at the meeting, but they can also be submitted via mail or email prior to June 1, 2018.

Review of AAB notices and applications: No City properties

Variance Application

- 6 Brussels Street, Docket # TBD
- 6 Humboldt Avenue

Announcements:

- **Public Hearing on Proposed Changes to 521 CMR** April 12th, 2018, 8:30am-12:30pm, Worcester State University, May Street Auditorium, 280 May Street
- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting** March 21th, 2018, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)** April 3rd, 2018, 4:00 – 5:30PM, YWCA, Members Lounge
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** April 12th, 2018, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** May 9th, 2018 at 9:00 am at 2 Coppage Drive.
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** April 24th, 2018 4:30pm.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.