

**Accessibility Advisory Commission  
Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday September 15, 2020, 4:30 PM**

Virtual meeting with WebEx platform, streaming on website,  
call-in conference line & ASL interpreters provided

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Robert Bureau, John Finn, Jr., Nancy Garr-Colzie, Fitzroy Hall, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

**Member Absent:** Dee Karuna, Paul Keister

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek, Miriam Nyante, Dawn E. Clark

**Guests:** Sue Philip, City Deaf Taskforce; Darcy Schwartz, ArtReach; Jack Peacock, Complements

**Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions**

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order and requested Director Turchek to provide the technology instructions for access and participation during the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves.

**Approval of August 18, 2020 Minutes\***

Commissioner Prochilo moved to approve the August 18, 2020 minutes as written. Commissioner Bureau seconded the motion. All approved.

**Presentation of Deaf residents' needs survey and suggestions for items to be added to Commission's work plan**

A City Deaf Task Force was established a couple of years ago to learn and address the needs of Deaf, Hard of Hearing, late-deaf and Deaf/Blind individuals with regard to city services. Sue Philips from Our Deaf Survivors Center, Inc., a member of the City Deaf Task Force presented the results of the Deaf needs Survey conducted last fall with the assistance of The Center for Living & Working, Inc., and Worcester Office on Human Rights and Disabilities. A student intern from Quinsigamond Community College collated the data. 19 completed surveys were received.

There were four needs that stood out:

1. Lack of relationship with city councilors

2. Access to voting may be an issue
3. Access or knowledge of the city website and city services
4. Knowledge of public meetings and how to access interpreters

Commissioner Prochilo indicated that the City Deaf Task force has done more than this survey and mentioned the Public Safety Day event two years ago.

Ms. Philip mentioned other areas of interest (snow removal, transportation, dog parks and restaurant accessibility) and also shared that the pandemic press briefings with Deaf interpreter teams were helpful.

With this information we have an opportunity to improve services for the Deaf community. Director Turchek said working with Sue has been so helpful to help improve services for the Deaf community and mentioned some of the successful initiatives: 6 VLOGS on city webpages, election public service announcement, Deaf Public Safety Day, Deaf Visitor Card that is now statewide, police training video, Deaf volunteer on the Disability Etiquette Workshop team and Deaf Tour of City Hall.

The Chairperson thanked Sue for all the work done locally and statewide and hoped it could be a model for the nation. We have a list of issues to work on.

From member of the public:

1050 Main Street crosswalk signals an issue. This is a quality of life issue. The Office will work with the caller.

Kelly Square is an issue. Lights not set up. Uncomfortable walking through the square. Commissioner Prochilo has been following and is compiling documents and videos about concerns. The electronics (lights) are not in place.

**Requests for information for American Sign Language (ASL), closed captioning and audio description for public agency meetings**

This is on the agenda to secure comments from Commissioners and members of the public about the need for these services. Since the city has now gone to using a virtual platform for public meetings there seems to be a greater need for these meetings to be accessible. In order for the Commission to make informed recommendations to the city manager the Commission was asked to consider what information they will need about current operations and needs in the community. The director of cable services has been invited to the October meeting to answer questions.

## **Recommendations for placement of a tactile street map downtown to assist Vision Impaired Persons**

This is an item that was referred to the Commission from an August city council agenda and petition from Mayor Petty. Commissioner Myska introduced this item. She began by explaining she has been losing her sight over the past twelve years and is finding tactile objects helpful. There are various degrees of sight impairment and not everyone will benefit from a tactile map.

Mary Haroan had brought the idea of a tactile map on Main Street to the Mayor's Office who has passed this to the Commission. Mary is a lifelong resident of Worcester and also a VIP (visually impaired person). She knows there have been many changes and would be good to have a map on Main Street with braille and large print to show how the streets are configured. This could be enjoyed by sighted people and a nice welcome to the city as well.

Sharon Strzalkowski spoke next. She felt this idea would be good for a number of people who were sighted and then lost their vision. Unfortunately this item would probably not be very helpful to her because she has been blind since birth.

Darcy Schwartz shared that she is also visually impaired and understands the tactile map from this perspective. She also sees this map being used by people using any language. This opens the opportunity for an artist to create something on a multi-dimensional map possibly using an icon such as the Smiley Face. Depending on its placement, it could be a welcoming and information location for city visitors.

Jack Peacock suggested having kiosks at Polar Park entrances and/or Green Street with tactile map, location of venues and information with an icon on top. This could serve as a meeting place. There would be a kiosk inside the park as well.

Commissioner Myska made a motion to develop a written proposal that embraces the idea of tactile maps in the city and other aspects presented this evening to bring back to the Commission for review before sending recommendations to city council. Commissioner Bureau seconded. All approved. Director Turchek will work with appropriate city departments to do the background work necessary prior to the October meeting.

## **Planning for White Cane Day October 2020**

This year, White Cane Awareness Day in Worcester is Wednesday October 21. With Covid the usual large gathering is not able to happen. This year the walk will

be through Kelly Square. Commissioner Myska encouraged to take a walk in this area and report any difficulties they find. This will make the square more walkable.

She has three city leaders who have agreed to walk a designated path with a cane to experience what it is like to be blind. She will provide updates to the Commission.

**Review of AAB notices and applications: None**

**Announcements:**

- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled) October 6, 2020**  
4:00 – 5:30pm, For questions email: [jbelleil@yahoo.com](mailto:jbelleil@yahoo.com)
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting:**  
**October 20, 2020 4:30pm**
- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting: September 23, 2020, 1-2:30pm, contact: [CMellis@cmrpc.org](mailto:CMellis@cmrpc.org)**
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting: TBD**

**Adjournment:**

Commissioner Hall moved to adjourn and Commissioner Prochilo seconded. All approved. 6:35pm

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