

City of Worcester
Accessibility Advisory Commission

Tuesday, June 15, 2021, 4:30 PM Minutes
Virtual meeting with WebEx platform
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/video-on-demand>
Call-in conference line and ASL interpreters provided

Attendance:

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

Members Absent: James Delage, Dee Karuna, Linda Larrivee

Staff: Jayna Turчек, Dawn E. Clark

Guest: Jason Homer, Head Librarian for the City of Worcester

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order at 4:34pm and requested Director Turчек to provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves.

Approval of May 18, 2021 minutes*

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved to approve the May 18, 2021 minutes as written. Commissioner Prochilo seconded the motion. All approved.

Update on Worcester Main Library Renovations *

Mr. Homer, Head Librarian, presented photos and detailed description of the renovations. They are to be completed by the end of June. Tours for the Commission are scheduled for the second week in July.

He has been with the City for about six months and happy to be here.

Beginning with the entrances: on the map there were two large dots, the one dot on the left is the new entrance on Franklin Street and the dot on the right is McGrath entrance which has been there. The ramp on Franklin Street at the right of the building goes up along the canopy into the building. A tree is blocking the sign on the canopy that reads Worcester Public Library. There is no longer a Salem Street entrance and the space has been folded into the library space.

Main Floor:

Photo 1 - looking into from the new entrance: Newspaper and Magazine section

Photo 2 – Newspaper and Magazine service point

Photo 3 – Newspaper section with Franklin Street windows on the right. Outside, the ramp is under these windows

Photo 4 (2) – New welcome desk at the center of library from that Perspective. The desk is adjustable. Left hand side: “stand” setting – Right hand side: “sit” setting to meet the needs of both patrons and staff.

Photo 5 – Exterior view - New Teens Space is to the right with floor to ceiling windows and twice the size of the previous space.

Photo 6 – Touchless Door Opener – Throughout the library
(Replaced old openers)

Photo 7 – (Exterior view) behind welcome desk on McGrath parking lot end is the Talking Book Library.

Photo 7 – (Interior View stepping inside) 3 height adjustable tables each with high contrast keyboard.

Photo 8 – Braille printer on larger adjustable table

Photo 9 – Close up of high contrast keyboard

Photo 10 – New Meeting and Training Room and two adjustable tables

Photo 11 – Loop table and two chairs- with blue tooth and hearing aids the sound will increase in that room.

Third Floor

Photo 1 – Children’s Room entrance under construction.

Photo 2- Perspective from the entrance, on the right is the rocket with

interactive displays to play with and at the top of the ceiling is a fabric that looks like the Milky Way Galaxy.

Photo 3 – Children’s Room showing how the Galaxy floats around the Room to the left is a round gray rug for floor games.

Photo 4 – Turning around are the restrooms which still need to be up graded including signage and will be family restrooms.

Photo 5 – Bright Children’s Program Room. It has a floor meant to look like grass and a lake, a replica of Elm park bridge and the wallpaper features Worcester homes.

Photo 6 – Outside the Program Room is the Tween Area.

Photo 7 – Next is the Owllet, the circle outside the building. There is a stage for programs, performances, story time etc.

Photo 8 – Computer area overlooking the Salem Street side of the library with Mill like features and roving colored lighting.

Photo 9 – Computer area featuring tradition computers and early literacy computers will be available for the youngest readers. Between 18 to 25 computers will be on this floor.

Mr. Homer introduced the new program called Dial A Story produced by the Worcester Talking Book Program and Worcester Library. People can call in and hear recorded stories recorded often by library staff. Staff chooses a story that is already in the library. The Number is 508-552-3456 and is available 24 hours/7 days a week. This particular program was chosen because there are books in the library that are not recorded for blind children. This is for the hearing community.

We are always willing to work with the Deaf community and we look to Lee Anne Hooley our Talking Book Librarian, for that expertise. A suggestion was made to contact Sorenson Relay to ask about a Deaf program for children.

We hope to be open in July. Jason is excited to meet and work with and welcome people back and into this new space.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Homer for the informative presentation and look forward to the tours to be schedule for July.

Planning for Fall wheelchair strolls and White Cane Day

- **Request for use of WooSox stadium for events**

Commissioner Prochilo began be stating there are plans to do a White Cane Day walk and a Wheelchair Strolls in the Fall. Both will begin and end at the stadium. For the wheelchair strolls invitees are able bodied persons who are officials, business owners and medical students who are put them in wheelchairs. We give people a 15 minutes crash course on navigating a manual wheelchair and take them on an hour long tour. He will be developing an issues list over the next few days. Comments from past debriefings have been from physically spent participants “I did not realize how difficult it is getting around the city in a wheelchair.” From these strolls we get information to advocate for a more universal design for the city

Commissioner Myska explained that the White Cane Day Walk started in 2015 as an event of the Commission on Disability and involved the Mass. Pharmacy School of Optometry. In 2015, Director Turcek identified 5 dignitaries from the city to participate. They were paired with a sighted guide and student from the college. The urban trail that was followed was designed by her business partner Jack Peacock. Over the years the number of people has ebbed and flowed. The key to this event is at the end of the walk the group gathers and the dignitaries, remaining blindfolded, debrief their experience documenting learnings.

Similar comments such as how do blind people do this, I saw things I never noticed etc. from different people. The stadium is a new place and people want to test the accessibility. At this point where we will walk and who will participate is still to be determined. We want to use Polar Park as a debriefing site. We want people to learn how to be sighted guides, learn what it is like to be blind and communicate with each other. This year we are working with the UMass Medical School as well as the Mass. Pharmacy College of Optometry. She wants to work with

the MPHS in the future. The second year Optometry Students have a Population Clerkship on the Visually Impaired. She started the Clerkship last year. For two weeks students will be immersed in blind culture and experiences. This year the Clerkship begins on October 20 (proposed date for the White Cane Day Walk) into November. This will give medical students an opportunity to participate in various roles: Being blind folded and walking, being a sighted guide etc.

She suggested the White Cane Day Walk happen in the morning and the Wheelchair Stroll take place in the afternoon with debriefing in between the two events.

We are aiming for Wednesday, October 20th rain or shine. People interested in participating please contact the Commission. If interested in being a sighted guide contact Liz Myska directly.

Commissioner Prochilo moved to request the use of Polar Park for the two events described on or about the day of (morning and afternoon) Wednesday, October 20, 2021. Commissioner Myska seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion: local observance of ADA Anniversary

(July 26, 2021) <https://www.adaanniversary.org>

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990. There were 30th year plans last year to have a communitywide celebration which was cancelled due to CoVID 19.

Commissioner Prochilo moved we postpone a major event. This year we recognize the ADA anniversary and put in motion planning with CLW and other agencies for a significant celebration for the 32nd anniversary in 2022. Commissioner Stolberg seconded the motion. All approved.

Suggest was made to show a video this year to recognize the day.

Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine

- Vaccine clinics <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>
- Homebound vaccination program www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-homebound-vaccination-program
- **FAQ-Transportation to COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments for MassHealth Members and Health Safety Net Patients**

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/transportation-to-covid-19-vaccine-appointments-for-masshealth-members-and-health-safety-net-0/download>

Concern raised that no ASL interpretation for Worcester vaccination sites. The Chairperson reported this issue was heard and brought to the attention of Commissioner Dr. Castiel. He apologize for the lack of accessibility.

Review of AAB notices and applications: (City in bold)

Variance applications:

- 670 W. Boylston St. (QCC), #V18-107 (Amended variance)

Notice of Action:

- 29 A-B East Mountain St., #V21-066
- **120 Granite St, Gerald Creamer Center, #V17-202**
- 15 Harlow St, Challenge and Reach Academy #V21-097
- **170 Belmont St, Belmont Street Community School, #V17-203**

No action was taken by the Commission.

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

- Follow up review of accessibility of Polar Park
- Follow up on concerns raised for effective communication by Deaf/HH resident:
 - Nice to have rely video interpreting at the Polar Park ticket both. Request closed captioning at Polar Park Stadium
 - There were accessible icons on menu that helped Deaf to order.

- Refused when requested to put Closed Captions on TV. This resulted in tears for him. Security came over to see if he was OK

The Commission has two groups to review accessibility in the next few weeks.

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group, June 16, 1-2:30pm**
- **MA Architectural Access Board (AAB) request for feedback on AAB forms and applications:**
<https://www.mass.gov/news/aab-forms-and-applications-feedback>
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting: July 20, 2021, 4:30pm**

Commissioner Garr-Colzie encouraged people to ride the buses. They are free until December 31, 2021.

Wheelchair Accessible Vans (WAV) Yellow cabs not on the road yet. They will be soon. Director Turchek received copies of Train the Trainer certificates for Yellow cab personnel. Other drivers should be trained soon and the WAVs will be on the road.

Adjournment:

Commissioner Prochilo moved to adjourn and Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconded. All approved at 6:58 pm.

*Material can be viewed at the Human Rights & Accessibility Office upon request.