



City of Worcester  
Department of Health and Human Services  
**Disabilities Division**

James G. Gardiner, Acting Commissioner  
Health and Human Services

Lawrence M. Raymond  
Director, Disabilities

City of Worcester  
Commission on Disability

Type of Meeting: Regular  
Date and Time Convened: October 8, 2008  
Place Where Convened: 25 Meade Street, Conference Room 208  
Members Present: Rachel Brown, Dawn Clark, Grace Clark,  
Jacqueline Norton  
Associates Present: Jill Swerzenski  
Members Absent: John Cronin, Daphne Phillips, Joseph Sinasky  
Staff Present: Michael Galvin, Larry Raymond  
Guests Present: Paul Morano, City of Worcester Office of  
Economic Development; Cesar Valiente, Project  
Manager DPW and Parks Dept.  
Public Present: Mike Kennedy, Debbie Malone, Megan Webber

1. Call to Order and Introductions. Meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m.
2. Acceptance of Minutes. Motion to accept minutes for September 10, 2008 by Rachel Brown, seconded by Jill Swerzenski.
3. Communications and Reports.
  - a. Chairperson's Report
    - i. Snow Removal Letter. Dawn and Rachel submitted the final draft of the snow removal letter to the City Manager regarding the enforcement of the snow removal ordinance. However, no response to the letter has yet to be made. There was also a discussion by the Commission that fines should be increased for Worcester citizens who fail to remove snow from their sidewalks in a timely manner. However, as the elderly and disabled cannot be expected to move the snow, it was discussed whether locals could be found to volunteer. Larry stated that he has been in contact with several area organizations, such as various youth centers, high schools, Junior ROTC and the Diocese of

Worcester looking for volunteers this winter. Rachel recommended that the City of Worcester use the increase in fines to pay a stipend to the volunteers who remove the snow for the elderly and disabled, as this may increase the likelihood of more volunteers.

- ii. Access Coalition Meeting. Rachel, Dawn, Mike Galvin, along with Julie Arroyo (Intern with Office on Disability), Easter Seals and Legal Assistance met the week of September 28<sup>th</sup> to discuss reenergizing the Access Coalition. They brainstormed ideas and goals to expand the group and its vision. More information will be forthcoming.

b. Director's Report

Larry recommended we suspend the Director's Report so that we could have Paul Morano, of the City of Worcester's Office of Economic Development update the Commission on the current status of the Federal Square Plaza Renovation project.

- i. Fragrance Policy. Michael Galvin distributed an outline of the policy the Commission on Disability could adopt for future meetings and thereby making the Commission's meetings, hearings, and other public events a fragrance free environment. It was recommended that the commission members review the proposal and vote on the policy at the next meeting. Michael Galvin also developed signage that would be placed outside of the meetings to notify the public and guests.

4. Transition Plan, Accessibility, and Access Board Issues.

- a. Presentation by DPW & Parks Department. There was a lengthy and in depth update by Cesar Valiente, Project Manager, City of Worcester DPW and Parks, regarding the upcoming and existing construction projects around Worcester. There was an extensive discussion regarding the Worcester Common and the different phases. Worcester Common has three construction phases. Phase 1 was completed in 2006-2007 and involved removing the old reflecting pools and improving access areas. Phase 2 is still ongoing and involves the construction of a pavilion and ice skating oval. This should be completed by the end of October 2008. Phase 3 will construct connection paths to Franklin Street to Front Street. A new WWII memorial will also be constructed. The last phase of the Worcester Common construction should be

completed by next year. The Commission was concerned with the lack of handicap accessibility as Mr. Valiente was discussing the plans for the Pavilion and the seating. The Commission was concerned that based on the plans there was a lack of handicap accessible seating and that more benches should be placed in Worcester Common for the both elderly and the disabled. Although Mr. Valiente suggested that the handicap patrons of the events had enough space to sit in front of the pavilion seating, the issue was raised that this may block the view of the patrons who were sitting in back. The Commission also stated that there needs to be better access between City Hall Plaza and the Pavilion. In its current design state, pedestrians need to go all the way around in order to reach the Pavilion rather than straight across. This creates a much longer walk. Although the project is 80% complete, Mr. Valiente stated that these considerations will be reviewed. The Commission was disappointed that accessibility was not more of an issue in the beginning stages. Larry and Mike Galvin stated that they would look more into this issue and report their findings at the next Commission meeting. Rockfield Field was then discussed. Phase I has been completed and is adjacent to Worcester State College. DPW/Parks renovated the existing baseball field. Phase II will renovate the softball and the little league field. There will be walking paths throughout Rockport Field and it will be handicap accessible. The next phase will include constructing public bathroom stalls and a playground. As the field is next to a wetland, there will be an increased amount of water drain pipes. Vernon Hill Park was also discussed. This park is off of Providence Street. They have been renovating the baseball and softball field with a \$450,000 grant. Before the renovation, the field did not have the correct length specifications for holding tournaments and had limited handicap accessibility. More pedestrian lighting will also be created around the Vernon Hill area and will hopefully decrease crime in the area. After the renovations, tournaments will be able to be held, thus increasing business and revenue and handicap access will improve. Burncoat Street Playground was also discussed. DPW and Parks removed the existing playground and replaced it. There is now room for wheelchairs and benches. They also made the playground more accessible for older children, whereas before the playground was for 2-5 year olds. Green Hill Park Bear Brook and

the pended projects were also briefly discussed, including Indian Hill and Oakland Heights Playground.

- b. Updates on City and School Dept. There were no updates on the City and School Dept. during this Commission meeting.
  - c. Sidewalks, Curb Cuts, and Chirpers.
    - i. List of Chirper Locations. Larry stated that a list is not yet available but would be distributed at the next Commission meeting.
  - d. HP Parking Fines. The statistics of the HP Parking fines from July to September 2008 were distributed. It was noted that in the month of July, there were 73 parking violations and three violations for blocking handicap ramps. In the month of August there were 83 parking violations and three violations for blocking ramps. In the month of September there were 82 parking violations and four violations for blocking the ramps.
5. Transportation and TPAG
- a. Buses and Para-transit. WRTA voted to increase fares by 25 cents effective January 1, 2009. It was also mentioned that eight new buses will be purchased.
  - b. Taxicab Statistics. The Taxicab statistics were distributed during the Commission meeting for the month of August. During the month of August, Taxicab 110 made 88 trips. Taxicab 109 statistics were not available; however, Michael Galvin stated that he would have the information available at November's meeting.
6. Emergency Preparedness
- a. Local Registry. There were no updates regarding the Local Registry during this Commission meeting.
7. Old Business
- a. UMASS Valet Parking. Rachel discussed the issue of Valet Parking at UMASS Memorial and that cars often block the sidewalks. There is also no signage regarding this problem. It was noted that Mike Kennedy and Rachel went to UMASS to evaluate this and took pictures to illustrate the problem. It was recommended that a meeting be arranged between the Commission and personnel at UMASS Memorial to discuss possible solutions, such as devoting one lane in valet parking for accessible drop-offs for handicap patrons.
8. New Business
- a. Federal Square Plaza Renovation. Paul Morano, City of Worcester's Office of Economic Development, updated the

Commission on the current status of the Federal Square Plaza Renovation. It was discussed that the City of Worcester will contribute approximately \$200,000 for this project and the state will contribute \$800,000 in earmarks. Dawn brought up her concern regarding the \$800,000 in earmarks the City of Worcester has coming for this project. She stated that in these uncertain economic times, could we still count on this funding. She also asked whether the \$800,000 is under the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), as this may make it more difficult in acquiring this funding. He stated that fortunately, this \$800,000 is not under the TIP. The City of Worcester has since received four proposals for this project. They will begin renovating the areas of Myrtle Street, Main Street, Southbridge Street, and Franklin Street. They will be focusing on streetscape and landscaping around the area, adding amenities such as park benches and improving walking surfaces. One of the main reasons for this renovation is to bring more activity to the Southbridge Street area. This will also include more lighting and possibly blocking off the street during events at Hanover Theatre. The logistics of this however as yet to be fully realized. Mr. Morano stated that unfortunately, there is not enough money in the budget, at least in the initial stages, to completely replace the sidewalks. They will, however, replace the pavers and borders of the sidewalks. The sidewalks will be similar to those on Shrewsbury Street. Trees and planters may also be added to improve the streetscapes around Federal Square. Mr. Morano stated that the above improvements will also hopefully add vibrancy, comfort and a pedestrian friendly accessibility to the area. Mr. Morano also stated that a restaurant may be opening next to the vacant building next to the Hanover Theatre, which will also draw more crowds near Federal Square. Rachel raised the issue of there being no benches in Federal Square Plaza. She noted that before the renovations there were benches. When asked if there were plans for the benches to be placed back in the area for the disabled and elderly, Mr. Morano said the issue is still being discussed. It appears that due to the problems of the homeless sleeping on the benches, they will likely be adding chairs, where one can sit comfortably but not necessarily lay down. He stated that a public meeting will soon be held to discuss this issue, at

which time, the Commission can voice their concerns or submit their concerns in writing.

9. Announcements and Adjournments.

- a. AutoMark Voting Machine Demonstration. The AutoMark Voting Machine allows voters with disabilities to mark a ballot privately and independently. This machine was devised based on input from election authorities and disability organizations. A demonstration of the AutoMark Voting Machine Demonstration will occur on October 16, 2008 at the Worcester Public Library from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. This event is sponsored by the Commission on Disabilities, Office on Disability, Election Commission, City Clerk Elections Division, MA commission for the Blind, and the MA Secretary of State.
- b. Olmstead Plan Meeting. Dawn discussed the Olmstead Plan meeting, which is a plan to ensure that people with disabilities, along with the elderly, have access to community-living opportunities. A Public Education Forum on the Community First Olmstead Plan will take place on October 23, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the Worcester Senior Center.
- c. The Commission then discussed the Worcester Commons project, specifically the City Hall Plaza walkway and how we could effectively proceed with our concerns about the lack of handicap accessibility. It was suggested that we may need to set up a subcommittee to research the issue further and look into the issue of the bleachers and whether a center access could be provided as the distance is too far.
- d. It was also noted that the Commission may need to be held at 25 Meade Street next meeting as well, while City Hall completes its renovations.
- e. Adjournment. Motion to adjourn at 5:42 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ms. Jill A. Swerzenski  
Secretary