

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes from November 18th, 2014, 4:30PM  
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr.

**Attendance:**

**Members Present:** Francesca Abbey; Rachel Shannon Brown; Nancy Garr-Colzie; Herbert Cremer; Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo; Stephen Stolberg; Susan Swanson

**Members Absent:** Paul Keister

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek; Joseph Sansoucy; Sundar Layalu; Dawn E. Clark

**Guest:** Richard Fiske, Director of Worcester Department of Emergency Communications & Emergency Management

**Members of the Public:**

William Coleman; Michael Kennedy; Jackie Norton and others

**Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions**

The Chairperson welcomed commission members and the members of the public present. Charles Hiamah has resigned and Nancy-Garr-Colzie has been appointed as a full member (to be voted in at city council later tonight). After the meeting was called to order, the commissioners introduced themselves. The Chairperson raised Nancy Garr-Colzie and Francesca Abbey for the purpose of voting at this meeting.

## **Approval of October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014 Minutes**

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved approval of amended minutes. Commissioner Cremer seconded the motion. The Commission voted to approval unanimously.

## **Conversation with Richard Fiske, Director of Worcester Department of Emergency Communications & Emergency Management**

Ms. Turchek introduced Mr. Fiske saying that the Commission is interested in being informed and involved with the Department of Emergency Communications & Emergency Management with the aim of getting to know Mr. Fiske and of keeping people with disabilities and elders safe in times of emergencies.

Mr. Fiske is Director of 911 and Emergency Communications and Management Department. He has been involved with public safety the better part of twenty years. He started as a 911 dispatcher in college and was an ambulance worker in MetroWest and in Boston. He left those simultaneous jobs and became a police officer with the Town of Shrewsbury and Framingham. He came to Worcester as the Deputy Director and then as Director in May 2014 when the position became vacant.

He has been getting to know the job with a staff of about 62 people which include 911 dispatchers. They are housed at police headquarters. The department runs 24/7/365 and he is tied to phones, etc. He has spoken with Ms. Turchek a few times about the Commission's work and complemented the Commission on their great work.

He noted that Worcester is far more involved with people with disabilities than other towns he has experienced. His job is to make sure Worcester is prepared for and has the ability to respond to the different kinds of emergencies that subjects its citizens and businesses in the city. Emergencies run from storms to terrorism, home invasions and domestic

violence. Anything that may strain or deplete the day to day operations of the city involves his department.

The department uses it's planning resources to look at what are the likely emergencies, how often do they occur and to garner the resources for these likely scenarios. They involve different groups such as the Commission, Mass. Emergency Management Agency, Police, Fire, Public Health, transportation, Homeland Security, and state officials for the basic purpose to make a plan for what might happen. They have a comprehensive plan with various scenarios with information like who needs to be involved and who will make decisions so resources can be coordinated quickly. They continually work at updating the plan to maintain its integrity.

The City does periodic table top exercises with the airport, colleges, hospitals and a full scale exercise every three years. Mr. Fiske has been working with these and other entities to include the city in their exercises so each will know how the other will respond.

Mr. Fiske reminded the Commission that citizens need to be prepared to shelter in place for at least three day period before one can realistically expect the government to be able to help.

The following information was gathered from responses to the Commission's questions:

- Alert Worcester is operated out of Mr. Fiske's department. It is used as a notification system to residents and businesses such as leaf collection, road closures. Used also by the Division of Public Health for various types of emergencies, i.e. fire. This system is a tiered subscription to receive a message via text, email, phone or a combination. Alerts can be for things like a beach closures, hazardous material, water boiling order, a shelter in place order and the like. Note: one could get selected notices without subscribing. This system uses 911 data received from the State

every six months and will provide a reverse 911 alert to all when a city-wide issue.

- The Voluntary Registry was well done with good data. The struggle is how to get the data to the “boots on the ground”. There was no easy way for this to happen without doing some physical work. By the time data was available the incident would be half over. Effort is being made to have the data available at the beginning of the incident by making it a hybrid between the Worcester Alert System and 911 which provides the phone # and caller to the 911 operator. Other data can be inputted into the CAD system as well.

The State is in the process of rolling out “Next Generation 911”. Mr. Fiske would like to wait for this system before transferring the data. About 15 years ago Enhanced 911 was brought on line state-wide. The new system allows access to text messaging, photos and short video clips.

The roll-out of “Next Generation” is in process. The State has visited several communities. To fully implement will take some time. There are more than 200 centers that would have to be updated. General Dynamics is the vendor that would be installing the system. Test rollout sites have been identified. Worcester is not one of them and opted out so any of the issues with the systems could be identified and corrected before Worcester received the new system. The other reason is that Worcester Department of Emergency Communications & Emergency Management is moving next year to near Goddard Memorial Drive and did not want to install the equipment twice. Hopefully the system can be installed next year.

- Mr. Fiske encourages the use of an emergency kit and suggested checking batteries and change water every six months when the clocks change so the kit will be ready to go.
- All shelters need to be ADA compliant and go through an inspection by the city’s Emergency Management Department and the Red Cross.

- The idea of putting information such as 24 hour gas stations and 24 hour pharmacies on the web site is a great idea the challenge is to keep the lists updated. The department of Public Health has the information on the pharmacies. Mr. Fiske is receptive to doing this depending on the resources available.
- First Responders are trained in different venues. Because Worcester's population is diverse gives opportunity to know about the different needs. When trained about the disabled population this includes needs of people with hidden disabilities as well. Mr. Fiske sends new staff to the special education training which includes information about autism, etc. Private contractors, Mass. Criminal Justice Training Council, American Red Cross, FEMA, MEMA and others offer this training. They all have training about disabilities for First Responders. The curriculum standard guidance comes from the respective regulatory agency.
- Many of the city's buildings have generator operated power. Places like the library may have only enough power for safety issues not for extended use. If there were need for generators by individuals during an emergency than use the shelter or maybe something like a hospital.
- Mr. Fiske looks forward to working with Commission and willing to have his staff attend Commission meetings when needed.

### **Communication from Citizens Advisory Council on applicants to city boards and commissions**

At the last meeting the Commission discussed whether or not to request a change in the membership on this Commission to seven full members to nine full members. The Commission asked for information about the level of interest of volunteers in this Commission. This Commission noted that a few people have applied for membership on this Commission over the past few years and wondered if there was a way to

improve the number of people who would be interested to warrant increasing this Commission's membership to nine.

Ms. Turchek indicated the Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) and its staff makes presentation to groups around the city to encourage membership in the various city boards and commissions. They explain the various Boards and Commissions and the appointment process. She asked Commission members if they had suggestions of groups the CAC might visit. Center for Living & Working was suggested as a group to which the CAC might make a presentation. It was also suggested that recruitment be done through Audio Journal.

All districts are represented at this point. The next posting for members will include representation from districts 2 and 3.

Mr. Cremer would like to have a discussion on changing the membership from seven to nine members. This will be put on a future agenda.

Mr. Coleman suggested using the local media as a recruiting tool.

### **Communication from Elder Affairs Committee**

This letter is in response to the Draft ADA Self Evaluation report reviewed by the Commission in August. The Commission appreciated that the Senior Center was identified as a priority and asked that the Office consider this when making recommendations.

### **Summary of ADA Results (Sundar Laualu)**

This is a follow-up summary of the results of the survey analysis that Mr. Layalu had done for the Commission last month as requested by the Commission. This will help the Commission make recommendations for ADA compliance going forward. Ms. Turchek is looking for a

conversation and guidance from the Commission about priorities and recommendations to give to the City Manager.

There are three or four buildings that the survey identified as top priority for needing to be ADA accessible and wondered if the Commission were in agreement with these priorities. Members agreed the City Hall as the center of government needs to be top priority for accessibility and requested to add the DCU.

There is no bus service to Skyline Drive where Emergency Preparedness and Park meetings are held. There was a request that meetings held at Skyline drive now be held at City Hall so the public can attend.

#### **ADA survey of polling locations update (Jayna Turchek)**

Ms. Turchek reported that the Institute for Human Centered Design reviewed all polling places on November 4, 2014, election day, and expects to have a draft report for the meeting in January. This report will be folded into the draft self evaluation completed in August. The review of polling places was identified as a gap in the earlier report. The Commission thanked the Office and the City Manager's Office for having this review conducted.

Scott Ricker appreciated the accessibility work done at Lake Park Community House and suggested training be enhanced for poll workers around the Automark. The Automark should be faced away from the public eye for privacy. The Commission requested training of poll workers be placed on the Commission's agenda.

#### **Review of AAB notices and applications**

The Commission agreed to review city owned property (in bold) and receive information on private property.

Variance Application:

- 274 Franklin St.

First and Second Notices:

- **2 Washington Square, Docket #C14-073**

Responses:

- **455 Main St. (Railings-Historical Preservation)**

The State Historical Commission did not find the railings detrimental to the Historical landscape of the building. The railings were approved. There will be three sets of railings on both the front and back stairs.

- 255 Park Ave, Docket #C14-071

Notice of Hearing:

- 894 Grafton St, Docket #C12-026

Decisions and Resolutions:

- 100 Institute Rd, Docket# V14-190
- 20 Winthrop St, Docket #C14-065
- 134 Providence St, Docket#C14-064
- 102 Russell St, Docket #V14-237

### **Suggestions for upcoming agenda items**

- Discussion of increasing the Commission's membership from seven to nine
- Training for election workers
- Voting by absentee ballot in upcoming elections
- Goals for 2015

### **Announcements:**

- WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting  
November 19th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)  
December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5-6:30pm, Worcester Public Library

- Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program: December 9th, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- Next Commission on Disability meeting: January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 4:30pm.
- Local Emergency Planning Committee Meeting, Wednesday, November 19, 8:00 AM, 50 Skyline Dr.

Emergency Preparedness Tip: People with disabilities might want to consider having several gallon containers of water at home for emergencies.

Mr. Coleman said there are two library trustee openings and suggested the Commission spread the information. These are six years terms.

**Adjournment:**

Mr. Stolberg adjourned the meeting.