

## **Accessibility Advisory Commission**

**Tuesday, November 17, 2020, 4:30 PM Minutes**

**Virtual meeting with WebEx platform**

**Live streaming on City's website:**

**<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, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

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

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

**Guests:** Commissioner D'Arcangelo, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB)

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

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

### **Approval of October 20, 2020 minutes**

Commissioner Prochilo moved to approve the September 15, 2020 minutes as written. Associate Commissioner Larrivee seconded the motion. All approved.

### **Conversation with Commissioner D'Arcangelo, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) regarding announced closure of the regional office at 390 Main St, Worcester, MA\***

Director Turчек introduced and welcomed Commissioner D'Arcangelo, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) back. He was the formal director of Mass. Office on Disability.

Mr. D'Arcangelo explained the closing of both the Worcester and New Bedford Regional offices was an opportunity to provide more and new services. The reasons for this decision included lease was ending, new technology connecting clients to service staff and CoVID experience made this a reasonable time to make

this transition Not only would there be cost savings on rent but also on staff transportation. He could not discuss specifics about labor because there is on-going negotiations with Unions underway. He was the person making this decision. Many local visually impaired people were in attendance and asked questions.

The following was learned with Mr. D’Arcangelo’s responses:

- Worcester MCB Advisory Council was not consulted.
- Staff will travel less and there will be staff meeting and planned interactions with and between. Staff will meet at clients requested locations.
- Memoranda of understanding are being developed with various entities around the region where on site services and programs will be held.

One Commission noted that this may be a new model for the state to consider for other state agencies.

Commissioner Myska provided a document outlining the closure process from her perspective.

Commissioner Myska and Mr. Jack Peacock provided a document containing information about the MCB Mass. budget item #4110-1000.

### **White Cane Day Debrief (Elizabeth Myska)**

White Cane Day was observed on October 21<sup>st</sup>. Precautions were taken with masks, personal protection equipment and social distancing. This year there were three community people who accepted the invitation. Blindfolded and using the white cane, they were escorted by sighted guides from the Mass. School of Pharmacy and Health Services. They walked from the Public Market around the perimeter of Kelly Square.

On a separate day, Mayor Joseph Petty experience being blindfolded and using a cane with a sighted guide.

### **Update from Commission work group to draft recommendations for the tactile map downtown (Jack Peacock)**

Mr. Peacock reported for the work group that this project could be done with private funding and therefore no cost to the City for designing, building and maintaining the project. They are considering two kiosks near and at Polar Park to include restaurant directory, LED displays and a tactile map of the area.

He plans to share the design with the Commission for input at a future meeting.

## **Notice of Election of Officers December 15, 2020**

Reported to the Commission

## **Notice of sidewalk snow and ice removal ordinance and public information and preparedness: <http://www.worcesterma.gov/streets/winter-weather>**

**Seniors and persons with disabilities can call the Customer Service Center at 508-929-1300 for a list of agencies and phone numbers that may be able to assist in snow removal.**

Reported to the Commission

## **Review of AAB notices and applications: (No City properties)**

### Notice of Action:

- Stamp Factory Lofts, 128 Chandler St (V20-149)

No comments

## **Suggestions for upcoming agenda items**

None

## **Announcements:**

- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled):** December 1, 2020, 4:00 – 5:30pm, Contact: [jbellil@yahoo.com](mailto:jbellil@yahoo.com)
- Mayor's Mental Health Taskforce Working Group: November 18, 2020, 10am-11am. Contact: Kelsey Hopkins [hopkinsk@worcesterma.gov](mailto:hopkinsk@worcesterma.gov)
- Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting: December 15, 2020, 4:30pm
- WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting: December 16, 2020, 1-2:30pm, Contact: [CMellis@cmrpc.org](mailto:CMellis@cmrpc.org)
- Emergency Preparedness Meeting: –TBD

## Adjournment:

Commissioner Prochilo moved to adjourn and Associate Commissioner Larrivee seconded. All approved. 6:51pm

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