

**City of Worcester Accessibility Advisory Commission
Tuesday April 12, 2022, 4:30 PM Meeting Minutes**

**Virtual meeting with WebEx platform
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/video-on-demand>
ASL interpreters provided**

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bureau, Philip Economou, Darya Karuna, Jully Khattar, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Christina Parissi Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: James Delage, John Finn, Jr.

Staff: Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Hung Nguyen and Vaske Gjino, City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order at 4:35pm and requested Director Turcek to provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves on roll call.

Approval of February 15, 2022 minutes*

Commissioner Larrivee moved to approve the February 15, 2022 minutes as written. Commissioner Prochilo seconded the motion. Unanimously approved by roll call.

Discussion regarding newly forming Pleasant Street Transformative Development Initiative (TDI)

www.worcesterma.gov/announcements/worcester-s-pleasant-street-receives-state-support-for-economic-growth-initiatives2

Hung Nguyen and Vaske Gjino, City of Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development provided the following information.

Hung Nguyen provided an overview: The TDI is run by Mass Development which is a quasi-private and state economic development agency started in 2014. A TDI is a district or neighborhood with a boundary with reasonable exceptions or sometimes known as a “fuzzy” boundary. Mass Development offers a lot of resources including a full time fellow to work with the partnership, technical assistance in doing planning studies, marketing and branding for the district, conduct community meetings, provide access to grants on place-making and beautification, etc. Also they provide equity investment if there is a property that is vacant or in poor shape.

Worcester has several TDIs. First was the Hanover Theater District which is known as the Downtown Business District. Next there is Main South and now Pleasant Street which is just getting started.

Vaske Gjino provided more details. He said a TDI can be thought of as a three year accelerator. Main South has been active for three years, closing this summer. He is the City’s representative on the partnership. During CoVID not as much got done as was hoped, however, there was a lot done including building relationships with long time business owners which developed into the establishment of the Main South Business Association. This gave businesses an opportunity to know about the funding related to CoVID and to receive that funding. Place making and beautification work was also completed. The “I Love Main South” sign on Benefit Street corner vacant lot came as a result of a community effort. The businesses paid for the sign fabrication and residents painted it. A multi-year branding process centered on the word “Here” was developed resulting in

a website and brochures. Banners were put up along Main Street with the branding colors. The TDI area is from Wellington Street to King Street.

With regards to the new Pleasant Street TDI, the geographic area being considered is Dewey Street to Irving Street. One of the goals is to help businesses be accessible.

Commission question asked if Commission would receive opportunity to have input prior to sidewalks/streets being redone. A discussion ensued about the work that was recently done. Commission suggested it would be helpful to see the map that was submitted with TDI proposal so the streets could be better understood. Concern that apex curb cuts have been put in as part of the 2018-19 resurfacing of Pleasant Street.

Another question: Do the Fellows have accessibility experience/knowledge? A lot of what was done in Main South was visual, not necessarily helpful for the blind. Commissioner Myska offered to partner with Fellow/staff to help them learn about the VIP/blind world.

The Commission thanked Hung and Vaske and looks forward to hearing more as the TDI develops.

Review winter snow removal enforcement reports (FY20, 21, 22)

The following report was provided by Danielle Clifford via email and reported by Director Turchek.

November 2019 – April 2020

Sidewalks cleared – 321

Citations issued – 172

Contractor to clear (which includes citations) – 60

Warnings issued – 58

November 2020 – April 2021

Sidewalk cleared – 286

Citation issued – 173
Contractor cleared – 47 (includes citations)
Warning issued – 80

November 2021 – April 2022

Sidewalk cleared – 245
Citation issued – 156
Contractor to clear – 48 (includes citations)
Warning issued – 76

Commission requested Director Turchek request list of properties that are repeat offenders and ask what proactive steps are taken with regard to addressing these properties year to year.

Update on Holy Cross student project (evaluation of Disability Etiquette Workshops)*

The Office has been providing this workshop since 2013 and felt it was time to evaluate the program. The Community Based Learning Program agreed to assist this process.

Program description and history:

City of Worcester Disability Etiquette Training Program

The Worcester Accessibility Office strives to ensure that all Worcester residents and visitors with disabilities have access to city programs and services by providing information and referral, advocacy, outreach and educational programs. We know that effective services and programming starts with effective communication and we therefore are pleased to invite you and your staff and volunteers to participate in our Disability Etiquette Training Program.

The Program was designed to assist groups in understanding basic principles of etiquette when working with disabilities. In the course of two hour we engage participants about how to serve and/or interact with people who have disabilities. This is an excellent opportunity to ask

questions, share experiences and learn from one another. This program has given new insights for colleagues when working with people with disabilities. At the conclusion of the program we provide additional resources and referrals to better assist your operations.

The program began in August 2013 with a staff member going to museums and non-profits in the city presenting information about different disabilities and best practices on serving people with disabilities. This was in a conversational style where participants would share their own experiences relating to people with disabilities (PWD). In July 2017 the program switched from a single staff presenter to a panel format for the presentation. As of today we have volunteers with various disabilities sharing best practices from personal and systemic perspectives. Plans are in the works to add to this team with volunteers to present other significant disabilities.

Summary of class findings and recommendations

The class found that results of the workshop were:

- A little uncomfortable/intimidated at the start
- Hesitant to join the conversation
- Difficult to stay focused
- Felt similar to a lecture
- Positive Experience
- Learned a lot about how to interact with those who are disabled in some way
- Good variety between panel members
- Reduced general discomfort with the topic and made situations more approachable
- Participants leaving workshop feeling more confident in situations with people with disabilities
- Able to teach others on topics discussed
- Engaged throughout the workshop
 - actively listening

- asking questions
- Increase from pre to post workshop survey score

The following recommendations were made:

- Ask multiple choice questions on information presented
- Opinion questions rating the workshop
- Mixture of both types of questions will help assess if the workshop is successful
- Follow up survey
- Putting people in situations to apply what they have learned at end of workshop
- Ask specific questions like:
 - What is something you learned from this training that you believe you will be able to apply in real life?
 - Do you believe that this training has taught you something about people with disabilities that you didn't know before? If so, what is it?
 - Do you have a greater interest in learning about and supporting people with disabilities after this training?
 - What disabilities did you learn most about? What disability do you wish to understand more about?
- More of a panel than a workshop
- More interactive format
 - Dos and Don'ts
 - Role Playing
- Breakout Groups
- Work through possible scenarios
- Supply the audience with more tools, especially, with real life situations
- More visual cues
- Make the workshop more standardized in terms of the speakers and what they saw.
- Overall, the workshop is informative and beneficial.

- According to the feedback forms, participants leave the workshop with a much better understanding of disability culture than they began with.
- Improvement is well within reach.

Planning update: Worcester disability history exhibit for Worcester's 300th celebration

Commissioner Karuna gave the following update:

Proposal for Commission's Exhibit at Worcester's Tercentennial on June 11, 2022 from Noon to 5PM on Worcester' Common

Overview: The Accessibility Advisory Commission is honored to participate in the celebration of Worcester Massachusetts 300 birthday.

Goals:

1. Our first goal is to participate in the 300 anniversary celebration of Worcester, Massachusetts.
2. The Accessibility Advisory Commission is joining with other organizations in Worcester to celebrate Worcester's amazing history and growth.
3. Educate Worcester residents and visitors on the role of the Accessibility Advisory Commission and show the growth in Worcester to provide accessibility to all people of Worcester. Addressing the areas of need in the city, will bring the people of Worcester closer to accessibility for all.

Specifications:

1. This display will capsulize the history of Worcester and the challenges of people with site, Deaf, hard of hearing, and mobility issues through the years.

2. The display will consist of two boards tracing the history of Worcester's treatment of people with special needs. The boards are 30 x 36 in. Green Mounting paper, and adhesive hearts.

3. The tables are approximately 4 ft by 4 ft. Four holding chairs will be needed. Two easels will hold the display boards. Tablecloth will be provided by the Commission.

Milestones:

1. The colonial history of Worcester's care facilities
2. A short history of the Commission on Disability
3. The commission's new name!

Assistance from the Commission needed:

1. Members of the Commission are asked to take turns for 1 hour manning the table.
2. Commission members are asked to set up prior to Noon and break down the exhibit table about 5pm.

Summary:

Worcester is the second largest city in Massachusetts. It is known for its firsts! Mechanization, inventions, medicine, and ingenuity are just some of the wonderful things about Worcester. Let's honor Worcester's Tercentennial this weekend! We all need to know about the Rickshaw, space suits, and the monkey wrench!

Chairperson Bureau requested a sign-up sheet be developed.

Training announcement: Universal Design of Housing for Inclusive Communities Wednesday April 27, 4pm (Zoom event)

Free event but need to register:

www.worcesterma.gov/announcements/city-to-offer-free-universal-design-training-session

WooSox update

- **Tour for Commissioners & friends of Commission**
- **HP parking and drop off**

Notice: Now scheduling groups for summer City Hall Tours for Persons with Disabilities/Allies Program.

Contact Dawn Clark at clarkde@worcesterma.gov

Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine

- **Walk-in Equity Clinics for COVID 19 vaccines Wednesdays & Saturdays at the Worcester Public Library, 3 Salem Sq.** Need an ASL Interpreter? To request interpreter/ accommodation call Michelle at 774-303-6976 or email mortizocasio.socialwork@gmail.com
- **Vaccine clinics and vaccine information:**
<https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>

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

Variance Application:

- El Basha Restaurant, 424 Belmont St
- 426 Main Street LLC.
- Alta Seven Hills, 22 Mulberry St (V21-195) (Amended application)

Notice of Action:

- Lutheran Rehabilitation & Skilled Care, 26 Harvard St, (V21 208)

No action taken

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items: None at this time

Announcements:

- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting:
May 17, 2022 - 4:30pm**
- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group Wednesday,
April 20– 1-2:30pm**

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 6:44 pm.

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