

**City of Worcester Accessibility Advisory Commission
Tuesday July 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, James Delage, John Finn, Jr., Darya Karuna, Linda Larrivee, Elizabeth Myska, Christina Parissi, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: Jully Khattar

Staff: Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Robert Antonelli, City Assistant Commissioner of Parks
Patrick Remy, Easterseals of Massachusetts

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order at 4:30pm On a roll call vote (8/0/0/) and requested Director Turcek to provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. Commissioners then introduced themselves..

Approval of May 17, 2022 minutes*

Commissioner Larrivee moved to approve the July 12, 2022 minutes as written. Associate Commissioner Parissi seconded the motion. Approved by roll call with Commissioner Myska abstaining.

Update on Parks Master Plans and Construction

Robert Antonelli, Assistant Commissioner of Parks, presented Information on the following city parks with projected completion dates:

Construction Projects

Crompton Park – Skateboard Park – August 2022

This park is a three level facility on the corner of Quinsigamond Avenue and Endicott Street. The first level is at the sidewalk. Second level is where the heart and city seal is. Third level is the bowl called the street course component. There is an accessible ramp that brings one up into the heart and on Endicott Street, there is an accessible ramp to the street level as well. This is for skateboarding and rollerblading designed by skateboarders through Pillar Design Studio both contracted by the City. Other features include heart or clover against the backdrop, lots of rails to assist the skateboarders in their activity. There are two places to park: one at the cutout on Quinsigamond Avenue and other is on Endicott Street.

Coal Mine Brook - Summer 2023

This site is on Plantation Street, across from the Route 290 exit, formerly used as a construction area to store material when constructing Route 290 and upgrading of Plantation Street. Plans include a new parking lot, a playground, fitness center and picnic tables, fully accessible route from Plantation down to North Lake Avenue and two overlooks overlooking Coal Mine Brook similar to what was down at Columbus Park and Hadwen Park. This site is designed to be an open space and mowed like meadow not intended to be a manicured space. The current parking on North Lake Avenue is to be removed. Trees will be trimmed so lake can be seen. Security cameras and lighting are also part of this project.

Grant Square Phase 2 - Summer 2023

Bordered by Northampton, Westminster, Mount Vernon and Windsor Streets, this is the final phase for this site to include tennis court, pedestrian lighting along the walkways and in and around the playground and a new fully accessible community garden area: firm surface and table planters. The Regional Environment Council will be managing the site. There is a shelter planned to protect from rain etc. at the corner. The walkways are accessible except for a set of stairs by the playground that accommodates a slope in the topography. There are three pickets for water source. Chose not to do the drip irrigation system do to maintenance issues. Cameras and lighting are part of this project.

Commissioner Myska introduced her colleague, Jack Peacock. He spoke to a closed drip system used in downtown planters and the system they were working on. Mr.

Antonelli agreed to have further conversation off line and agreed to look at alternatives in the future.

Indian Hill Park Phase 2 – Fall 2023

This park is off Ararat Street. Phase 1 was completed a few years ago with basketball court and parking lot. The second phase will include softball field, practice end field and a rectangular field as an overlay of the two fields with no permanent items and stores on the facility until needed. As well as new dugouts, batting cage, bull pen area, additional parking area with a HP spot and lighting for the asphalt walkways around the perimeter. Depending on how the bides come in there may be a playground included.

Design Projects

Tacoma Street Playground

Plans are for a multi-use facility to include a full size rectangular field for soccer, field hockey, men's and women's lacrosse; playground; spray park similar to the one at East Park or Greenwood Park; dog park.

The final design is currently being worked on and construction should begin sometime next year. The layout could change, but the content will be the same.

User choice wheelchairs can be used I the spray parks.

Foley Stadium

This facility is in back of the stadium which is on Chandler Street. Currently, this is a grass area used for baseball with overlays for track and field etc.

The design will include the completion of the walking path around the football field, new baseball field and a rectangular field using synthetic turf with walking path, bleachers, batting cage, and bull pen all at grade. Lights will be installed. On the exterior there will be javelin and discus.

To date the schools use this facility by permit. Assistant Commissioner Parissi was interested because she is looking for a field where accessible baseball could be plated.

Indian Lake Beach

This facility is a Clauson Road. Currently the parking area is gravel. Building needs replacing and there is no accessible beach access. This plan will remove and erect a new building. Provide an appropriately lined parking lot and access to the upper beach. Lighting and security cameras are included in the plans. Once completed plans include beach chair, matting and features like other city beaches.

The question was asked are not having enough lifeguards. This issue has been considered. The plan is to complete the planning process and then take a look at the situation. This year 70% of the lifeguard need was available. There is optimism the in a few years they will be back to full capacity and all beaches will be open. Currently trash is picked up once a day sometimes in the morning or early afternoon. When beach is not open trash picked up twice a week and do maintenance work.

Geese droppings continue to be an issue for city water bodies. Perhaps in a couple of years this will be more manageable. Wire netting is being used to keep the geese away on off hours which seems to be working especially during mating season. A dog is also used and works until geese get used to being harassed.

South Worcester

This site is at the corner of Cambridge and Camp Streets. There are two projects planned. One to include new handball and basketball courts to be built. Completion date expected summer 2023. The second project is to update the inside with accessible restrooms and other details. Completion date expected for the end of 2022. An entrance ramp was built several years ago.

There was a question about the possibility of lowering the hoop for people with disabilities to play. This has been tried I other communities and found that the infer structure is damaged by people who are not careful. Mr. Antonelli is open to discussing this option.

Lincoln Square WW1 Memorial

This facility is at the corner of Highland and Belmont Streets where they meet Major Taylor Boulevard. The memorial has been moved three times to date. It used to be in a roundabout, moved to another location and then to the current location. The monument has deteriorated in the interior. The city is looking to restructure and restore. Right now there are steps going up to the monument. The hope is there will be a way to eliminate one of the set of steps.

East Park – Little League Field Renovations

The field is on the left in East Park next to Shrewsbury Street. The plan is to renovate this area with an updated parking area including accessible parking spots currently being worked out with possibility of access points from the parks parking area in the center of the field; a regular Little League size field with sports lighting and all the amenities to be accessible. This is being done as the results of the former ball field on Mulberry Street at the Mt. Carmel field being repurposed for housing.

The Little League has first right of refusal, then others could use the field.

The Parks Department determines number of HP spots in three ways: 1. What is required by law; 2. location of amenities, and 3. available space.

There is no plan for ramp or railings etc.

Master Plans

New Park at 69 Sever Street

This site is where the old Worcester Tennis Courts were and purchased by Becker College which made an oval loop and now has been purchased by the city. The plan is to build both permanent and temporary art installations, gardens, trees and other amenities with paved/accessible walkways. The City's Cultural Affairs Office and Commission will oversee the art displays.

Commissioner Karuna noted that more artists with special needs should be included in displaying art.

Blithewood Park

This facility is at the corner of Massasoit and Blithewood Avenues. A parking lot and playground has already been built in previous phase. Plan is to redesign the tennis and basketball courts as well as the field area with a walkways that circumnavigates the tennis court and field area. Amenities are also planned including a shelter, upgraded picnic area etc. Decision on type of field is yet to be made. The final plan will go to the Parks Commission in September for approval.

Thank you's were exchanged. Mr. Antonelli expressed his appreciation working with the Commission and Director Turck to making the parks as accessible as possible.

Commissioner Myska thanked Mr. Antonelli for taking her on a tour Columbus Park at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

Conversation on adaptive sports in Worcester

Patrick Remy, Program Specialist, at Easterseals of Massachusetts since 2016. He provided information about Adaptive Recreation Programs in Worcester through a PowerPoint as follows:

1. a. Mission: provide equal opportunities for people with disabilities to Live, Learn, Work, and Play.
b. Additional services include Assistive Technology Evaluations & Training, Transition Assessments, Vocational Evaluations, Employment Placement & Skills Training, Rehab Services & Veteran Services
2. Survey done early in his time with Easterseals went to partners, clients and friends asking what people wanted. 121 responses were received and 99% indicated an unmet need for people with disabilities in the area. Activities identified included yoga, video games, and martial arts. There was also a focus group of people that was introduced to a martial arts instructor who explained moves and the community building benefit.
3. October 2016 the first accessible martial arts class was held at the YWCA with 11 participants. The group was diverse and feedback was given.
4. A few months later the group became larger so the space was moved from the classroom to the gym. Soon after a second program was started in the Boston area.

5. When the YWCA was under construction, the group met in Easterseals small room on the sixth floor of Denholm Building.
6. During the pandemic, 3 sessions were offered virtually on Zoom: Thursdays - 5-6pm, Facebook and You Tube Live. Will probably add the yoga class.
7. Easterseals has a long history of swim programs. There are 10 programs across the state. About 20 years ago the program slowed.
8. Adaptive Swim Program
 - In 2017 - piloted the program with The Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program. The program is an adapted recreational swim program for children and adults with disabilities, their families, and community volunteers.
 - This program is for individuals who want to experience swimming but are not ready or interested in structured swim lessons. This recreational swim program uses in-water education to develop water safety and swimming skills, and focuses on developing self-confidence, self-esteem and social connections.
9. Swim Program dates – July 8th – August 16th and rain date August 19.
10. For more information:
Patrick Remy - Program Services Specialist
Easterseals Massachusetts
484in Street, Worcester, MA 01608
Call or Text: 508-751-6417
Premy@eastersealsma.org
eastersealsma.org

Associate Commissioner Parissi is a graduate of the swim program and encourage the importance of being able to swim. She congratulated the program for the work being done to assist people with disabilities to have access to adaptive recreational activities.

Notice: Opportunities through the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/universal-access-program>

Representative to join the Commission for a conversation during our next meeting Tuesday August 16.

Director Turchek asked the Commission and public to submit questions for DCR representative to respond to in August.

Can hand cycling happen in Worcester?

Commissioner Myska trains DCR staff to be sighted guides for the blind. Plans are for a blind walk in August probably at River Bends in Upton.

There was a suggestion to read the information on DCR website for details on activities and sign up.

The Miracle League baseball (Christina Parissi)

<https://www.miracleleague.com>

Associate Commissioner' brother volunteered in Springfield. This is how her interest started. Miracle League is baseball for people of all challenges. She is asking the Commission to support an adaptive baseball league in Worcester. This League has very specific rules. One concern, Miracle League has the requirement of a specific surface. Expensive but safer than natural surfaces.

There are several options. She is working with Director Turchek and others to determine interest and the best option. She suggested beginning with a survey.

Chairperson Bureau summarized some of the issues the needs to be addressed: field surface, cost, age and competitiveness other teams in a league that could participate. There is the suggestion of forming a working group of Commission members and the public. At an optimal time in their work a survey could be done.

Commissioner Myska said there was an exhibition of Beep Ball (baseball for the blind) in Waltham on September 11th. July is the team's busy month. Elana Regan who presented to the Commission with Kristine Hartness of Canines for Kids last year is an active player. Dr. Mike is their Team Doctor. She suggested he come to a meeting and talk about Beep Baseball.

Tercentennial Tabling/Exhibit Debrief

Commissioner Karuna and Associate Commissioner Delage shared the following report.

The weather was beautiful the afternoon of June 11, 202 with hundreds of people on and around the common. The Commission's table was in an ideal place on the corner of Main and Franklin Streets with displays, a big book with history about accessibility features and the Commission's work over the years. Games and takeaways were made available. Table visitors were glad to know the accessibility information and there will be follow up with the two people interested in joining the Commission.

Review and discuss draft FY23 Planning Calendar*

Director Turchek explained that this is a working document would be used to guide the Commission's work in FY'23 as the monthly agendas are developed.

Commissioners were encouraged to feel free to add their interests to the calendar.

Election of Officers

There are three officers for the Accessibility Advisory Commission. Chairperson, Vice Chairperson and Secretary. Explanation of the job descriptions were reviewed. Nominations were opened: Chairperson Bureau nominated himself for Chairperson. Commissioner Larrivee nominated Commissioner Myska as Vice Chairperson and Commissioner Karuna seconded. Commissioner Myska accepted the nomination. Commission Finn, Jr. Nominated himself for Vice Chairperson.

The nominees for Vice Chairperson gave a statement of interest in being Vice Chairperson.

A roll call vote was taken for the office of Chairperson. Commissioner Bureau was unanimously voted as Chairperson (8/0/0).

A roll call vote was taken for the office of Vice Chairperson. Commissioner Myska received 7 votes and Commissioner Finn, Jr. 1 vote. Commissioner Myska is the new Vice Chairperson.

There were no nominations for the Office of Secretary,

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)

Decision:

- AAB V21-195 (Alta Seven Hills Worcester) 22-28 Mulberry Street

No action taken.

Announcements:

- **Inclusionary Zoning Public Hearing Tuesday July 19, 5pm City Hall Levi Lincoln chamber (3rd flr) & virtual:** www.worcesterma.gov/agendas-minutes/standing-committees/economic-development/2022/20220719.htm
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission meeting: August 16, 2022 - 4:30pm**
- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group Wednesday, September 21, 2022 - 1-2:30pm**

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 7:14 pm by a roll call vote moved by Commissioner Larrivee and seconded by Commissioner Karuna.

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