

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes from January 20, 2015, 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, Susan Fahlbeck, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

**Members Absent:** Susan Swanson

**Staff:** Jayna Turчек, Joseph Sansoucy, Dawn E. Clark, Sundar Layalu

**Guests:** Lisa Tarantino, Marilyn Cleary, advocate, parent and student from Quinsigamond Community College Operation T.A.L.E.N.T., Joseph F. Borbone, Worcester Director of Engineering, Representatives from UMass Memorial Medical Center

**Members of the Public:**

Michael Kennedy, Jackie Norton, Scott Ricker, Paul Rile, Thomas Shields and others who chose not to sign in

**Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions**

The Chairperson welcomed commission members and members of the public present. He invited members of the public to sign in. After the meeting was called to order, the commissioners introduced themselves.

**Approval of November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014 Minutes**

Commissioner Brown moved approval of amended minutes. Chairperson Stolberg seconded. Motion approved (6 Y, 1 A).

**Conversation with Lisa Tarantino and students from Quinsigamond Community College Operation T.A.L.E.N.T.**

Ms. Tarantino began by saying the College now has a presence downtown on 25 Federal Street. She introduced Marilyn Cleary, Director of Operations, who offered the following background information. T.A.L.E.N.T. stands for Transformation through Academic Learning and Experience to Navigate Tomorrow. The program was launched in 2007 and has won many awards. The program was initiated in collaboration with QCC Academic Affairs and Disability Services and Workforce Central. The program works closely with employers by learning the skills they need from employees that they weren't finding. Most often the need was the area of office support. The program is a 10 month non-certificate program for people with disabilities who want to focus on working in an office environment. An effort is made to find internships for students in their area of interest. An example: a student with sports interest was placed in the Worcester Sharks' office.

Ms. Tarantino explained a student must have a high school diploma or GED (Alternative is a reading assessment test because the text used in the program is 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> reading level). The application includes the application, disability documentation, references, and assessment of emotional and social maturity. Students are expected to work 15 hours a week internship and pass a CORI screening.

The students finish the program with Microsoft Office computer skills, office skills and career goals for the future. They create a portfolio and resume and complete an internship. The program works with the college's disability services to secure accommodations a student may need.

The curriculum has three parts: 1. Basic computer skills and meet basic high school diploma requirements. 2. Career exploration and workforce readiness, learning style assessment, time and money management and other areas needed for successful career and independence. Business etiquette: interpersonal skills, resume writing. Workforce Central comes in and works with the students. A resume is then put in the student's portfolio. There are work centers where students get to actually do the work such as filing, vocabulary work, phone calls, etc. In April students go to Workforce Central and practice their skills. 3. Internship: Student works Monday thru Thursday (15 Hours) and meets on Friday at the main campus of College.

The College begins reviewing applications on July 1 (and sometimes before) running through August 27<sup>th</sup>. The first two weeks of September is introductory time. The program can accommodate a maximum of ten students. This year there were four students. The cost of the program is \$2,295 and includes everything. This program does not generate money for the college. If a student is a Mass. Rehabilitation Consumer (MRC), MRC may pay for the program.

A student's parent offered her perspective on the program. Her son was academically ready for his high school diploma, but not socially ready. His IQ was too high for Dept. of Developmental Services so that left her family and son "nowhere". MRC got him a job immediately as a dishwasher, but he did not know what a dishwasher did or what it meant to be employed. Ultimately this job did not work out for many reasons. MRC then suggested the T.A.L.E.N.T. /QCC Program. This is what he needed: going out every day, learning what it means to work and how to interact with colleagues and the public. This parent is excited about the program and wished there were more programs like it.

Next, a case manager from the Asperger's Association spoke. The Association has a new name: The Aspergers/Autism Network. She is also a life Coach with this program in Watertown; working with young adults on life skills, job readiness, coaching after finishing T.A.L.E.N.T., etc. Mass. Rehab works with both these entities and this case manager is able to work with the son of the previous speaker. The connectedness here gives this student a solid foundation to go into the world.

A third supporter was a student of the program. Speaking from her perspective, she wasn't too sure about the work at the beginning of the program, but now she feels it is ready helping her to get a real job in the world.

Information gathered as a result of questions from the Commissioners and public:

- This is a 10 month program and when the students receive their diplomas, they present their power point presentation
- Related to bullying: Program personnel work with students on how to deal with both positive and negative comments from others. Speakers agreed with

the insensitivity of some people. Educate employers to be sensitive. There is so much more support than there was in past years.

- There is no federal payment support, but cities/towns may support in some cases. There was a college scholarship awarded for one student to continue a college class.

### **Review of plans for City Square public parking garage & plaza**

Joseph F. Borbone, Worcester Director of Engineering, presented plans for the City Square public parking garage (580 parking spaces which includes 2 levels of parking below ground and the ground floor as an open space plaza). There will be 12 HP spaces/ van accessible which will be adjacent to the two elevators, one on each end of the first floor. If there are more vans than autos HP spaces can be converted to van accessible spaces in the future.

Information learned from Commission and public questions.

- Parking would service both sides of Front Street (underground). The levels of parking run under Front St. so there is shelter if the weather is inclement.
- Right now there are no plans for handicapped parking on the second level. However when there is a demonstrated need for additional spaces they can be converted. The same number of HP spaces can be designated on the second level as is planned on the first level.
- Mr. Borbone said they were to have 2% of parking accessible parking; of that 1/8 needs to be van accessible.
- Encouraged strong enforcement of handicapped parking. In response Mr. Borbone said this was to be a municipal parking lot and would be enforced by DPW- traffic patrol officers.
- Request to consider putting over and above the required number of HP spaces.
- Large vans can fit in the garage. Mr. Barbone will check to be sure.
- Surface of plaza is thought to be stamped concrete. (The Commission has strong objection to the use of pavers because they can move and create hazardous conditions. There is a difference between cobbles and pavers.)

### **Progress update: Polling location accessibility review**

Ms. Turchek reported that the Institute for Human Centered Design reviewed all polling places on November 4, 2014, Election Day. The report was due to be presented this evening, however, the Center has had a change in staff assigned to this project and the City has granted an extension. The report is expected to be ready for presentation at the February Commission meeting.

**Informational communication: S1985, An act Relative to Local Commissions on Disability, signed by Governor Patrick**

The Mass. Office on Disability sent an email and is attached to S1985 for the Commission's information. The act allows local Commissions on Disabilities to use remote communications when members are not able to attend meeting under certain conditions.

To make use of this law the Attorney General's Open meeting law will need to be changed and then the Commission will need to discuss its own policy.

- Commission member noted her pleasure to see this come about.
- This has been a long and hard fought battle to achieve.

**Discussion of whether to recommend increasing full membership on commission from 7 to 9 persons**

Commissioner Cremer spoke in favor of this change. It would give more opportunity to have a full complement of officers and to do the work of the Commission. He stated Worcester is the second largest city in the state and Cambridge which is a smaller city has nine members and the Human Rights Commission has nine members. He stated this was passed by the City Council to have the City Manager consider an increase in membership.

A concern was raised that this would mean we would need more people to attend to get a quorum to do business. Another Commissioner was concerned that this did not decrease the number of Associate members. Right now the charter says up to five Associates could serve. Associate Commissioner Abbey helped clarify that the number of Associates could change with a change in the charter. Mr. Cremer moved to recommend increasing the Commission's membership from 7 to 9.

Commissioner Nancy Garr-Colzie seconded the motion. Motion carried (4 Yes, 2 No, 1 Abstention).

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

The Commission agreed to review city owned property (in bold) and receive information on private property. In the future the Chairperson would appreciate Mike Kennedy, Access Coordinator for Center for Living & Working, Inc. to provide the information on the private properties for the Commission when warranted.

### Variance Application:

- 55 Lake Ave. N – UMass Memorial Medical Center – University Campus

The petitioner presented the case for variance to the Commission.

The Center became aware of parking issues for the handicapped and has had conversations with the effected party. As a result Catherine McGinnis, ADA consultant, was hired to work with the center to find a solution. The Center understands this presentation as an opportunity to hear the Commission's concerns so changes in the application can be made before the AAB hearing scheduled for June 1, 2015 in Boston.

Ms. McGinnis' consulting firm has been around a long time. She began work with the Center on the parking situation about two months ago. The variance addresses two issues: 1. The number of HP spaces and 2. the location of spaces. The community may have other concerns as well which UMass would like to learn. They are aware that there are not enough HP spaces. There is a robust valet service which seemed like a good idea to mitigate the number of HP spaces in the garage.

The hospital and garage is actually owned by the Medical School (2 buildings) and are leased by the UMass Memorial Medical Center. These are two separate entries. Both parties use the garage. A plan of the buildings was presented showing the parking areas and buildings. The emergency room lot (short term use) is very small as is the Benedict lot.

Valet parking has been expanded in response to patients and visitors saying parking is too far away. A third to half of people using valet service are people with disabilities (A total of 25,000 cars at hospital and 60,000 cars for ambulatory used

valet service). When comparing to a large Boston Hospital, use of valet service is less than Worcester's usage.

Given the large number of people at the hospital entrance, an ambassador position has been created to assist people to get in to the hospital and connected with the service they are seeking.

Regarding cost: parking is from \$3.00 to \$8.00 a day. HP is \$2.00. Valet fee is \$7.00 and with HP placard/plates \$2.00.

One of the reasons a variance may be granted is cost. It would cost UMass Memorial Medical Center \$70,000 in lost revenue to modify the parking at the University campus and not address the lengthy walk or poor weather conditions.

Concerns raised by Commissioners and public and the responses:

- Large waiting line for those that want to use valet –need separate drop-off (especially in bad weather) valet for people with disabilities Response: Working with the school and ambassador to keep the entrance clear. Looking at options for people picking up others. Will look at separate drop off for people with disabilities.
- Even at 7:00am HP spaces are full. Is there monitoring of parking areas? Response: There is an enforcement policy and parking control offers review parking lots hourly. Will review and put in more operational policies.
- Concern was raised about comparison with Boston. Worcester does not have the public transportation that Boston does; bedroom communities with cars here.
- Concerns about people with disabilities relying on valet service. Vehicle may be equipped with devices that need specialized training to use. A person does not know how long it will take to get waited on so meeting appointment time is a question. There is accommodation for those who have special equipment and do not wish a valet attendant to drive a car. These cars are kept in the stacking lane.
- Suggestion was made to use a multi-layered system: a lane for drop-off, another for parking, etc. having a line of cars out to Plantation Street doesn't work. UMass Representative agreed there has been an uptick in the waiting line. We need to distinguish between-off and HP.
- Thomas Shields, UMass Memorial user with a disability, has reviewed parking spaces with the facilities staff. Where he noted there was no HP signage, there is signage now. There are 30 spaces being used for valet parking that could be used

for HP spaces. He said valet parking should not trump HP spaces. There are 50 spaces by the Benedict building used as a “nesting” for valet cars. Yesterday the stacking area in front of the hospital was closed with a sign that says valet parking would have to go somewhere else. The UMass representative explained that it was a holiday and valet was closed, however the hospital was open. HP spaces are available by the Emergency Room and the garage.

- Written notice states that there is no need for van accessible parking because UMass provides valet service. The speaker thought that most vans are company owned and he did not see the wisdom of these vans with wheelchair lifts for people who needed this feature at a reasonable drop-off space going through valet parking.
- The variance says the garage, and 2 parking lots are used by employees, patients and visitors. The speaker noted that the two parking lots were used by the valet service which is closest to the hospital. The speaker believes the spaces closest to the door should be used as HP spaces and not for valet.
- There was no van drop-off zone. Recently this has changed however, the vans are asked to leave as soon as the patient is dropped off. This does not allow the driver to assist the patient who is not able to ambulate/reach the building or the appointment office. There needs to be a larger loading zone for those who need assistance to their doctor’s appointments.
- UMass representative thanked people for their feedback and understood valet service was not the only service/ HP spaces need to be available as well. He clarified the valet service does not request tips.
- One speaker noted that as a result of this parking/valet situation handicapped vans park free and people with HP plates and placards pay \$2.00 to park. Apparently people with veteran plates also park free.
- The UMass representative pointed out the stacking area was not stationary, but cars were constantly being moved often to the first floor of the garage.
- There was a request for UMass to come back for further conversation. The representative was more than willing to accommodate this request.
- A speaker noted UMass was requesting a variance for 45 spaces thus showing the deficiency of HP spaces

The UMass representative thanked the Commission and the public for their comments.

First and Second Notices:



- 222 Harrington Way, Docket #C14 131
- **50 Foster Street, #C14 014** - Luxury 4 suites - knee clearance of seats & high stool – restroom knee space under the sink- DCU staff indicated willing to accommodate when asked. Mr. Sansoucy saw no problem with sink and recommended keeping a companion chair for use when needed in the suite. Scott Ricker, member of public, indicated that there needs to be a policy of accommodation on the DCU website. He said there was an error in the AAB paperwork, there are no tables in the luxury suites. He indicated the AAB promised him an amended notice to clarify this.
- 315 Grove Street, Docket #C14 155

#### Responses:

- 894 Grafton Street, Docket #C12 026
- **2 Washington Square, Docket#C14-073-** The city sought more time to respond to the AAB regarding the issue of path of travel to the outdoor seating area.
- 50 Foster Street, Docket#C14 014

#### Notice of Hearing:

- 255 Park Ave. Suite 602, Docket #C14 071

#### Decisions and Resolutions:

- 102 Russell Street, Docket #V14 237
- 75 Lovell Street, Docket#V14 274•93 Grand Street, Docket #V14 303
- 222 Harrington Way, Docket # C14 131
- 274 Franklin Street, Docket#V14 314
- 1059 Grafton Street, Docket #C14-074

#### Suggestions for future meetings

- Update on Transition Plan
- Parking in garage on Tuesday for Commission meetings

**Announcements:**

- WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting: February 18th, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled): February 3rd, 5-6:30pm, Worcester Public Library
- Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program: February 10th, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- Next Commission on Disability meeting: February 17th, 2015 4:30pm.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 7:12pm.