

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for September 19th, 2017, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber,
Room 309, 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bilotta, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Douglas Russell, Jr., Lindsey Silva

Members Absent: Robert Bureau

Staff: Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Susan Ledoux, City Clerk; Niko Vangjeli, City Clerk Office-Elections; Richard Fiske and Meghan Gomes, Worcester Emergency Management Division; Sean Lauziere, RAVE-Mobile Safety

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Chairperson Prochilo called the meeting to order and Commissioners introduced themselves. Lindsey Silva was elevated for this meeting for voting purposes.

Approval of August 15th, 2017 Minutes

Commissioner Garr-Colzie moved approval and Commissioner Bilotta seconded. The Commission unanimously approved the August 15th, 2017 minutes as written.

Polling Location Updates

The Chairperson welcomed and thanked Susan Ledoux, City Clerk and Niko Vangjeli, Assistant City Clerk for coming. There are three polling places that have been relocated for the November elections. Mount Camel Church will no longer be hosting a double precinct. Ward 4 Precinct 1 will move to the Mount Camel Apartments at 50 Shrewsbury Street and Ward 4 Precinct 2 will be at the American Legion Post at 326 Plantation Street. The Elections Commission voted to move these two precincts with the non-availability of the church.

Ward 8 Precinct 5 which was at the South Worcester Neighborhood Center, also known as the Harry Sherry Field House on Camp Street, will now be at St.

Matthew's Episcopal Church Social Hall at 695 Southbridge Street. This situation has been a long-standing issue with the Center's ADA inaccessibility. The Elections Commission voted to move this location for the November election which may or may not be a permanent solution depending on the ability to make the neighborhood center ADA compliant.

There are 50 polling locations throughout the city and they are continually monitored for ADA compliance. If the Commission has any suggestions about where other polling places could be more accessible for people, the Elections Commission would be interested in that information.

Both the Commission members and Michael Kennedy of CLW appreciated the move of Ward 8 precinct 5 to an accessible location.

Emergency Preparedness Presentation and Update (Division of Public Health and Emergency Management and Communication)

Ms. Gomes stated she knew the Commission was well aware of the necessity to be prepared for emergencies and so she came to both observe September as Emergency Preparedness month and bring some information about the recent hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

The theme for the first week of September was "Making a Plan for Family Members and last week's theme was "Help Your Neighbor & Community". The third week's theme is "Build Out Your Plan" and the last week's theme is "Get Involved and be a Part of Your Community" .

Because hurricanes are so recent and more are coming she wanted to inform the Commission that localities are getting better predictive information than in the past. This is not to say the information provides information where the hardest hit will take place. It is important to remember no matter how well prepared people and localities are, confusion and mistakes will be made.

In Hurricane Harvey first responders began overwhelmed so it is important to know and remember that depending on the type of storm/emergency it will take time to get to everyone, but the intention is to get to everyone. Many times the local

personnel rely on volunteers that come from other places and it takes time to get to the emergency location.

When there is an emergency it is important to have the decision makers in one room because sometimes decision are made quickly based on circumstances. Ms. Gomes pointed out the importance of being transparent with information. She noted as an example of transparency when Florida's Governor Scott showed emotion when speaking.

Hurricane Jose is the next storm that may hit New England, but thankfully it is moving east and would be a tropical storm which we are already feeling some of the effects. There is no major threat to Worcester. There is another month to go for the hurricane season.

A good way to prepare for emergencies is to sign up with ALERT WORCESTER. Others that can help with emergencies are the Red Cross and Salvation Army.

Mr. Fiske reminded the Commission of the Volunteer Registry for People in Need of Additional Assistance and some of the difficulties especially related to keeping it updated. We now have a new program that replaces the registry. This program is called Smart 911.

Mr. Fiske introduced Sean Lauziere, RAVE-Mobile Safety and partner with the City of Worcester. They work with the City's Emergency Office of Communication Fire and Police Departments. The company works to provide a community safety solution for everybody. They are a Boston based firm with an office in Framingham and have customers in all 50 states.

Smart 911 is registered in all 50 states and the information that the person inputs into the system goes with them wherever Smart 911 is in operation. We process 911 calls through a system so that when 911 is called the phone #, general area of the call and carrier comes up on a screen. Smart911 provides supplemental data.

To sign up go to Smart 911.com. All the information is voluntary, secure and shared only with first responders. Information is stored in the cloud and not locally. When 911 is dialed the information will automatically come up on the screen for the

emergency responder. The information can be shared with first responders on the ground.

Facilities in the city can be registered and connected to phones in the facility. Floor plans can come up on screen when a 911 call is received.

The company does not link with patient's medical records. HIPPA comes into play as well as other issues. Documents from medical staff can be uploaded by the person signing up for Smart 911.

The person that signs up must update the profile every six month. The company will email if not updated and if still not updated in the next few weeks a text message will be sent. If these first two notices do not receive a response a phone call is made. With no response the profile is suppressed so responders do not have the incorrect data. In the next few months there will be a new app that you can use to confirm that there are no changes in the profile.

A profile can be submitted in 57 languages and the company is looking to add another 64 languages in the next few months. The profile will be in English for first responders.

In the near future there will be sign up days for those people that do not have internet access.

Mr. Fiske responded to the Commission Emergency Preparedness recommendations.

1. Facility preparedness

The team has been meeting with the City Manager, City Department Heads, School Dept. and Worcester Housing Authority (separate from the city) to make the facilities ready for emergencies including evacuation plans. Many have them and others don't. The aim is they all will meet the various required codes: Fire, Safety Building, etc. Most buildings are in compliance. The evacuation plans could be in a more conspicuous location. Completion is scheduled for June 2018.

2. And 5. Acquire Evacuation Chairs and store in stairwells and training to use. Remembering that each building is responsible for its own evacuation plan and equipment this is one of many ways to evacuate. Some buildings

have them others don't. Perhaps the city could apply for a grant for more than one chair. To require a chair does not always work, however Mr. Fiske's office will do all they can to encourage the purchase of chair for building needing this piece of equipment.

3. Assure emergency shelters have generator back-up power for elevator and refrigeration. The Red Cross has just done a review of primary and back-up shelters. All have generator back-up power.
4. Allow service animals in shelters. Partnerships have been developed with the Worcester Animal Control Officer and the Animal Rescue League (ARL). Service animals are allowed into shelters with owners and arrangements are made for pets to be sheltered at the ARL when owners are using their shelters.
5. Each month the TTY System is tested and Worcester has passed at 90% or greater. In some months, TTY calls known as "silent calls". The call operator goes to the next call not recognizing the "silent call". The call operator does go back to these calls, however, because they are not answered in sequence the test is considered a failure.
Shelter kitchen and other facilities that are used in the shelters are ADA compliant. (Note: Only a portion of a facility is used when sheltering.

Mr. Fiske is open to receiving additional emergency preparation goals even if it repeats a previous goal. He expects to give a progress report to Director Turchek before June 2018 on the City building evacuation plan posting and the evacuation chairs.

Emergency bags were distributed.

Chairperson Prochilo thanked the team.

FY18 Goals review, discussion and assignments update:

The FY'18 goals have been approved by the Commission, however not prioritized. The Chairperson was complemented in helping the Commission understand what has to happen to achieve a goal. A suggestion was proposed to apply the anachronism SMART: specific, measureable, attainable, realistic and time bound. There was much discussion about how to approach the goal of providing a list of

accessible restaurants in Worcester. Size of venue was suggested. A number of questions were raised that needed more research, review and deliberation. Due to time limitation, this item was tabled and staff was asked to work with individual Commission members to work on the goal(s) they suggested.

Application submitted for FY18 MA Office on Disability Municipal ADA Improvement Grant

As reported last month the Worcester's FY' 17 proposal to rehab 2 Housing Authority apartments and upgrade the community room at Greenwood Gardens was not funded.

The FY' 18 request for proposal opened in mid-July and grants are expected to be announced in December 2017. Worcester submitted a \$40,000 proposal for internal accessibility features of Stearns Tavern at Coes Pond to include a paddle door opener, interior ramp, door hardware and signage throughout the building.

Review of proposed definitions for racism, discrimination and health equity as approved and forwarded by the Partnership for Racial and Health Equity

With a motion by Robert Bilotta seconded by Commissioner Garr-Colzie the Commission unanimously approved the following language and definitions to be forwarded to the Partnership for Racial and Health Equity for consideration:

Ableism-

Practices and dominant attitudes in society that devalue and limit the potential of persons with disabilities - A set of values and beliefs that assign inferior value (worth) to people who have developmental, emotional, physical or psychiatric disabilities. Source- <http://www.stopableism.org/what.asp>

Able-Bodied Privilege

a "set of beliefs, presence and practices that produce-based on abilities one exhibits or values-a particular understanding of oneself, one's body and one's relationship with others". - Source- The politics of Ableism, Gregor

Wolbring https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5219934_The_Politics_of_Ableism

"Demonstrating the means as to which the "abnormal" disabled body is referred against the "normal" able body, privilege is maintained based on an understanding of the "the powerful" versus "the powerless." Able-bodied privilege assumes that everyone can see, walk, hear and talk, for example, constructing environments around these "non-negotiable" attributes." Source-

<https://privilegeuncensored.wordpress.com/what-is-able-bodied-privilege-3/>

Webster Square Wheelchair Stroll October 4th, 5pm

This stroll was scheduled to accommodate working people including the Mayor, who subsequently was unable to attend. There are 8 participants confirmed. There will be two groups one beginning at Coes Park going down Coes Street crossing Park Avenue up to Webster square the other group beginning at the cull-du sac at Lakeside Avenue up Lakeside Avenue to Park Avenue, pass Mill Street to Main Street on to Stafford Street, Curtis Pond and meet at the backside of Webster Square.

White Cane Awareness Day: Oct. 18th, 10am-12noon

October is White Cane Awareness Month-This is the fourth year Worcester will have celebrated thanks to the support of the Office of Human Rights & Disabilities. The first year we did a Flash Mob on the Common. The last two years and this year we asked various city leaders and decision makers including City Council members to be blindfolded with sighted guides from the MA School of Pharmacy & Health Sciences and use canes to travel the central downtown sidewalks.

A person who is blindfolded is paired with a sighted guide and a visually impaired person.

This year the walk will begin at the police station and include the sidewalk that will be under construction on Main Street between Lincoln Square and the new court house. We are expecting 10 groups. They will diverge a bit at some point on the walk with their destination as the Worcester Public Library. At the same time the walk starts at 10AM there will be exhibits at the Worcester library with local agencies who provide resources for people who are blind and visually impaired. About 11Am when people return from the walk there will be a debriefing of people's walk experience with exhibitors and public invites to sit in. At noon the exhibit will still be available along with the opportunity to experience bring

blindfolded and assisted by a sighted guide for an interior walk and tour of the library. Everyone is invited to join the fun.

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month Lunch and learn event:
October 23rd, 12-1:30pm**

This year's theme is Innovation, Drive, Inclusion. This event is targeted to hiring managers and others are welcomed. It is a brown bag lunch with a panel and booths with technology. We are working with Easter Seals of Massachusetts which houses the local MRC Match Technology Program. All are invited.

A Train Trip to "Nowhere" (South Station by Commuter Rail) November 4th, 2017

Commissioner Myska had taken a group of visually impaired people into South Station in the spring and would like to see a similar trip to include people with all types of disabilities to participate in a November trip on the MBTA commuter rail. On September 27th the Office on Disability and the Senior Center are cosponsoring a MBTA/WRTA Application Assistance Event. This trip is a way to learn how to use the CharlieCard for which people applied. She asked the Commission to sponsor his event.

The Commission unanimously voted to sponsor "A Trip to Nowhere" to South Station on the commuter rail.

Review of AAB notices and applications: (City properties in bold)

Decision of the Board

- 120 Granite Street, Docket # 202
- **170 Belmont Street, Docket # 203**

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

- Best Buddies Program
- Membership drive for the Commission
- YMCA disability services

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
Sept. 20, 2017, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**

October 3rd, 2017, 4:00 – 5:30PM, YWCA, Members Lounge

- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** October 12th, 2017, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **September 23, 2017, 10am-3pm- Annual Recovery Day** The Ninth Annual Recovery will filled with great activities such as a community cookout, guest speakers, games, and resource tables. City Hall Common
- **September 27th, 2017, 10am-3pm- MBTA Senior/Blind Charlie Card & WRTA Reduced Bus Fare Pass Transportation Event,** Senior Center,128 Providence Street. Register: 508-799-8486 or clarkde@worcesterma.gov
- **October 5th-6th 2017, 8:00 am - 4:30 pm & 8 am – Noon- Raise the Bar – Hire Event,** DCU Center, 50 Foster Street. **Free for persons with disabilities**
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** October 17th, 2017 4:30pm.
- **Emergency Preparedness Meeting:** November TBD 2017 at 8:30 am, at 2 Coppage Drive.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.