

Commission on Disability Meeting  
Minutes for July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 4:30PM  
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber,  
Room 309, 3<sup>rd</sup> Flr.

**Attendance:**

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

**Member Absent:** Robert Bureau

**Staff:** Jayna Turчек, Katherine Esparza, Dawn E. Clark

**Guests:** Kristin Hartness, Canines for Kids; Jacob Sanders, City Manager's Office

**Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions**

Chairperson Garr-Colzie called meeting to order and Commissioners introduced themselves. She informed the Commission with regret that Vice Chairperson, Francesca Abbey had resigned. The Commission thanked her for the service and leadership she had given over the years and wished her well. Lindsey Silva was raised to full member for this meeting.

**Approval of June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Minutes**

The Commission unanimously approved the June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2017 minutes as written.

**Reflections on the 27<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA**

The Chairperson noted on July 25<sup>th</sup>, the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act would occur, signed in 1990 by President George H. Bush and amended in 2010 under his son, George W. Bush.

## **Conversation with Canines for Kids (Kristin Hartness)**

Canines For Disabled Kids (CDK) is a national program based in Worcester founded in 1998. The mission is “Increasing independence for children with disabilities and their families by promoting service dog partnerships, understanding and awareness throughout the community.”

CDK to support the creation of child-canine service dog teams to promote independence and social awareness. Offering free services to families and communities across the United States, CDK helps connect children with the service dog that can best help them overcome limitations caused by a variety of disabilities while helping communities to be welcoming and supportive of the special canine tools being used. Scholarships to help cover the training costs are offered, another way CDK helps to bring these teams together.

A 501C3 non-profit organization, CDK work to support children and service dogs on their road to being as independent as possible.

CDK began in 1998 as an offshoot of the NEADS, Dog for Deaf and Disabled Americans training program. Very few service dog programs were willing to provide trained service dogs for children. CDK believed it was possible to train dogs to help autistic children, children with hearing impairments, other physical disabilities and set out to help families find the best training programs for their children.

It costs \$25,000 to \$30,000 for training dogs –\$45,000 for running dogs.

A service animal is a dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform a task for a person with a disability is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

There is a difference between service dogs and emotional support animals. Emotional support animals can be more than dogs and are protected by the Fair Housing Law.

There is a growing list of legal tasks service animals are being trained to do. These tasks and training relate specifically to the user's need for access to the world rather than the world being brought to the person with a disability.

The dogs always must be under the handler's control. Service dogs are never allowed to be aggressive. When a dog is working no one should touch or speak to the dog. Seek permission to touch the dog before touching. If not the dog is distracted from the work being done for the owner. Users should be trained to interrupt people who are touching their dogs.

Canine For Kids offer programs to educate people on service dogs.

The law dictates that there are 2 questions that anybody can ask the user:

1. Is the dog required because of a disability? Yes or no
2. What task has the dog been trained to do that directly relates to the person's disability? The user needs to tell the task that this dog was trained to do.

In a court situation, proof of dog ownership is needed.

It is important that people who have service dogs be able to answer these questions but call people out if they are not. What is going to stop the abuse to fake service dogs in general populations? There is a proposed state bill where if someone is caught faking they would be required to do community service and pay a fee.

Education is a big piece. CFK is working on a capstone project with Clark University that proposes that all city clerk's office ask the 2 questions when individuals are applying for their dog licenses. The town/city could then issue a service dog tag and would be a public record. Yes, some people could lie but it changes from an intent issue which has criminal implications versus a convenience factor.

Training of dogs begins as early as 2-3 days and 8 weeks. The right match between the owner and dog is important. CFK dogs come from all over the place. The working years of a dog depends on the dog's size and the work the dog does. Dogs with disabilities can be trained but it depends --- for example if a dog is hearing

impaired the owner would have to communicate with sign language. Most training will not train dogs that have a disability.

Allergies and fear to dogs are not valid reasons for denying access to a person using a service dog. This portion of the law is to be helpful ensuring access is not limited to the user.

Who can use a service dogs? Any adult or child with physical or psychological disabilities – everybody has to be considered individually.

Service dogs cannot be protective or aggressive. Responsibility it is never the facilities to be responsible for the service animal. The handler is the responsible party. If the dog is out of control the owner and dog can be asked to leave the establishment

Insurance at this time does not see a service dog as a medical cost that can be reimbursed or paid. There is an effort to petition insurance companies to cover the cost of service animals. Some organizations have endowments and don't charge people or non-profits ask people to fundraise money or offering scholarships there is also funding through VA – must be a member of Training Dogs International.

Contact information for **Kristin Hartness**

978-422-5299

[www.cainesforkids.org](http://www.cainesforkids.org)

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Hartness for her presentation.

### **Interactive tour of the new city website (Jacob Sanders)**

Jake Sanders works for the City Manager on intergovernmental affairs and other projects. The City is preparing to roll out the new website late this summer or early fall, the accessibility recommendations made by the Institute for Human-Centered Design have been followed.

A pilot was launched a couple weeks ago with a few changes: vibrant and cleaner look, restructured to make more sense, more intuitive, responsive design that

transforms the page depending on what device (computer, cell phone etc) you are using.

Current site is too verbose. They have cut down content and made it so you can do quick searches. There is a new calendar that links to meeting details/agenda, location, as well as directions. Also new searchable databases, for example open checkbook. Also utilized external links to keep information updated.

Some of the accessibility features include – coloring and contrasting of site, increased font sizes, alphabetized links, descriptive tags for images, standardized pdf's, and google translate.

The following questions were asked and responded to:

- Will there be an audit to make sure content is coming the way they suppose to?

Goal is to have each department helping making it better, concise, centrally located items

- Will there be a map to highlight how to get to things- locations?

We are in the process of incorporating maps

The access to pilot website is [pilot.worcesterma.gov](http://pilot.worcesterma.gov). Mr. Sanders asked Commissioners to send feedback via the survey and thanked them for their recommendations.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Sanders.

### **Announcement: City Hall Tours for People with Disabilities**

This is the fifth year for this program. Five tours are planned: July 6<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> (Vietnamese Seniors), 27<sup>th</sup> (Visually Impaired), August 3<sup>rd</sup> (Deaf) and 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Update on FY17 MA Office on Disability Municipal ADA grant**

The Greenwood Gardens Project proposal to bring the community room into ADA compliance and to renovate two apartments with accessible features was not funded.

### **Review COD FY17 Annual Report**

The draft was reviewed. The Commission suggested the following as FY'18 goals:

- Audit of sidewalks throughout the city
- Be informed about the Worcester School's Special Education department, funding and transition program -- have commission look at that to bring to school committee
- Review google article about finding locations as accessible --- take a look at this initiative and may have people to report to find accessible / able road app

### **Election of Officers (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary)**

Robert Bilotta nominated Joseph Prochilo for Chairperson. Mr. Prochilo accepted the nomination.

Nancy Garr-Colzie nominated Robert Bilotta for Vice Chairperson. Mr. Bilotta accepted the nomination. Joseph Prochilo nominated Elizabeth Myska as Vice Chairperson. Ms. Myska declined the nomination.

There were no nominations for Secretary.

Voting took place as follows:

Chairperson – Joseph Prochilo – 6 votes (Douglas Russell left prior to the elections)

Vice Chairperson - Robert Bilotta – 6 votes (Douglas Russell left prior to the elections)

The election resulted with Joseph Prochilo as Chairperson and Robert Bilotta as Vice Chairperson.

**Review of AAB notices and applications: None**

**Suggestions for upcoming agenda items**

## **Announcements:**

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**  
September 20th, 2017, 1-2:30pm, WRTA HUB, 60 Foster Street
- **REDD (Rights, Equality and Dignity for the Disabled)**  
August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 4:00 – 5:30PM, YWCA, Members Lounge
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 4:30pm.
- **Local Emergency Planning Committee Meeting:** November 14, 2017 at 8:30 am, at 2 Coppage Drive.

## **Emergency Preparedness Tip:**

- Pack an emergency “Go Pack” with essential life-saving items and store several gallons of water/person at home. Click here for a list of items and other helpful tips: <https://www.ready.gov/>

## **For your reading to learn more about disabilities:**

The Disability Studies Reader, edited by Lenard J. Davis; Routledge, New York, 2013. This book was donated by past Commission on Disability chairperson Herbert Cremer.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned.