

**City of Worcester Accessibility Advisory Commission
Tuesday August 16, 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, John Finn, Jr., Elizabeth Myska, Christina Parissi, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: James Delage, Darya Karuna, Jully Khattar, Linda Larrivee

Staff: Jayna Turcek, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Kristen Rhodes, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
Universal Access Program
Bill Cark, Owner of Yellow Cab
Michael Marciello MD, team doctor and Alana Ragan from BEEP Baseball

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau requested Director Turcek provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. She also introduced a new feature that includes a language choice for closed captioning. Commissioners then introduced themselves. A unanimous roll call vote was taken to start the meeting.

Approval of July 12, 2022 minutes*

Commissioner Myska moved to approve the July 12, 2022 minutes as written. Commissioner Stolberg seconded the motion. Approved by roll call.

Conversation with MA Department of Conservation and Recreation Universal Access Program* <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/universal-access-program>

Kristen Rhodes, Youth Coordinator, for DCR's Universal Access Program provided the following information via an audio described Power Point.

- The Universal Access Program was started by Tom McCarthy in 1994 and includes:
 - Accessible recreation programs with 6 full time staff
 - Specialized adaptive recreation equipment
 - Site improvements
 - Supporting the agency in Universal Access
- Adaptive Recreation Programs
 - Pre – CoVID
 - 120 Programs per year statewide: weekly, monthly, one time
 - Paddling, hiking, biking, skating, winter outdoors
 - Annual attendance: 5,000
 - 40% with disabilities
 - Current
 - Vendors work with DCR to provide specific programs
 - DCR works with non-DCR Programs on DCR land such as golf, wind surfing, rock climbing
- Pandemic Response
 - 2020 -Stopped programs
 - 2021 -Re-introduction of limited test programs (65)
 - 2022 -Gradual resumption of full program menu
 - Programs are smaller and no known cases of CoVID
 - Thinking about restarting ice skating rink program this winter
- Adaptive Equipment
 - Available at select locations for independent use: beach wheelchairs, pool lifts, ice sleds
 - Limited to program use: trails chairs, adaptive bikes, kayaks
 - Adaptive golf carts are available at the two DCR golf courses
 - In Worcester there is adaptive ice skating equipment
- Beach Adaptive Equipment
 - Beach Wheelchairs
 - 2 Styles
 - 75 Beach Wheelchairs in 32 Statewide Locations
 - 32 Beach Wheelchairs in 16 Boston Locations

- Beach Mat
 - 15 locations
 - Over 2200 feet
- Planning and Design
 - Master Plans/Stewardship Plans
 - Resource Management Plans
 - Project Plan Review and Support
 - Developing Universal Access Plan Design Guide
- Site Improvements 132 sites and 32 campgrounds
 - Past recreation design contracts
 - Current work in other contracts
 - Project field support
 - Operations project support
 - PSO project support
- Accessibility Assessments
 - 9-year contract, 3 years remaining (2016-2025)
 - 177 completed assessments:•102 Forests, Parks, and Reservations
 - 23 Pools & Spray Decks
 - 29 Skating Rinks
 - 2 Reservoirs
 - 2 Golf Courses
 - 18 Structures & Recreation Features
 - Uploaded into CAMIS
- DCR Wide Supports
 - ADA Complaints•MAAB variances
 - Interpretive Staff Training
 - Interpretive Exhibit Accessibility Reports
 - Accessibility info on DCR location websites
 - Trail Signage Project
 - Accessible Trail reports

- OPDMD Policy Development

Commissioner and public questions and comments:

- Requested hand cycling in Worcester/need to find a partner to provide the program
- Requested DCR literature to distribute locally
- Commissioner Myska told Kristen that she was blind and two weeks ago her seasoned sighted guides blindfolded DCR staff including Matt Mitchell to get a feel for what it was like to be blind. The yesterday she took a group of blind people to the Upton DCR sight to take a walk on the wooded trail. They had never walked in the woods before and truly enjoyed it. She also mentioned the \$10.00 life time parking pass for people 65 years and older. Ms. Rhodes indicated this was now on-line.
- Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission received a grant to purchase an electric bicycle and wondered if DCR could work with them.

Planning for Fall Neighborhood Walk (Saturday September 24)

For the past seven years, the Commission under the direction of Joe Prochilo and Elizabeth Myska have been helping city officials and community leaders learn accessibility issues by having them use wheelchairs and white canes along major transportation corridors and neighborhoods in the city. This has allowed us to do an accessibility audit to give to the Dept. of Public Works for mitigation and to help other Departments design accessible features. New Commission leadership on the stroll front is being passed to Associate Commissioner Parissi who is ready to roll.

There are new developments in the city. One is Next/Now long term city master planning process and the other is the creation of the Department of Transportation and Mobility.

Commissioners who would like to be part of the planning process should contact Director Turchek.

Joe Prochilo said he has developed a training manual on assessing sidewalks with four sections: 1. Cub cuts, 2. Path of travel, 3. Signaling issues, 4. Built Environment issues. The document should be available soon for review and use.

WAV Taxi Ridership- 6 Month Report from Yellow Cab (last reported (midyr)): January 2022)

Bill Clark shared that ridership has stayed the same, not a huge volume. He is pleased and plan to continue what he considers a valuable service for the community. The 3 Wheelchair Accessible Vans (WAV) are used for trips when not serving people needing the assessable feature. The report received is as follows:

Month	Accessible trips completed	Client no shows	Trip denials
January	38	1	0
February	38	1	0
March	42	0	0
April	33	0	0
May	18	1	0
June	13	0	0
totals	182	3	0

Two WAV users provided their thoughts:

Rider 1: Have used the WAV several times and the service is wonderful. Request the rides be able to be scheduled through the reservation App like everyone else. On one of the rides the seat belt was not available and driver said the parts were being ordered. The rider wanted to know if all the seat belts were working in the WAVs. Mr. Clark clarified by seat belt, the shoulder harness was not working. The rider confirmed yes. Mr. Clark indicated that he would like to know immediately if something like this is a problem so he can deal with it. As far as he knows the WAVs are working.

Rider 2:

Good 2 round trips rides and was patient with the drivers getting used to the loading/unloading process. The fare did not start until we pulled away.

Had some trip denials. Just a few weeks ago was told only 1 of the 3 cabs was in service. The driver had been out all day and dispatch couldn't say that he could do my 6:30pm pick up or 8:30pm return.

Try to use them now and then even knowing that WRTA is free for paratransit we really pushed Bill to get the cabs.

Mr. Clark said there was one WAV in an accident and takes time to get fixed and back on the road. Another WAV was off the road for a mechanical issue needing fixing. The third may be in for general maintenance or may be in the process of a driver switch. Except for a short period of time all three WAVs have been on the road. Again an immediate phone call about these kind of issues would be helpful to maybe rectify more quickly.

On behalf of the Commission the Chairperson thanked Mr. Clark for using the taxi medallions for this much needed accessible service for the community.

Everything you wanted to know about BEEP baseball <https://www.nbba.org>

Vice Chairperson Myska described herself as she is blind and uses the phone so some Commissioners have not meet her in person. (The meetings have been virtual since June 2020 due to the CoVID pandemic.)

BEEP (competitive) Baseball is for players who are blind. The name of the local team is “The Boston Renegades” out of Watertown, MA. She introduced Michael Marcello MD, team doctor and Alana Ragan, a team player to help introduce BEEP Baseball both whom are also legally blind for about the last 10 years. Dr. Mike was a collegiate baseball player and now the hitting coach for many years before his certified blindness this year.

BEEP basketball is and organized adaptive sport. Like regular baseball there is an offensive and defensive team and looks a little different. The offensive team works with the catcher and pitcher of the same team while everyone is blindfolded. One gets 4 strikes to go out. There are two bases, first and third, no second. These are pylons set up about 100 feet from home plate. If the ball is hit one of the pylons will alternately beep. The goal is to hit the pylon with some part of the body.

Meanwhile on the defensive team there are six plyers blindfolded in the field with two sighted volunteers as spotters. The spotters call out a number to identify how hit

the ball has been hit and where on the field it is. Only one number is said unless something is dangerous and then stop is said. The goal of the defenses is to pick up the ball and stop the runners. This is done by listening for the ball to hit the ground and roll through the grass then lay down and stop the ball and pick it up. If the defense gets the ball before the runner hits the base then it is and out and if the runner hits the base before the defense gets the ball it is a run. These are the basic rules.

The Renegades have been around for about twenty years and play competitively around the nation. This year they played in Long Island and the World Series in Texas and finished fifth in the world. The stadium needs to be absolutely quiet so players can hear and after the play people can cheer. Note: this is an international sport yet not large enough to be a para-Olympic sport. Because of CoVID there have been no international competitions. For safety reasons this sport is played on grass and has rules that everyone must learn and play by. Player age range is 18 and older for legal reasons.

If people with other disabilities were to play then the game would be complicated, but individuals and disabilities would be considered.

The team has a close relationship with the community example Lions Clubs. The team does charity games. There is one in Salisbury on August 20th and September 11th in Newbury.

Associate Commissioner would like to see an exhibition game in Worcester next year. Dr. Marciello thought that this could be a possibility. The games are streamed on Facebook. They are in contact with the WooSox. The Renegades were honored at their stadium.

Commissioner Myska pointed out that it is not unusual for players to go to the hospital with injuries. The Dr. concurred.

Guests were thanked by the Chairperson.

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>

NOTICE: For information and the latest updates related to monkeypox, please visit mass.gov/monkeypox or cdc.gov/monkeypox

Review of AAB notices and applications: None received

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items/ Check in regarding meeting venue preferences (virtual, hybrid, in person etc.)

The Commissions present opted for meetings being hybrid. Those not present will be contacted for their preference.

Requested for ADA Transition Plan Update – Director Turchek reminded Commissioners there are annual reviews of this plan. The Built Environment and Website plans are completed and up to date. The Public Right of Way (streets/sidewalks) is in progress as we look at issues related to strolls etc., and needs to be completed. The other large piece is the Worcester Public School facilities. As we look at individual schools the Commission reviews accessibility issues which is part of the City’s ADA Transition Plan. Commissioner Stolberg said the city has come a long way and applauded the city for its work to make polling locations accessible. When he reviewed the polling locations last year every location he visited was accessible. Everyone has access to vote.

Announcements:

- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting:
September 20, 2022 - 4:30pm**
- **WRTA Transportation Advisory Planning Group Wednesday,
September 21– 1-2:30pm**

Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 6:26 pm by a roll call vote moved by Commissioner Bureau and seconded by Commissioner Stolberg.

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