

Commission on Disability Meeting
Minutes for June 21st, 2016, 4:30PM
Worcester City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber, Room 309, 3rd Flr.

Attendance:

Members Present:, Francesca Abbey , Robert Bilotta, Herbert Cremer, Nancy Garr-Colzie, , Paul Keister, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Douglas Russell, Jr., Lindsey Silva, Stephen Stolberg

Member Absent: Robert Bureau

Staff: Pamela Callahan, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Richard Fiske, Director of City of Worcester Communications

Members of the Public: Rachel Brown, Michael Kennedy, Scott Ricker

Welcome, Call to Order & Introductions

Chairperson Paul Keister welcomed commission members and the members of the public present. He then requested Commission Garr-Colzie to chair the meeting. This being Commissioner Stephen Stolberg's last meeting of his second full term the Commission thanked his service.

Approval of May 17th, 2016 Minutes

Commissioner Stolberg moved to table the May minutes. Commissioner Cremer seconded the motion. All approved.

Conversation with Richard Fiske (review of emergency shelter and update on progress made towards COD's priorities)

Mr. Fiske updated the concerns that the COD outlined as 5 priorities.

Mailers to Constituents: Mr. Fiske said information is regularly given on the Jordan Levy show and on Channel 3. While they do have materials, just including it in tax bills can amount to over \$7000 and they just don't have the budget for that so a 'boots on the ground'

approach has taken place and his staff have gone to the Library, Senior Center and various community meetings. He said that the COD also asked about maintaining the registry that started a few years ago. He said it was a struggle to keep the registry updated and to get the information to first responders when emergency calls come in. Mr. Fiske reported that they believe they have resolved this issue.

Beginning July 1st, they have budgeted a considerable amount of money to institute a new program called Smart 911. This allows anyone to register themselves free of charge using either a wireless phone or landline. When a call is made to 911 the information given by the resident will present itself to the 911 dispatcher; Floor plans of the house, detailed information regarding mobility, disability, mental disability, anything you would want will present itself to the call taker. If you are in the registry, it will show all information you put in, if you have diabetes or a safe room in the house and how to access the safe room. Once you register, when you call 911 a pop up window goes on the call takers window and all the supplemental information, floor plans, photos etc. that you provided is displayed. The call taker puts it into a pass system and the all information is relayed to the persons actually responding to the call.

It is a significant amount of money out of our budget and it was approved by the City Manager, city council. This takes training and technology and since the Dispatch center will be moving to a new location in July, the training and implementation will be rolled out with toward the end of July.

The Smart 911 system travels with you. If you use your phone in any community in the country with the Smart 911 system it will access the same data base. This is a very good system and will take place of the old disability registry system. Information is shown to the call taker and the responder has it when responding to the call.

Renewal of Inspection of Emergency Shelters:

Mr. Fisk said that the last inspection was five years ago. After the last meeting with the COD, his department connected with their partner at Red Cross and had an inspection of Worcester Technical High School.

They are the ones that conduct citywide inspections and to qualify as a Red Cross certified shelter there is very high criteria, including accessibility, special accommodations, medical beds, wheel chair accessibility, bathroom/shower and kitchen facilities. In addition it must have a plan for power. The inspection was 3 hours with Red Cross and school officials and successfully recertified Tech High, which remains the City's primary facility

Mr. Fiske said he is often asked what happens if the shelter fills it up and he stated that they can accommodate between 600 to 1000 people depending on staffing. He said if there were more than 1000 then we as a City are in trouble. They would then open shelters in regional locations, but that 1000 would be the maximum we would be able to feed and sleep. He said they didn't anticipate ever having that happen but if a certain segment of the city was evacuated due to fire or flood, we could shelter 600-1000 for a short amount of time if we had to, and then would have to make long term arrangements. It could be Salvation Army or the Red Cross and would be a city wide effort. If we had to, we could access Brimfield which has a small population and we could transport people there.

Evacuation of Wheelchair Residents:

In the event of an evacuation order, we would notify the community in many different ways. Whether it was winter and a power outage or something else, if there was an order to evacuate, we would send you a notice. If you are unable to evacuate, we would need to get the requests for a city evacuation and triage those requests. We have an agreement with the WRTA to transport to and from shelters but it is a case by case basis, not automatic. Everyone needs to make arrangements ahead of time, connect with family and friends or a neighbor. If there is a reason why you are unable to evacuate, say you live on the 3rd floor and there is no power for the lifts, or your car won't start, we will have to triage those requests. If it is a couple of streets affected, we will get to you pretty quick. But if we are evacuating a pretty large area, resources are going to be taxed, we're going to say to you, ok, we will get to you and then the person who comes to get you will be a public safety person;

police or EMS. We have arrangements with WRTA to transport to and from shelters but you will have to make those arrangements with the WRTA yourself.

In my Emergency Preparedness role, I always encourage for people to make these arrangements ahead of time for themselves. If something affects the whole city and we have 180,000 people and you need to evacuate but can't, we have a long list of people to get through. What if I live on the 3rd floor and power goes out, what will I do? How am I going to leave my house? What if there is a flood, how will I get out? These are arrangements you need to make ahead of time based on your own situations in your own home. Maybe that means connecting with a neighbor on your own instead of depending on city that will have a lot of people to get out. That is reality. I believe I have said this to the commission before, but you need to be able to survive on your own in your house for 3 days. This is a fluid number but it takes 3 days for a city government to ramp up and effectively pull together the resources to feed people, evacuate people. It takes 3 days with FEMA and MEMA to pull together the staffing and resources and be able to get to you. We will get to you eventually if you don't make your own arrangements but you may be waiting awhile. It's triage: volume vs. capacity.

Establish a Core of Employee or Volunteer to Check on Elder and Disabled in an Long Term Emergency:

Residents would register in advance for someone to check on them if it was a long term official city emergency. I took 'Long Term Official City Emergency' to mean a wide spread outage, flood, sickness situation or something that would require long term shelter. I go back to Smart 911, we can print out that data base and we know who is there, but to go door to door in that type of emergency would be extremely difficult so I go back to saying neighbors and relatives should be checking on everybody. We put out notifications of low heat or high temp warnings and we always push through media, to ask people to check into every elder or disabled to make sure they are not in need. If you can't make contact, we

can send emergency response but once again it's triage; volume vs. capacity.

Make the arrangements to check on family members, neighbors etc. that's the way to do it. If you wait for city government to do it for you, we will get to you but you may be waiting for a long time. That is reality.

Emergency Hotline Operators Trained in TTY:

Short answer, I have 57 operators and all are trained on TTY. We use an operational keyboard relay system through the state 911. They are tested by the state about twice a week to make sure operators know how to answer the phone and know how to process the call. We pass about 93% and we do fail sometime. They are trained to start the TTY manually if they don't get a response. We bought a new machine to train staff.

Robert Bilotta asked how they will roll out the Smart 911 plan. Mr. Fiske said that once they roll out the program they will have considerable outreach to everyone including this Board. He would connect with Jayna to have all the materials and information to come back. We will work with Jayna to get the information out to all departments. The registration is pretty straight forward, our staff can help you register if you're not computer savvy, otherwise you can do it yourself.

Francesca Abbey asked if someone is already registered on the old system will they be automatically transferred to Smart 911. Mr. Fiske answered that if they can validate the records in the old system they will transfer them to Smart 911.

Nancy Garr-Colzie asked where Communications was moving to and Mr. Fiske replied Copperidge Dr. by the airport.

Lindsey Silva stated that as a nurse she was happy to hear about Smart 911 and asked about plans to do outreach to hospitals and community health centers and Mr. Fiske said that the outreach would be community

wide. They are making plans to do all of that; community health centers, COD, Worcester Housing Authority, all publicly held city council meetings, City Manager's office, WRTA, Senior Center everywhere we can to get the information out. We're investing considerable funds and my goal is to have it launch successful and connect with everyone to get all signed up.

Francesca Abbey stated that in senior apartment houses, neighbors can't always help neighbors. Mr. Fiske said that WHA has staff and plans for emergency, police will eventually get there and the WHA has plans in plan to utilize equipment, staff and resources. Buildings should have emergency generators; elevators should be operational and work from a generator. 3 deckers or 3 family homes pose the most concern.

Scott Ricker asked two questions; 1. If the City had evacuation slips for stairways and Mr. Fiske stated that Fire Dept. will try to carry rather than use a sled. They would rather use a stretcher or full length basket or long board. 2. When a shelter opens can it be open to other communities. Mr. Fiske said that if the shelters are not full they can be opened to other communities.

Herb Cremer stated that he saw during Hurricane Katrina people in wheel chairs were dumped for days at the dome with fear of looting. He asked if there was a plan in case of complete breakdown to restore law and order. Mr. Fiske said that the demographics in New Orleans are very different than in Worcester. The city was built in a bowl that was completely flooded; evacuation zone was flooded which precluded leaving the city. In Worcester, we have over 400 police and in the surrounding towns National Guard, State police. He said he cannot see a situation of complete breakdown of police and people exploiting and stealing. He said our number one threat is snow and winter and there is always a small segment of the population taking advantage. Unfortunately people do take advantage but we are fortunate to live where we do not regularly deal with tornadoes and wild fires. We could certainly have floods but not to the magnitude of New Orleans. We saw

one situation in Uxbridge when during a boil water order that affected 1/3 of the town someone thought it was entrepreneurial to buy cases and sell them for \$5.00.

Herb Cremer said that disabled people should keep bottled water for emergencies and food as well. Mr. Fiske said that all people disabled and non-disabled should always have enough water and food to survive for 3 days.

Mr. Fiske closed by asking the board to determine more priorities going forward. He said if the board makes priorities, he will address them and then go on to the next.

Discussion Regarding Polling Locations and Recommendations for Improvements.

In June COD members were briefed on the results of the survey of polling locations and now were ready to make recommendations for the City Manager for corrective action. Due to the upcoming Federal Election, the Board made many recommendations.

Herb Cremer called attention to the fact that the public can have access to absentee ballots which can be mailed and will far more convenient than trying to find a place to park and waiting in line.

Board members listed ideas and then voted on what to include as formal recommendations.

Suggestions and comments regarding the polling location results:

Doug Russell: have board members act as volunteers

Robert Bilotta: recommends that the Neighborhood Centers on Camp St and QCC not continue to serve as polling locations as they are not accessible.

Joseph Prochilo- Training of Police details on the Automark machines to make sure they understand they are meant to be confidential.

Robert Bilotta: Must stress the physical accessibility issue with all polling locations

Paul Keister: System to verify Automark Machines are in working order

Mike Kennedy: Some locations should not be used unless ramps are built now.

Rachel Brown: There should be training, training and more training on all levels.

Other comments during the discussion:

Rachel Brown, past member, stated that a few years ago, the board had provided training to all poll workers, but the workers tuned it out and didn't do it.

Dawn Clark stated that the commission made laminated to help direct accessible booths and Automark machines as part of the training and wonders what happened to the signage.

Scott Ricker stated that he didn't understand why police had control over Automark machine. They should be there to protect and serve.

Joe Prochilo: Volunteer staff often turn to police for questions.

Scott Ricker requests the City Clerk verify Automark machines are working.

The board unanimously voted on the following recommendations to the City Manager:

- New polling locations be found to replace centers that are not accessible; specifically the Community Centers at Camp St. and

QCC due to the complete and total inaccessibility of these locations.

- Mandatory training be held on how to treat disabled persons with respect and courtesy for both Police who detail the elections and poll workers.
- Mandatory training on use and placement of the Automark machines for both Police and poll workers
- City Clerk be given the detailed report.
- System in place to ensure Automark machines stay in good working order.

Announcement of Election of Officers in July
Nominations open for Chairperson, Vice Chairperson & Secretary p

Nominated for the position of chair:

Nancy Garr-Colzie

Nominated for the position of Vice Chair:

Francesca Abbey

Discussion on draft of FY'16 Commission on Disability Annual
Report

This item was tabled for the July meeting.

Review of AAB notices and applications: City properties in bold
Variance

□ **20 Alden Street, Docket #V16 164**

First Notice

- **284 Highland Street, Docket #C16 025**

Notice of Hearing

- 274 Franklin Street, Docket #V14 314

Decision of the Board

- **20 Alden Street, Docket #V16 164**
- **284 Highland Street, Docket #C16 025**
- 29 Sunderland Road, Docket #C14 044

Announcements:

- **WRTA Transportation Planning Advisory Meeting**
September 20th, 2016, 1-2:30pm, WRTA Building, 287 Grove St.
- **Audio Journal, Accent on Ability Radio Program:** July 12th, 2016, 5-6pm, <http://www.audiojournal.net/>
- **Next Commission on Disability meeting:** July 19th, 2016
4:30pm.

Emergency Preparedness Tip: People with disabilities may want to consider having several gallon containers of water per person at home for emergencies.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned.