

**City of Worcester
Accessibility Advisory Commission**

**Tuesday, May 18, 2021, 4:30 PM Minutes
Virtual meeting with WebEx platform
<http://www.worcesterma.gov/video-on-demand>
Call-in conference line and ASL interpreters provided**

Attendance:

Members Present: Robert Bureau, James Delage, Philip Economou, Nancy Garr-Colzie, Fitzroy Hall, Dee Karuna, Elizabeth Myska, Joseph Prochilo, Stephen Stolberg

Members Absent: John Finn, Jr., Linda Larrivee

Staff: Jayna Turчек, Miriam Nyante, Dawn E. Clark

Guests: Bill Clark of Worcester Yellow Cab

Call to order, instructions for virtual meeting, introductions

Chairperson Bureau called the meeting to order at 7:03pm and requested Director Turчек to provide the technology instructions for public access to the meeting. Closed captioning (artificial intelligence) was available for this meeting through WebEx. Commissioners then introduced themselves.

Approval of April 20, 2021 minutes*

Commissioner Prochilo moved to approve the April 20, 2021 minutes as written. Commissioner Myska seconded the motion. All approved.

Presentation of variance requests by Deborah A. Ryan on behalf of the City of Worcester

Russ Adams, City Department of Public Works introduced Deborah Ryan, former Director of the Mass. Architectural Access Board for 26 years. She has been hired to work with the city on upgrading the following city schools. For some of these schools the city works with the Mass. School Building Program (MSB) replacing windows and doors. With these renovations the 30% rule has been triggered. This means once work being done on a structure costs over thirty per cent of the assessed value than the entire building needs to meet compliance for accessibility.

With the exception of the Challenge and Reach School variance regents have been previously made to the Mass. Architectural Access Board AAB). There was some confusion at the time. The cost of build replacement was used rather than the assess value. The AAB suggested the city find someone to do a thorough review for accessibly needs. Ms. Ryan has done this review and came to the Commission to present the findings and variance request recommendations prior to submitting to the AAB.

She proceeded to present her recommendations school by school. When variances were recommended these related to the exceptions of technologically not being feasible and/or cost exceeds substantial benefit to individuals.

Columbus Park Preparatory Academy, 75 Lovell Street - built 1923

This is probably the most difficult school to achieve accessibility. The school has three floors. Additions were built in the 1950's on either side.

Entrance Conditions: The MSB work was windows and doors on the left addition and was made accessible at the time with a compliant ramp, accessible parking space and in incline wheelchair lift that goes to the second floor. At both the main and right side entrances there are sets of stairs into and in the building.

Variance 1 - request for entrances to use signage to accessible entrance.

Access issue to other floors: currently there is no access to the lower level or third floor. Cafeteria and other functions in the basement that are not accessible to students with disabilities.

Variance 2 – request a three year time variance to propose, design and implement a solution for access to all three floors.

Existing Handrails: The inner handrail is part of the structure and a width of 4 inches with is too wide. The current wall handrails will be replace with a compliant one. At one stairway the inner rail does not allow for continuous use. A newel disrupts the use of the rail.

Variance 3 – request not to change the inner handrails.

Gymnasium: There are old bleachers present. Accessible seats are not incorporated into them. There is space on the floor for those using wheelchairs.

Variance 4 – request not to replace the bleachers. The cost exceeds substantial benefit to individuals.

Gymnasium: There are double doors going in/out. With single door open there is less than 32 inches when both are open the width is five feet. There are other single door that meet width compliance. Generally when there is a function the doors are open.

Variance 5 – request to leave the double doors as they are.

Gymnasium: vertical access to balcony: The balcony is three tiered. (When reviewed it was used as storage. Not sure how often used.) To access would require a vertical lift and once up there is not space for wheelchair seating.

Variance 6 – request not to provide vertical access to the balcony.

Challenge and Reach Academy, 15 Harlow Street – Built 1897

Entrance: This school has not been before the AAB before. There is a compliant elevator and restroom. There are two entrance. One is on Hallow Street and has three steps. The other is on the other side of the building where the accessible parking will be. There is a new vestibule where the elevator is.

Variance 1 – request use of signage at Hallow street entrance to parking lot entrance.

Existing ramp in basement: Not sure why built, maybe used for deliveries. Ramp slope is 1 in 10 instead of 1 in 12. The width is 46 inches instead of 48 inches. There is the custodian closet on this floor. To make the ramp compliant would block the custodian's office.

Variance 2 – request to keep the current ramp/the cost exceeds substantial benefit to individuals.

Existing Handrails: The inner handrail is part of the curved structure and a width of 4 inches with is too wide. The current wall handrails will be replace with a compliant one. At one stairway the inner rail does not allow for continuous use. A newel disrupts the use of the rail.

Variance 3 – request not to change the inner handrails.

Gerald Creamer School, 120 Granite Street

Entrance: The front entrance has steps going into the building and steps inside. There is an accessible entrance with a ramp and a van accessible space at the parking lot at the side of the building. Signage at the front indicating accessible entrance.

Vertical access: Building has three floors. There is access to the basement and the first floor but not the second floor. There are classrooms on the second floor all other functions are on the accessible floors including classrooms. A second lift would have to be installed for all three floors to be accessible.

Variance 1 – request not to provide access to 7 classrooms on second floor.

Second floor restrooms: These appear to be the original. Plan to provide a single stall, grab bars in one of the stalls and accessible sink.*

Variance 2 – request not to provide accessible restrooms on the second floor.

Handrails: Newel disrupts ability for continuous use. Wall handrails will be replaced.

Variance 3 – request not to change the inner handrails.

*There are no restrooms in the basement.

Lincoln Elementary School, 549 Lincoln Street – Built 1920's

This existing build has two floors and is fully accessible with accessible parking. . There is an entrance at the front with a ramp. Part of the upgrade will be to have access from Lincoln Street.

Vertical Access: The basement is not accessible. There are locations for vertical access. There is an entrance in the back with stairs at half a level and then again on the inside at half a level. Excessive ramping or lift would be needed for accessibility. There will be signage provided at this entrance indicating accessible entrance.

Variance 1 – request a three year time variance to propose, design and implement a solution for access to the two floors.

Thorndyke Elementary School, 30 Thorndyke Road

This is a two story building with an addition in the rear.

The addition's classrooms has toilet facilities that are not accessible. The plan is to have each restroom made accessible with the exception of the restroom between classrooms 11 and 12 due to the need to redirect fixtures.

Variance 1 – request that the restroom between Classrooms 11 and 12 do not need to be made accessible.

Door Hardware: The door hardware is 29 inches above the floor. Plan to replace with lever handles.

Variance 2 – Request approval to have height of handles remain the same.

Access: The two floors in the building are not accessible to each other and the connection between the building and the addition is not accessible.

Variance 3 – request a three year time variance to propose, design and implement a solution for access to the two floors and the addition.

Commissioners has a concern about evacuation plans if single access exits are blocked for some reason. Ms. Ryan agree to address this issue with the AAB with the filing of the package of school variances.

Commissioner Prochilo move to approve the WPS variance requests going to the AAB as presented with the addition of a comprehensive evaluation plan the requires vertical access. Associate Commissioner Delage seconded the motion. Approved with Commissioner Myska abstaining because of her membership on the Architectural Access Board.

Commissioner Prochilo moved to request an evaluation plan for each of the WPS currently requesting vertical access variance to the AAB for the Commission's review. Associate Commissioner Delage seconded the motion. Approved with Commissioner Myska abstaining because of her membership on the Architectural Access Board.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Ryan for her presentation.

Update on WooSox stadium tour (Nancy Garr-Colzie and Elizabeth Myska)

On Monday May 10 members of the Commission and Accessibility Office staff toured Polar Park to review accessibility features available. Commission members made the following observations and requests for additional feedback:

1. What are the roles of Ambassadors, Ushers, and Security with respect to assisting patrons with accessibility questions and directions?
2. How are above staff/volunteers trained to interact with persons all abilities? For example: is anyone trained to act as a sighted guide if needed?
3. If guests need accommodations for their visit how do they make these requests? Is there an opportunity at point of sale (online, over the phone?) If guests need assistance at drop off locations?
4. Visually Impaired Persons (VIPs) would be interested in touching/exploring with their hands the Ted Williams sculpture. Is this allowed?
5. Will there be a designated service animal area(s)? How would guests know where to find it/them?
6. Is closed captioning available? Will it be play by play announcing?
7. Commissioners noted that there are not any automatic door openers (paddles) for any of the doors/entrances. Response was that all doors will be open with door stoppers on game day. What about other times when facility is open to public? Would it be possible to install some in key locations?
8. Elevators do not have audio identifying locations/stops. During the tour Commissioners were told volunteers would be operating the elevators on game days.
9. Commissioners noted there is not a designated charging area (phones and electric chairs). Is this something that could be made available and advertised at the fan services area and/or other area?
10. The Press Box lift was not in operation at the time of the tour
11. Listening devices need to be readily available and park staff should be trained to be able to instruct users on operations

12. A relief area for service animals should be created and that location should be something that can be made known to public (signs and indicate on map online)
13. Public address system in concourse area very loud would be hard for people with autism

A follow up tour with operations staff was requested for Commission members. Director Turchek said that the tour was held at the last possible day before opening day due to the delay in getting the elevators inspected. Construction continues even with the opening and some parts of the park were not ready for inspection on the date of the tour. Associate Commissioner John Finn, Jr. attended the tour and also attended a game during the first week and shared some of his observations with Director Turchek by email. Other Commissioners will be attending games this week and will be able to provide additional guest experience feedback. An additional tour(s) will be arranged for the rest of the Commission. Friends of the Commission who are interested in joining should let Director Turchek know of their interest.

Worcester Yellow Cab request for Commission review and recommendations for issuance of wheelchair accessible taxi medallions 109 and 110

Bill Clark, Worcester Yellow Cab owner, had been asked about fourteen months ago if Yellow Cab would consider providing accessible cabs. Since then medallion 109 and 110 have become available. Three accessible Braun vehicles have been purchased, 2 used and 1 new. The 2 used vehicles will be operated by Yellow Cab directly. Mike Frisoli, one of Worcester Yellow Cab's independent drivers, has bought the new vehicle.

Five questions were asked of Mr. Clark:

1. Can you verify the newly purchased vehicles meet the requirements under the city WAV taxi regulations?
Response: They all meet these standards. Two of them are the kind used for years in New York City as accessible vehicles. The new vehicle has a lift spherically designed for this purpose. The used vehicles have about 100,000 miles on them.

2. Describe how rides will be recorded and reported to the Commission (preferably a log is submitted on a monthly basis and reviewed publicly as needed).

Response: There is a computerized system for reporting. These cabs will be categorized as HP. These cabs will be used for standard rides when not in service providing rides for people using wheelchairs. Hopefully he will be able to service all requests for service. If unable for whatever reason these will be reported as well. He should be able to provide the information to the city.

3. Describe plan for maintaining vehicles to ensure long term stability and continuity of service.

Response: Worcester Yellow Cab has its own maintenance facility with two full time mechanics six days a week. No one works on Sunday. With three vehicles there should be no problems. Cabs are checked at shift time. The lift itself is not electronic and pretty simple. The maintenance crew will be able to fix if necessary.

The new vehicle has a warranty direct from the dealer.

4. Who will provide driver training and how many drivers/vehicle to ensure 24/7 service?

Response: Mr. Clark stated that he and Mr. Frisoli will be taking a train the trainer training scheduled for June 2. He will then train drivers the following week. The plan is to be on the road as soon as possible after the training of drivers.

Mr. Clark trains all the company employees. Training drivers for these cabs will include sensitivity and special need details. Mr. Frisoli will train his drivers.

The company has 30 drivers; a select group would be trained and rotated so they would have a chance to work with people using wheelchairs. If a call came in and these vehicles were in the yard one of the office personnel who is licensed and trained would respond to the request.

5. How will the WAV taxi service be advertised with community and how can Commission support getting the word out?

Response: Social media, word of mouth goes a long way. Vehicles on the road with stickers and emblem have generated calls. Would be happy to consider Commission ideas.

Last week Commission members inspected and tried out the vehicles. Director Turchek showed photos of the vehicles. Commissioner Garr-Colzie elaborated from her experience testing the loading and unloading from the vehicles. The new vehicle can accommodate other passengers (not using a wheelchair) in a middle seat. The used vehicles can accommodate another passenger (not using a wheelchair) in the front passenger seat. She thanked Bill for taking on this service.

Fare is the standard fare. When the driver begins the boarding process the meter begins.

Commissioner Prochilo moved to recommend to Worcester’s Chief of Police that medallions 109 & 110 go to Worcester Yellow Cab, Co. be provided: one to Worcester Yellow Cab and the other to Michael Frisoli, independent owner with Worcester Yellow Cab, Co. Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Clark for the presentation and for making this necessary service available to the disabled population in and around the City of Worcester.

Notice: MA COVID-19 vaccine

- **Eligibility and appointments** <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>
- **Homebound vaccination program** www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-homebound-vaccination-program
- **FAQ-Transportation to COVID-19 Vaccine Appointments for MassHealth Members and Health Safety Net Patients**
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/transportation-to-covid-19-vaccine-appointments-for-masshealth-members-and-health-safety-net-0/download>
- **Worcester Mobile Equity Vaccine Clinics**
www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/7b/1b/7b1b9a6da4845690a43f34241f277b4f/wmevc-community-guide.pdf

Review of AAB notices and applications:

(City properties- See WPS variance applications above)

Variances:

- 29A East Mountain Street (Housing-new construction)
- 82 Winter Street (Bocado Tapas and Wine Bar)

First Notice:

- 1160 W. Boylston St (O’Connor’s restaurant) (Docket C20 071)

Suggestions for upcoming agenda items

- Follow up on School evacuation plan for three public schools
- Follow up of WooSox Stadium accessibility recommendations
- Follow up on marketing/advertising accessible cabs availability

Announcements:

- **WRTA Advisory Board Meeting May 20, 2021, 8:30am, Contact:**
tsebastian@therta.com
- **Next Accessibility Advisory Commission virtual meeting:**
June 15, 2021, 4:30pm
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Adjournment:

Commissioner Prochilo moved to adjourn and Commissioner Garr-Colzie seconded. All approved at 7:00 pm

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