



City of Newton, Massachusetts COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2014

Members Present

Rob Caruso, Co-Chair
Girard Plante, Co-chair
Jane Brown
Barbara Lischinsky
John Lojek
Jini Fairley
Lucie Chansky

Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Candace Havens
Director, Planning &
Development

Alice Walkup
Senior Planner
Community Development

Anne Marie Belrose
CD Manager

Members

Rob Caruso, Co-Chair
Girard Plante, Co-Chair
Jane Brown
Lucie Chansky
Jini Fairley
Rosemary Larking
John Lojek
Barbara Lischinsky

Advisor

Sergeant Jay Babcock
Newton Police Department

Staff

Joel Reider
ADA/Sec 504 Coordinator

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Staff Present

Joel Reider, ADA Coordinator
Alice Walkup, Senior Planner, Community Development
Sergeant Jay Babcock, Newton Police Department

Guests

Sandra Lingley
Nelson Liu, Schwartz/Silver Architects

MEETING:

Rob Caruso called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM

1. Beacon/Centre Street meeting

Rob C. gave a summary of the Jan 6 meeting at City Hall about the pedestrian safety concerns at the intersection of Beacon and Centre Streets. The meeting was attended by the Co-chairs Girard Plante and Rob Caruso, members Barbara Lischinsky and Jini Fairley (remotely by phone), ADA Coordinator Joel Reider, Alicia Bowman, Andraea Downs, Bill Paille, Sgt Jay Babcock, Heather Platte and Mayor Warren. Although Bill P. says it's impossible to implement an immediate permanent solution, he will make some temporary modifications that will hopefully improve the situation until a permanent solution can be reached. The permanent solution involves installing new equipment and getting that equipment will take until March. Rob acknowledged Bill P's acceptance of responsibility and his responsiveness, but he also emphasized the frustration of many individuals about the long time it is

taking to fix the obvious problems at this important intersection. Jini Fairley promoted the idea of reverting to an all-stop+configuration; Heather Platte and others said they were not opposed to Bill P's suggestion of retaining the concurrent/parallel crossing configuration, but with the addition of a lead phase,+a period of 10 or 15 seconds of pedestrian-only traffic before cars get a green light. They said they would accept such a lead phase+strategy, but only if there was also a way to control motorists turning left, i.e. with a red left arrow. Girard P. pointed out that it was encouraging to have the Mayor in attendance, and that he voiced his displeasure with the situation, asked Bill P. for some kind of interim solution and offered to personally contact any contractors to try to speed up the process of delivering and installing the needed new equipment. Bill P says that until APS and other new equipment is installed, they will be adding signs to the intersection warning left-turners to yield to pedestrians.

2. Minutes, 12/9/13

Rob C. asks if anyone has comments on the Draft Minutes from the previous meeting of the COD on Dec 9, 2012. Jane Brown moves to approve the minutes; Lucie Chansky seconds; motion passes.

3. ADA Coordinator report (Joel Reider):

Joel R. mentions that Traffic Council is scheduled to hear HP5-13, David Koses request to remove one HP space from the municipal lot on Waltham St, on Jan 22. Lucie C. asks if David K. ever provided the additional information COD felt was needed to justify removing this space. John Lojek suggests that more HP spaces is always better than not enough. Unless there is great justification to remove this HP space the COD should reject this request. Moves to write a letter to David K. asking that he not bring this item to the Traffic Council until additional information is provided to COD for consideration. Lucie seconds. Joel R. will write a letter to David K.

Joel R. extends an invitation from Community Preservation Program Manager, Alice Ingerson to hold a future meeting of the COD in the newly completed and now fully accessible Durant-Kenrick house. CPC funds were provided for the renovation of this historic property, to be used as a museum about colonial life in New England.

4. CDBG report (Alice Walkup):

Alice W. reviewed the CDBG report (see meeting packet for details). No update on APS Project; Education Center . Accessible Building Directory Sign project (these funds will be proposed for reprogramming at the February meeting). Alice W. spoke to Carol Chafetz to recommend working with COD membership to consider designing this directory in a way that will maximize accessibility for visitors with impaired vision. Curbcuts: Pearl/Jackson and Newton Centre projects came in under budget, so surplus will go to increase budget for FY14 (\$138,212). Remaining lights in Newton Centre will be

installed soon. Funding for War Memorial project will be discussed at CPC meeting on Feb 26. Alice W. encourages COD members to attend to express support for funding the project.

Girard P. asked about curbcuts on Commonwealth Ave. Alice W. agreed to ask DPW to consider these. Rob C. wonders if surplus from Pearl/Jackson & Newton Centre can be used for these curbcuts. Alice W. explains this money is already allocated for use at Lincoln/Walnut and Washington/Walnut. John L. asks why these projects are over-estimated and under-budget. Alice W. explains that it's always easier to over-estimate rather than have to come back later for more funding. Rob C. expresses concern that surplus in CDBG funded accessibility improvement projects gets lost before it can be spent in other places. John L. asks if there is a list of criteria to evaluate which intersections need improvement? COD should be aware of how these intersection improvements are prioritized.

Alice W. reads memo from Community Development and Planning dept. recommending that the item, %Projects TBD+be removed from the list of architectural access projects designated for funding in FY15, according to the FY11-FY15 Consolidated Plan. This will comply with HUD's requirement that only clearly defined projects receive funding. The proposed FY15 budget includes \$45,000 for Parks and Rec (Newton Centre Playground Pathway Phase VI) and \$65,700 for DPW (ADA Compliant Curb Cuts, Citywide).

John L. moves to support the memo. Jane B. seconds. Motion carries.

5. Amended decision (MAAB), 40 Chase St.

Joel R. reviewed Amended Decision of the Board, in which MAAB approves additional variances for second floor bathroom and second floor kitchen.

Lucie C. asks which bathroom has the window near the toilet which COD objected to when reviewing original application. John L. says the window glass was replaced with something much sturdier, like glass blocks.

John L. summarized public ZBA hearing at which neighborhood petitioners objected to City's approval of this project. He noted that several of the future residents attended and gave presentations in support of the project. John L. emphasized his support of the project and expressed his dismay at public opposition.

6. Amended decision (MAAB), 35 Webster St.

Two items require additional variances: to comply with fire code, architect proposes adding a door at second floor stairway area to isolate this area; this door will have only 31"+clear opening. The ramp @ second floor from Waiting Lobby 240 will be only 36"+wide.

Regarding the narrow door, John L. suggests a letter be sent to Donald Lang Architects to see if they considered an appeal to Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) to be allowed to install additional sprinklers in this area instead of a door. If this is allowed, it would mean one less variance granted by MAAB. Regarding the ramp, it was agreed that COD would support MAAB's decision, whatever it is.

7. Application for variance 141 Herrick Road

Nelson Liu of Silver/Schwartz Architects presented the project, a new home for the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. Many accessibility improvements will be made to the building and the site, but the design makes it necessary to request variances for seven items. Virtually all variances are driven by historical nature of the building. COD was generally impressed by the quality of the presentation and of the project. The strongest reservations expressed had to do with the lack of a second accessible means of egress in the Chapel. John L. points out that code requires only one accessible means of egress and that the %Area of Refuge+provided near the secondary entry is a standard feature to provide emergency evacuation for persons with disabilities where only one accessible means of egress exists.

Lucie C. moves to support the application; Jane B. seconds. Motion carries.

8. Consideration of future guests at COD meetings

Reel Abilities Film Festival has been interested in forming a relationship with COD, but each year approaches the commission with very little time left before the festival begins. COD is open to the possibility of supporting the festival in some way, but ask that Reel Abilities contact them in a timely manner for next year's festival. Joel R. will suggest to Ellie Pierce of Reel Abilities that she introduce themselves to the commission at least four months before the 2015 festival to provide adequate time to discuss this relationship and to plan any specific events or activities.

MBTA System Orientation Training is a program provided by MBTA to help familiarize persons with disabilities with options for navigating public transportation independently. Larry Haile has offered to organize a training at a venue in Newton, possibly at the Senior Center or at the Library. COD is receptive to this idea and asked Joel R. to contact Mr. Haile and invite him to a COD meeting to describe the programs and discuss the details of an event.

Deborah Pierce is a Newton-based architect with a special expertise in designing accessible environments. She is the author of the book, *The Accessible Home*, and a friend of Rob C. He has offered to invite her to a future meeting to discuss possibilities for a public event/workshop.

John L. supports visits from guests such as these, but proposes spacing out these visits over several months.

9. COD web page revision

Rob C. thanked Barbara L. for her time in revising the content of the COD web page. He also noted that an earlier revision, drafted by Girard P. and himself at the time the COD became a commission, was never uploaded to the server. In effect, there are now two versions of the revised COD web page: the one Barbara L. just completed, and the earlier one prepared by Rob C. and Girard P. So, rather than reviewing Barbara L.'s draft, as anticipated, Rob C. advised members to review both versions at their convenience, but before the next COD meeting. At that time members may comment and provide input in order to arrive at a final approved draft.

Barbara L. added that the link to the COD page is buried in the Newton web site and impossible to find unless one knows beforehand where to look. She suggests contacting IT to arrange for a link on the home page directly to the COD page. Joel R. notes that there are many such hard-to-find web pages w/in the City web site and that IT might see a comprehensive review of the web site as a more appropriate action than adding a link to the home page.

10. HP fines

Sgt. Jay Babcock presented the records for HP fines through Dec 31, 2013. Total fines (outstanding and collected) = \$42,220.00. He projects a total of approximately \$61,000 by the end of FY14.

11. New/old business

There was some discussion about outstanding fines issued for parking in front of curb cut on Newtonville Ave. Sgt. Babcock mentioned that the Board of Alderman asked to rescind the fines, but he refused. Police placed a barrel at the site with a ~~%~~NO PARKING+sign, but people are still parking there.

Rob C. raised the issue of snow collecting in curb cuts after storm cleanup. He mentioned that pedestrian advocate Alicia Bowman has been documenting this problem with photographs and wants to bring this before DPW and Board of Aldermen. Sgt. Babcock suggests that after the initial cleanup effort, contractors can be directed to specifically clear snow from curb cuts.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM