



## City of Newton, Massachusetts COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Meeting Minutes  
February 10, 2014

### Members Present

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

Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

Candace Havens  
Director, Planning &  
Development

Alice Walkup  
Senior Planner  
Community Development

### Regrets

Jane Brown  
Rosemary Larking

### Staff Present

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

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

### Guests

Sandra Lingley  
William Paille, Transportation Director, City of Newton  
Alderman Susan Albright  
State Representative Kay Khan

**Advisor**  
Sergeant Jay Babcock  
Newton Police Department

### MEETING:

Rob C. called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

#### 1. Minutes, 1/13/14

Lucie C. moves to approve the minutes. Barbara L. seconds.  
Motion passes.

#### 2. ADA Coordinator report (Joel Reider):

Geoff Engler, Newton developer contacted Joel R. to see if the COD is interested in having him attend the March meeting to discuss a development he is planning on Court street in Newtonville. Lucie C. points out that there is some neighborhood opposition to this project. Joel R. says Mr. Engler wants to share his plans to develop more affordable

1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459  
T 617/796-1120  
F 617/796-1142

[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)

and accessible housing units with members of the community who have a special interest in these issues. John L. wants to know exactly what Mr. Engler wants from meeting with the COD. Joel R. reads from an email he received from Mr. Engler emphasizing that he is only trying to identify groups in the city that care about developments of this kind. John L. moves to invite Mr. Engler to the March meeting of the COD. Barbara L. seconds.

Joel R. mentions that he will be meeting with COO Bob Rooney later this week to seek authorization from the executive office to hire a consulting firm to complete the City's ADA self-evaluation in preparation for developing the ADA Transition Plan. John L. explains that city staff is not realistically able to conduct this kind of evaluation on their own. He believes that w/o funding for this effort, the deadline for the Transition Plan is going to continue to be pushed back. Lucie C., suggests using COD funds; John L. says we shouldn't use these funds as we don't actually have them yet. Rob C. notes that the Mayor was previously "aghast" that we didn't have a Transition Plan or an ADA Coordinator, and that he should recognize the need to fund this effort and see it through completion. Rob C. offers to write a letter of support from the COD for funding the self-evaluation and extending the hours of the ADA Coordinator position to full-time.

### **3. CDBG report (Alice Walkup):**

Alice W. reviewed the CDBG report (see packet for details). No update: APS project. Reprogramming proposal for Ed Center accessible directory sign has not yet been heard; updates on budgets for FY 14 curb cut projects.

Alice W. described BMPO effort to make pedestrian accessibility improvements along Washington St. corridor in Auburndale. Encouraged attendance at public "listening session" on Feb 26.

Alice W. reviewed a list of criteria (see packet, page 4) by which curb cuts are selected for improvement, and invited COD members to identify specific curb cuts known to be in need of improvement.

There was some discussion about Austin Street development and linking infrastructure improvements in the vicinity of such projects. Regarding curb cuts in vicinity of new developments, John L. notes lack of "public benefits incentive" strategy.

Sgt. Babcock interjects recent policy development: DPW will put a barrel with at NO PARKING sign wherever a curb cut is installed mid-block or w/o a crosswalk. This is an attempt to avoid another situation like Newtonville Ave.

Public Bldg dept will be presenting its application for Community Preservation Act funds to proceed with the War Memorial elevator and acoustical improvements at the Community Preservation Committee meeting on Feb 26

at 7:00 PM. Alice W. encouraged COD members to attend to express their support for this project.

#### **4. HP fines**

Sgt. Babcock presented the records for HP fines through January, 2014. Total fines (outstanding and collected) = \$47,440.00. JL asks if there are plans to begin ticketing in parking areas after the weather improves (e.g. one of the malls).

Sgt. Babcock mentions that Traffic Council voted 4 to 1 to restore one of the HP spaces in the Waltham Street lot to a metered space. They felt there were already enough HP spaces in West Newton.

#### **5. Beacon and Centre St update**

Bill Paille, Director of Transportation gave a powerpoint presentation to illustrate the various problems with the recently implemented traffic improvements at the intersection of Beacon and Centre Streets. There is no way to control left-turning motorists, so that with the concurrent pedestrian phases, pedestrians- especially those with impaired vision- are potentially at risk of being hit by a turning vehicle.

Long-term solutions to the problems include replacing the very large mast-arms with more slender ones that are better suited to this location. New signal equipment will be installed that will include Audible Pedestrian Signal controls, options to program red left-arrows and more flexible timing systems which will allow for maximal adjustment and the ability to achieve maximum safety and efficiency. This new equipment will not be delivered for some time, and will not be installed until mid-to-late April.

In the meantime, DPW has installed signs to alert motorists to YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS IN CROSSWALK. The pedestrian-activated walk phase has been replaced with an automatic walk phase; the control buttons have been removed; and an audible %walk+chirp will be installed.

Lucie C. is concerned that the temporary signs are placed too high and not easily visible to motorists. Bill P. cautions that the temporary solutions were just put in place and adjustments will be made after DPW has had a chance to observe the new conditions. Jini F. is concerned about the persisting condition of cars that can turn left while pedestrians are in the crosswalk. Bill P. reminds that red a left-arrow is not possible until the new equipment arrives. Lucie C. asks if the City voted to standardize crossing signal sounds throughout the City. Bill P. confirms and explains that DPW is in the process of implementing this new standard.

#### **6. MAAB Notices**

Joel R. notes that after receiving a complaint, MAAB has issued a citation for violation to Boston College for failure to maintain accessible features, specifically that the accessible door to Babst Library is closed when the main door to the library is open.

Joel R. provides updates on MAAB Variance Application at Nathaniel Allen House, 135 Webster St. All requests have been granted by the Board (see packet for list of all granted variances).

## **7. Commuter Rail Accessibility Improvements**

Alderman Susan Albright introduces State Representative Kay Khan to explain her efforts to improve accessibility at the Auburndale Commuter Rail station. Rep Khan points out that all three Newton stations are inaccessible, and that for 15 years she has been working on improving all Newton stations, but especially on the Auburndale station.

She worked with US Congressman Barney Frank who was able to secure \$3 million in federal funds, which has been spent on design for Auburndale (design documents are 60% complete). It is a complex situation with many agencies with their separate jurisdictions: MBTA, Mass Turnpike Authority and CSS (the company that owns the track). The State has since purchased the track from CSS.

West Newton station is potentially less tricky than Auburndale; Newtonville station is more complicated as the only real solution is to install an elevator, and Rep Khan is talking to DOT and City about combining this effort w/ a larger project to improve accessibility generally throughout Newtonville.

There is currently a transportation bond bill including an amendment for \$17 million (which is what is needed for construction at just Auburndale). A lot of advocacy is needed to promote this. Rep Khan has met with Mayor Warren and the Governor who are both supportive. Is meeting soon with Secretary of Transportation.

Jini F. notes that Auburndale seems to have been separated out.  
Rep Khan: Auburndale meets several criteria so that's where the money went.

Several members note the difficulty of using an exterior accessible elevator in winter. John L. suggests that maybe the Shaw crossing over the tracks in Newtonville could be developed as part of the Washington street development and might become the location of a new station with an interior elevator.

Rep Khan suggests COD send letter to secretary of state dept of transportation. The letter should mention centrality of Newtonville Sta. and benefits of utilizing air rights. And emphasize importance of finishing Auburndale project which has already begun.

Rep Khan will provide a draft including important points; Joel R. will follow up with her.

### **8. COD web page discussion**

There are several different versions of drafts that have circulated by email and that Joel R. printed from Rob C.'s email and brought to the meeting. Everyone is confused about which version is being considered. Rob C. offers to issue a final edited version for everyone to review and discuss at the next meeting.

There followed a premature discussion about the description of the scope of the Commission's area of interest and activity. Girard P. and Rob C. both emphasize that the Commission doesn't need to limit the scope of its activities by the extent of members' expertise. If issues arise that members are not qualified to resolve, there are many resources available to help.

### **9. New/old business**

Barbara L: Waban area council meets this Thursday, 2/20 in City Hall and will discuss pedestrian access in Waban.

Jini F. asks who to call about snow blocking curb cuts. She has been repeatedly frustrated by attempts to report this to City's customer service number. Joel R. offers to follow up on this.

Lucie C. claims that HC parking is too far from doors of Memorial Spaulding. Rob C. says this will be inspected.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM**