

**Minutes of the Brookline Commission for the Disabled (BCD) Meeting  
September 22, 2016  
Brookline Health Building, Library**

**Present:** Chair, Saralynn Allaire, Joan Mahon, Elaine Ober (notetaker), Jim Miczek, Henry Winkelman, Ann Kamensky. Ex officio: Chris Chanyasulkit, Asst. Director, Office of Diversity, Inclusion, & Community Relations, Brookline

**Public visitor:** Rita McNally

The meeting commenced at 6:10 PM.  
The minutes of the July 28, 2016 meeting were approved.

**1) Discussion of name change for Commission**, the two possibilities being

- a. Brookline Commission on Disability
- b. Brookline Disability Commission

The discussion brought up the need to use “people first” language; the logic of keeping “Brookline” in the name, to distinguish from commissions in other towns that might use the same name; and that the town doesn’t have a preferred format for these names.

“Brookline Commission on Disability” was thought “more descriptive,” and to be nicely parallel with the “Massachusetts *Office* on Disability.” “Brookline Disability Commission” was thought shorter and to have better initials. Chris assured us we shouldn’t worry about the initials. Jim suggested that we table it til the next meeting; Chair recommended proceeding with a vote as we shouldn’t really table it for a second time. A vote was taken:

Brookline Commission on Disability: 4      Brookline Disability Commission: 1

Chair explained that there is a specific process for making the name change official. This involves a letter to the Board of Selectmen which she will write and send.

**2) Variances at 85-87 Harvard Street (Benefitness).** The minutes of the September 8, 2016 special meeting were approved. Update/further information about the site:

- Henry spoke with the former tenant (Red, of Phillips TV) about the step at the front door. Red explained that when the town redid the sidewalk they added the front step. Red complained to the town about it, as it creates an access barrier, and was told that it was necessary because there was too much grade. Since he knew he’d be leaving soon, he didn’t press it.
- Both Henry and Jim were able to locate photos from Google Earth that clearly show the front, corner entrance without the step.
- Jim noted that the proposed accessible entrance for the new business is actually, now, a front entrance to another business. Thinks they changed the interior ground floor – adding stairs – in order to make the basement level usable.
- Chair noted that the work may have been done without a permit.
- Chair reported that the AAB met on September 12, 2016 and moved the variance request to a hearing, which is set for January 9, 2017.

No new variance applications have been received.

### **3) Access Complaints & Issues:**

a. Access to Discounted Taxi Vouchers: The Brookline Senior Center determines eligibility for taxi vouchers for the elderly. It seems that somewhere it says that people with disabilities are also eligible (if they meet the income requirements), and someone contacted Lloyd Gellineau about it. His office is working on it. The grant that funds the voucher program allows only for seniors but the office hopes that by sending a letter of explanation to the grantor, people with disabilities can be added. What the Commission has is an opportunity to extend this program to people with disabilities, and we agree we should do it.

However, what do we do about verifying disability? Senior Center staff suggested that allowable paperwork could come from many sources – only 1 form would be needed per person – and these include:

- Mass Commission on the Blind
- proof from SSDI
- The Ride documentation
- proof of Handicapped plate/placard
- letter from Registry stating that the person cannot drive for health reasons
- Mass Rehabilitation Commission

Discussion of including Department of Mental Health and Commission on Developmental Disability. Joan reminded us that, generally, Deaf people do not need this service. Joan also mentioned that once this is approved, it needs to be publicized.

Also need to verify the same income eligibility requirements as the elders.

b. Update on the HP parking space survey: BU students surveyed part of Beacon Street on September 20<sup>th</sup>. These are students in an OT class; this is their class project. Will ultimately complete all of Beacon Street, both sides, with photos, and will check the width of the spaces, too.

Earlier this year a space on the inbound block of lower Beacon Street (near St. Mary's) was found with a passenger side totally blocked by a tree, tree well and street furniture. This space has been moved to be the first space on St. Mary's Street.

There's currently no town database of the HP spaces. Discussion of how to ask the GIS Office to add a layer to their map that would show the HP spaces. Jim suggested that they might be bundled into an existing layer of all parking spaces. Since the BU students' form includes location information, the GIS office could work with it to pull out the HP spaces into their own layer. Henry asked if there is any money in the GIS budget for this.

Noted that the BU professor whose OT class is doing this survey would like her students to do a project for us every year. Discussed maybe a survey of Harvard Street would a good next project. And we need to think of others.

c. Update on Babcock Street redesign: Jim reported that most of the parking remains; there are 2 HP spaces within a 6-door span. There will be a bike lane with something to separate it from the cars. Jim will follow up with the other resident on the street who needs access to an HP space. It was noted that for every 100 parking spaces, 5 HP spaces are required. Joan noted that this ought to be seen as a minimum because the population in Brookline has a higher proportional need for HP spaces.

d. Bank of America, Coolidge Corner: This is Rob's issue; will wait for him to report back.

e. 1299 Beacon Street, 40B development: Saralynn reported that she wrote a personal letter voicing concerns about this proposal. Current design calls for elevator parking – people would drive in and their cars would be taken to 1 of 2 levels; not clear if the spaces will allow for the dimensions of vans, so therefore not accessible. She reminded us that we need to keep accessibility issues in mind – and bring them up – at any meetings we attend on town topics.

f. Devotion School construction: concern about access on the side street during construction; Jim reported a wooden ramp on Harvard Street covering a water line which is too high for wheelchairs to traverse safely.

- Joan brought up the more general issue of tree roots. Jim explained that you need to report them to the town, get them on the fix list, and the town will remove the roots and repave the affected sidewalk.

#### **4) DICR Update (Chris Chanyasukit):**

- attended the disability summit on employment – Brookline well represented – distributed some of the information from the summit
- DICR new hire for position of Community Relations Specialist and ADA Coordinator starts mid-October. Caitlin Haynes comes to job from a position at Boston Center for Independent Living and, before that, Perkins School.
- ADA Workshop October 19<sup>th</sup>, Medford Town Hall. Morning is an ADA update for state & local govt; afternoon is about employment. DICR will be going; Chair asked commission members to consider attending, at least morning.
- approximately \$30K in COD funds, of which \$12K is earmarked for the ADA coordinator position. DICR oversees the remaining (\$18K) funds, which can be used for disability services, such as ASL interpreting at a town event, etc. If the commission want to put on a program, we would ask DICR for funding from that money

#### **5) Other Old Business**

a. Proposal from May 10, 2016 meeting (approved) to host Community Monitor Training, put on by MOD to train people to assess accessibility of buildings in their towns: Chair recommended that we not try to do this right now because we may not have an appropriate venue or enough parking for the 25-40 people with disabilities likely to attend. Not a problem for MOD since they already have 3 location options for 2017.

b. Proposal to meet with Boston Center for Independent Living: will discuss further in a future meeting.

#### **6) New Business**

a. Use of Commission name: You can always say that you are a member of Brookline COD but you need state that your opinion is your own, unless it is a topic we've discussed and voted on.

b. Boston Area Regional Meeting of CODs on 10/5/2016, One Ashburton Place, 11 AM – 2 PM. A networking event where COD members from Boston area towns can share initiatives, successes, roadblocks, etc. Chair asked commission member to consider attending.

c. Saralynn is going to be interviewed by BIG in November.

**7) Next meeting:** October 27, 2016 start time TBD (may be 5:30)

- Thomas Hopkins from AAB will present