

Minutes

Brookline Commission on Disability

Wednesday, April 23, 2020, 6 PM – 7:45 PM

Held via WebEx due to COVID-19

Public Link:

<https://brooklinema.webex.com/brooklinema/onstage/g.php?MTID=eecd1a48c306fc433bb31d8cbc9ae8a27>

Members in Attendance (Virtually): Saralynn Allaire, Chair; Jim Miczek, Deputy Chair; Elaine Ober; Henry Winkelman; Rob Heist; Joan Mahon; Ann Kamensky, Ben Franco, Select Board Member

Members absent: None

Note taker: Sarah Kaplan, Community Relation Specialist – Ex. Officio

Members of the Public in Attendance: Tina Kurys; Deborah Klein; Jen Carlson, LeftField; Philip Gray, Architect Jonathan Levi Associates; Rob Mullin, Project Manager, Town of Brookline; Devon Williams, Administrative Services Director, Town of Brookline; Matt Gillis, Public Schools of Brookline; Tony Guigli, Town of Brookline

The Meeting commenced at 6:01 pm and there was a brief introduction of all those in attendance.

Phil Gray presented on the Driscoll School: Mr. Gray gave a brief overview of how the school grounds are being designed to increase access and safety. The School will have two accessible entrances that are close to a centrally located elevator. The stairs will have contrasting color nosings to assist people with low vision - later a question was raised about adding tactile indicators to the nosings as well and Mr. Gray and Mr. Mullin said the nosing would also have tactile indicators. He gave a brief overview of the school's layout, focused mostly on the more communally used first floor that includes a cafeteria and an auditorium. A member questioned if access had been addressed in the cafeteria and Mr. Gray confirmed that it will be fully accessible. Mr. Gray also talked about the flexibility of the design to help with social distancing if needed. There was extensive discussion regarding the need for a second elevator. Most members feel one elevator is enough, but one member and one member of the public spoke about the importance of a back-up elevator. Adding another elevator would increase the budget by a half-million dollars. The Ridley School only has one and it has more students. Mr. Gray described what other towns have done, specifically Framingham, which only has one elevator in the school Mr. Gray designed for them. He stated most towns decide on one elevator. There are no half levels in the school so there are no ramps; the only way to travel

from floor-to-floor inside the school is to use the stairs or the elevator. Mr. Mullin said since Brookline buys good quality elevators and provides good maintenance, that breakdowns are uncommon.

Discussed the Garaventa Evacu-Trac and the Stair Climber devices (chair lifts for people who cannot climb the stairs - to be used in an emergency or when the elevator is down - it runs on a battery and Mr. Gray says that they are able to go up and down the stairs). The ADA Coordinator and Jim Miczek both gave first hand accounts of using such an evacuation chair - some thought the experience was a good one all things considered and others did not. There was also discussion of the option of "lift and carry" with training for staff in the building on how to assist a person in an emergency. The Commission on Disability in Framingham supported including them in the school Mr. Gray designed for their community. Comments were positive and negative for this option. Discussion revolved around the town purchasing these for the school, one going down from fourth floor to third to second and another going up from the basement to first floor. The first and second floors are accessible to the street. The Commission ultimately supported the inclusion of the chair lift devices.

Report from Sub-Committee re: Park School Variance: The Variance Sub-Committee met on April 16 to review the variance request from the Park School, which was about a utility/slop sink in the art classroom. They want a sink with four faucets that is 10 inches deep. Such a sink would limit knee space underneath that sink to 24 inches. 521 CMR requires at least 27 inches of knee space. Saralynn wrote to the architects to ask why they were requesting a sink with four faucets when on the application they said 'a teacher would be using the sink.' Due to that information provided in the variance, the Variance Sub-Committee recommended that the Architectural Access Board recommend that the designers look into ADA Compliant utility sinks.

Ben moved to support the Sub-Committee's recommendation. Henry seconded the motion. Saralynn, Jim, Elaine, Joan, Rob all voted in support.

- **Vote on the Minutes from April 16, 2020:** Rob made a motion to accept the meeting minutes as written. Jim seconded. Saralynn voted in support. All members in attendance during that subcommittee voted to post the minutes as written.

Old Business

Harvard Ave. Tree Removal: Saralynn informed the Commission that the tree was removed and the sidewalk is now accessible.

Letter to the MBTA re: issues with the RIDE: The letter was approved by the Transportation Board and it is believed to have been sent to the MBTA.

Report on Sighted Guide Video: Tina said that the video is complete. They are finalizing the slide on how to contact someone in Town if they have questions or comments. Tina said that they think they are going to include the general phone number and Department that houses the ADA Coordinator (Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations). There was discussion of how to add the department's web address. It would not make sense to add it to the slide because a person would have to pause the video to copy the information down. It cannot be incorporated into the script of the video at this late date. It is better to add the link to the video information on Youtube. The Sub-Committee will also develop a blurb for Youtube.

The Commission discussed if this is a good time to release a video due to social distancing issues. Overall, the Commission felt this isn't the right time to release the video but it's good to finish and be ready to release at some point in the future.

ADA Update:

- The ADA Coordinator reported that she has not received many complaints from residents at this time regarding accessibility, except for issues on WebEx and requests for WebEx reasonable accommodations. The ADA Coordinator has contacted the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing regarding providing captioning for virtual meetings and is waiting to hear back from them. She has also connected people to IT for training in WebEx. Tina spoke about her experience with WebEx training with a blind employee in HR - she believes WebEx is very inconsistent and overall very frustrating.

Discussion of Virtual Town Meeting: Town Meeting has been moved to June 23 and will be done virtually. While Zoom supports screen readers, it does not support voice-to-text captioning. Captioning would need to be provided by a "captionist" or CART provider. The ADA Coordinator is working to get more information from MCDHH. Saralynn raised the idea of using some of the HP Fine Fund to pay for captioning of Town Meeting.

Announcements:

- **Month long shut down of the MBTA:** The Commission is being asked to comment on the access plan. The ADA Coordinator and the Chair have been in

contact with the person that is managing this process and are waiting to hear back from him.

- **Resources document for People with Disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic:** The Emergency Preparedness department released a document that is on the Town's website. It does not include some of the suggestions the Commission made including Transportation.
- **MOD call re: People with Disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic:** People with Disabilities are having issues getting PPE for PCAs; the ARC is having issues with staffing in group homes; people are having issues standing in lines at grocery stores; people who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing have issues communicating when everyone is wearing masks; Parents are finding the care of Autistic children to be challenging; and getting people food deliveries from food pantries.

Next meeting:

Wednesday, May 13, 2020 via WebEx (tentative)