

Minutes

Brookline Commission on Disability Regular Monthly Meeting

Thursday, September 19, 2019

6:00 to 7:45 PM

Town Hall, Room 308

Meeting commenced at 6:03 PM; led by Chair, Saralynn Allaire

Identification of Note Taker – Sarah E. Kaplan, ADA Coordinator, Ex. Officio

Members present: Saralynn Allaire, Rob Heist, Ann Kamensky, Jim Miczek, Henry Winkelman; Joan Mahone, Elaine Ober, Ben Franco

Members unable to attend: Myra Berloff; Cindy Lee, Transportation Board Liaison

Introductions/Public comments

Guest names: Tina Kurys, Deb Sue Klein, Alyssa Ison

Key points of any comments: Alyssa is a student at Northeastern and attended in order to observe a public health policy meeting as part of an assignment.

New Business

Presentation by Eddie Bates of Community Planning & Development re: the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG):

Eddie shared a document with the Commission titled “Accessibility Projects 2011-2019.” He stated that in all the projects listed, accessibility was not the focus of any project but was an aspect of them – developed document to explain how accessibility can be considered in CDBG funded projects. Brookline receives approximately \$1.3 Million/year in funding, geared toward low-to-moderate income residents. As a group, Senior Citizens and People with Disabilities are categorized as low-to-moderate income, so projects for these groups can be done anywhere in town as long as they can demonstrate they will be primarily used by these groups. CDBG uses the American Community Survey 5-year estimate to determine where funds may be used. There is no requirement regarding how much must be spent on access, and; there are no requirements on how the money must be spent every year (although there are caps on certain categories). Every five years, towns must create a five-year plan. Before developing said plan, Eddie is meeting with different groups in Town as part of a Needs Assessment.

Discussion re access related goals/needs in areas of:

Affordable Housing – increasing accessible housing for people with disabilities across the age spectrum so that not all-accessible housing is located in senior only buildings.

Public Services – there is a 15% cap on public services – Brookline typically maxes out in this category every year. Henry and Jim brought up the importance of increasing mobility for people with disabilities –

a bus or a shuttle perhaps. Saralynn asked if the funds could be used to increase access in public meetings to people who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, whether it be CART services or re-wiring some of the rooms for public meeting rooms for Assisted Listening Devices – Eddie said he didn't know if such a project would be eligible, but he would check.

Economic Development/Job Creation – has been used for the BETS taxi program, for example.

Public Facilities/Park Improvements/Infrastructure – these projects are determined by census block – 40.82% in said block must be low-to-moderate income to determine where in Brookline infrastructure projects can be funded. Could not renovate sidewalk but could be used to build new sidewalk. Elaine and Ann brought up the need to increase accessibility of Brookline parks and playgrounds. Saralynn and Tina also asked about using funds for Audible Pedestrian Signals.

Action: Eddie said that the RFP is open in December and everything will be in by March 2020.

Review Minutes of June 19, 2019:

Needed to re-approve June 19, 2019 Minutes – approved as edited by Saralynn.

Vote: Approved by four members that were in June meeting.

Creation of Synopsis of Minutes of July 11, 2019:

Discussion: BCOD members who attended the July 2019 Meeting discussed their memory of meeting in order create of Synopsis of July 2019 minutes due to issues with Ann Kamensky's computer. The members that were in July meeting helped to created synopsis of said meeting. Discussed the importance of posting any sub-committee meetings at least 48-hours in advance.

Motion to approve Synopsis of July 2019 meeting made by Jim Miczek, seconded by Ben Franco.

Vote: Yes: 5; No: 0; Abstain: Joan Mahone, Elaine Ober, Ann Kamensky

Variances

Results of July 15 AAB Hearing on BU Howard Thurman Ctr., 808 Commonwealth Ave:

AAB held hearing in July, Saralynn went to hearing. AAB requested that the petitioner to further investigate possible mitigation for Newel posts on inner handrails and possibility of rubberizing stairwells steps.

Action to be taken: None on this issue; Saralynn stressed that she feels it would be good to send someone to these hearings to demonstrate support of any recommendations made by the Commission

Old Business

Update of Development of Sighted Guide Video: Tina Kurys

Discussion: Working with BIG, video has been filmed last week and BIG needs to do a rough first cut. Once that is completed, Tina and two BCOD members will watch the rough first cut. Tina also wants to invite her husband because he knows a lot about being a sighted guide and has some film background. Ann would like to be there to see if the video would be a good fit for the schools. The ADA Coordinator recommended that the video be captioned so that the video itself is accessible. We discussed if BIG had

that capability. The ADA Coordinator said she thinks it has been confirmed by BIG that they can do captions, but she will check. If needed the video could be sent out for closed captioning. Tina and Ann think the filming went well and think it will produce a quality video.

Action to be taken: Tina will work with BIG to set up meeting to view rough cut at their office. The ADA Coordinator asked to be informed of when and where that meeting will take place so that it can be posted.

Update on addition of HP spaces to Brookline Parking Map:

Discussion: HP spaces have been added to the parking map but they are now adding known HP spaces in private lots. Saralynn said that she is still having issues accessing the map from the Town's website and feels others may have the same issue. Ben mentioned that the entire Town website is being redesigned and will be more accessible as a result of the redesign.

Accommodation Possibilities at Brookline Government Meetings for People with Sensory Limitations:

Discussion: Cambridge's ADA Coordinator brought up this issue during the September CODA call. There are other real-time captioning options besides CART. Boston uses GBH's captioning center for the city council meetings. Ben asked which meeting we are talking about. The ADA Coordinator stated that if the Town could decide on a service that they were willing to pay for, they we could better advertize real-time captioning and other available accommodations as well as that accommodations are provided upon request. Commission members stated concerns about costs.

Action to be taken: Look into pricing for CART and other real-time captioning services and reach out to other ADA Coordinators to see what is being done in other towns. Also figure out the technical capabilities in rooms around Town that host public meetings – work with IT on this survey. Joan and Elaine agreed to meet with the ADA Coordinator about this.

ADA Coordinator Update:

MOD Grant Proposal: The ADA Coordinator is working with DPW on selecting street crossings for installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals. Planning to apply for funds to renovate 12 of them, starting in North Brookline..

Complaints: Resident complaints this summer were largely about construction issues and the e-scooters (4-6 in the last few months).

Projects/Initiatives/Activities: The ADA Coordinator is working with Economic Development on a Business Access In-Service Presentation to local businesses on how to increase access for all to their business.

Action to be taken: Saralynn asked that the ADA Coordinator bring a draft of the presentation to a future BCOD meeting to get feedback.

Other: ADA Coordinator was part of BHS Expansion Meeting giving feedback to the architects; ADA Day in July went well, 25-30 residents attended. The ADA Coordinator asked about purchasing more BCOD jar openers and actually purchasing in-ear headphones before next Town Meeting. Soofa is having a ribbon cutting next week; members should let the ADA Coordinator know if they would like to go.

Action to be taken: The ADA Coordinator will bring in quotes for in-ear headphones to next meeting.

New business

Joan on Paris disability experience: Joan took a French Sign Language class; only 13 out of hundreds of Metro Stations are accessible. There were some businesses that earned certifications if 80% of their employees have disabilities. She found a café staffed by all deaf and hard-of-hearing employees. She felt that a year was not enough time to get embedded in life there.

Needs assessment: Ben brought this up as an idea in July. The Town pays for The National Citizen’s Survey – 6% of Town identified as people with disabilities. Definition of Disability is key. Saralynn mentioned focusing on different group or other ways to do outreach.

Action to be taken: Plan to continue discussion in future meetings.

Advocacy

Proposed law against use of electric shock on children and other abuse: This was discussed in last CODA call but haven’t heard anything else since then.

AAB Law Update: More action has been taken. No further discussion.

Announcements:

Babcock St. Renewal: Sidewalk success! : Jim talked about having increased mobility since construction was completed.

MOD Disability Summit: ‘Improving Access in Our Communities, September 27, 2019, 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM @ Boston Convention and Exhibition Ctr., 415 Summer St., Boston; Free, but registration is advised.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Thursday, October 17, 2019

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Thursday, December 12, 2019

Meeting ended at 7:45 PM.