

## Minutes

Brookline Commission on Disability  
Wednesday, September 22, 2021; 5:30 PM – 7:15 PM  
Meeting held via Zoom

**Members in Attendance (Virtually):** Saralynn Allaire, Chair; Jim Miczek, Deputy Chair; Jim Lee; Rob Heist; Henry Winkelman; Elaine Ober; Ann Kamensky; Joan Mahon; Miriam Aschkenasy, Select Board Member; Nancy Moore, Transportation Board Liaison

**Town Staff in Attendance:** Ben Kauffman, Town Clerk; Justin Casanova-Davis, Assistant Town Administrator

**Members not in Attendance:**

**Note taker:** Sarah Kaplan, ADA Coordinator – Ex. Officio

**Members of the public in attendance:** Katy Sawyer, Senior Engineer with Toole Design; David Trevvett; David Kroop; Jules Milner-Brage; Abby Swaine

Jim Miczek chaired the meeting. Meeting commenced at 5:33 PM.

**Introduction/Public Comments:** Katy introduced herself to all Commission Members and members of the public in attendance. All Commission Members and members of the public briefly introduced themselves.

**Brookline Bridle Path presentation:** Katy Sawyer led a presentation and discussion about the Brookline Bridle Path. Toole Design was hired by the Town to complete a Feasibility Study which began in February 2021. They were asked to develop multiple options for the corridor on Beacon Street. They held several meetings with the public at large and select Commissions, Committees, and Boards to get feedback on potential options. Feedback from all stakeholders include what they would like the Bridal Path to do and what they wish to preserve. They plan to have a final feasibility study and concept design plan by the end of 2021.

Feedback has created the following vision for the Brookline Bridal Path:

- “A Place to Be” – a public landscape and cultural amenity like the Emerald Necklace
- Age-friendly and Universally Accessible – a multi-generationally-enjoyed public asset
- Enjoyable by People Walking, Biking, and Taking Transit – a safe, comfortable, and equally joyful travel experience for all modes
- Thriving and Vibrant Local Culture and Businesses – commercial and cultural centers enlivened by a bike and pedestrian-friendly street

Stakeholders have helped Toole identify issues along the corridor now. For example, the complex crossings at Hawes (zig-zag) and Centre Streets, among others. These crossings are

inconsistent and confusing and potentially unsafe to residents, especially for people who are blind or have low vision. Toole has met with the MBTA's Green Line Transformation Team (GLT) about these issues. GLT plans to make upgrades to platforms along Beacon Street in the next five years. Toole Design is assisting the MBTA with updates to their Design Guide for Access. All of the information they learn from GLT will be included in the feasibility study.

Alternative Concepts for the Bridal Path:

- Alternative A: Median Shared-Use Path & Angled Parking – maintain median angled parking, add a 12-foot shared use path to the median (angled parking is not always accessible by sidewalk – currently there are places where people may need to walk in the parking lane)
- Alternative B: Median Shared-Use Path & Parallel Parking – convert median angled parking to parallel parking; add separated bike lane to the median (will reduce the number of overall parking spots, because you can't fit as many spots parallel spots as you can with angled parking)
- Alternative C: Separated One-Way Bike Lanes - separated one-way bike lanes on either side of Beacon Street

Currently Beacon Street has angle parking that alternates between the north and south of the median. In Alternatives A and B, wherever the parking is currently located would be where the path would be (so at Washington Street and Harvard Street the path would need to cross over the tracks).

Jim M asked how many accessible parking spaces (HP) are there now and how many would there be depending on what alternative is chosen. Katy did not know the number parking spaces off the top of her head, but she said it was a project goal to maintain the number of accessible spaces that currently exist.

Katy wanted to highlight the Washington Square intersection. She showed a possible design for the crossing that aligns with Alternative A.

Katy ended her presentation – she said that as of this point it appears that some sort of shared-use path is preferred by the majority of stakeholders surveyed (so, likely Alternatives A or B).

Jim asked about the current bike paths on Beacon Street – would they be maintained? Katy said yes, due to the different levels of Beacon Street, some current bike lanes would need to be maintained as is (especially to the east of Beacon Street). Joan asked about benches on the path. Katy said that the stakeholder group had identified a need for benches and bike parking. Rob asked about the length of the Bridle Path. Katy said that the project would extend the full length of the Town of Brookline along Beacon Street, which would allow cyclist and pedestrians to walk the length of Brookline without interacting with the vehicle traffic lane, other than the

required crossings. Henry spoke about the area of Beacon Street that has been limited to one lane, from Summit Ave to Westbourn. Elaine asked about plans for lighting on the path. Katy says yes, that lighting will be part of the feasibility study and the cost estimate – she expects they will recommend updating all lighting. Saralynn spoke about her preference for a sperate path for cyclists, rather than a multi-use path, for safety for all on the Bridle Path and on the sidewalks of Beacon Street. Miriam spoke about the recent comprehensive study on Pedestrian Lighting that Brookline just commissioned, she advised Toole reference that study. Katy took down all notes provided by members and the public. Nancy spoke about how the Transportation Board seemed to prefer Alternative A – they see the bridle path as mostly a bike lane. Jim Lee also supports separating the cyclists from pedestrians for safety. Miriam wanted to see the rationale for the shared use path vs the separate bike lane.

- **Action:** Katy took down all notes and said that she would share a PDF of the presentation she gave plus additional information requested so the Commission can consider it at a future meeting. No vote was taken at this time. Further discussion was tabled for a future meeting.

**Announcement from Saralynn Allaire:** Saralynn is stepping down for health reasons. She thanked all members for their hard work and participation. Jim thanked Saralynn for her leadership and energy, as did Ann, Joan and Henry. The ADA Coordinator thanked Saralynn for the opportunity to work with her. Jim L thanked Saralynn for recruiting him to the Commission.

**Review of the August 2021 Minutes:** No changes needed.

- **Vote:** Henry L. motioned that the minutes be accepted as written. Jim L. seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Joan abstained because she wasn't there. All other members present voted in favor of the motion. Motion carries.

**Variances:** Joan asked via email if the Commission had recently reviewed any variances for the Coolidge Corner Theatre (CCT) The last time a variance for the CCT was discussed was during the July 2021 Meeting. Saralynn recounted: The AAB approved the following: 1) an extension to the railing on the outside of steps to make it ADA complaint; 2) the men's bathroom on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor will become a unisex ADA accessible bathroom; 3) a new lift will be put in near the small theater to make sure it functions. No changes will be made to the ramp in the big theater on the first floor – it is uneven but the AAB has accepted the assessment that there is no way to reasonably address that. The Variance subcommittee agrees with that assessment.

- **Need for a new member of the Variance Subcommittee:** With Saralynn stepping down a new fourth member of the subcommittee is needed. The ADA Coordinator does attend those meetings but does not vote because she a) works for the Town and b) does not live in Brookline. Joan offered to give it a try.

- **Vote:** Henry nominated Joan for the Variance Subcommittee. Jim M. seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor of the motion. Motion carries.
- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator with email all members so they are connected in one group.

## Old Business

**Review October 2021 Tab column/topics for future columns:** Review October column was a mistake on the agenda. Topics for future columns were tabled for a future meeting. The ADA Coordinator suggested accessible Halloween costumes. Abby said October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. The ADA Coordinator suggested highlighting the Job Accommodations Network (JAN) or <https://askjan.org/> and offered to send information to Abby and Elaine.

- **Action:** Abby and Elaine asked members to email them suggestions.

**Changes to the BCOD Webpage:** Tabled for a future meeting due to time. The ADA Coordinator did tell the members that they needed a new member for this subcommittee. No one volunteered.

## ADA Update:

**CART Services for Fall 2021 Town Meeting (November – December 2021) & Special Town Meeting (October 2021):** The ADA Coordinator brought an estimate of \$11,000 for 44 hours of service (11 days, 4 hours per night x 2 captioners) from HRI CART. The members needed to decide if they were willing to take the money out of the HP Fine Fund that they control.

Joan asked about if the captioners were from Massachusetts. The ADA Coordinator could not answer that question. HRI is a Florida-based company. The ADA Coordinator also spoke about the lack of response from the State re CART requests in the past.

Miriam said that she has used the CART services at Town Meeting in the past and found them sufficient. Miriam asked 1) How much money does the HP Fine Fund currently have? 2) How else is it spent on?

The ADA Coordinator reminded the Commission that they settled the accounts in the last meeting. The HP Fine Fund has \$37, 373.83 in total, allocated as follows:

- Professional Tech: \$27,337;
- Special Projects: \$10,000

The ADA Coordinator said CART services and other interpretation requests for the year typically come out of Professional Tech. In the past year the Town got one request for ASL interpretation. On average there one to two requests a year for such services.

Saralynn asked if a formal request for CART has been made. The ADA Coordinator said yes, a formal request had been made. Saralynn says that she believes that it is on the Town to pay for it if a formal request was made. She also asked about HRI's policy of requiring 48 hours' notice for any cancelation. The ADA Coordinator turned to Ben Kaufman, Town Clerk, for more information.

Town Clerk spoke about requesting CART for all the days Town Moderator asked for because in the Spring 2021 Town Meeting the meeting went longer than expected and asking for CART Services on short notice increases the cost. If Town Meeting is shorter than expected they will cancel the nights not needed with 48 hours' notice.

Joan asked if Town Meeting Members (TTMs) have been asked if they like the captioning service. The ADA Coordinator said that they have received positive feedback from seven TTMs and negative feedback from two TTMs.

Justin Casanova-Davis, the Acting Finance Director and Assistant Town Administrator spoke to the group. He said that the Town did pay for a portion of CART in the Spring Town Meeting, and it warrants a discussion going forward as to if the Town should pay for some or all of CART services in the future, but it has not been budgeted for this year. He pointed out that there is a Warrant Article for hybrid meetings in the upcoming Town Meeting and it may warrant the Town having that discussion.

- **Vote:** Henry motioned to vote on spending \$11,000 for Town Meetings with the hopes it can be reduced by cancelling 48 hours in advance (whenever possible). Joan seconded. A roll call vote was taken. Miriam abstained. All other members vote in favor. Motion carries.

**The MOD Grant for FY 2022:** The ADA Coordinator read certain portions of the grant application to the group including: Grant Scope; Cost Estimate; Impact Statement from Jim Lee; Impact on Access; Monthly Usage; and Census Data. She also explained the Environmental Justice map.

- **Vote:** Saralynn made the motion to submit the MOD Grant as written. Elaine Ober seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All members voted in favor. Motion carried.
- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will seek final feedback from her supervisors and the Grant application team and submit the application by October 8 @ 5 PM to the Massachusetts Office on Disability.

**Report from Transportation Board Liaison:** Tabled for a future meeting.

## **New Business**

### **Public Hearing on Warrant Article 6 (Sidewalk Obstructions) in the October 2021 BCOD**

**Meeting:** Announced officially in the meeting and the ADA Coordinator will make the Announcement on the BCOD website as well. Abby suggested putting it in the Access Brookline column. Jim and Rob offered to have their pictures taken to show them dealing with issues related to sidewalk obstructions and access to add to the presentation developed by David Trevvett.

The ADA Coordinator and Commissioner of DPW will also present the Warrant Article to Select Board on September 28, 2021.

- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will send info to all members re the Select Board presentation

**Election of new Commission Leadership:** Jim M spoke about the need for a New Chair or Deputy Chair. The ADA Coordinator explained that members can nominate themselves or someone else, and votes are taken by roll call, no secret ballot. The Commission could elect for multiple positions, including Co-Chair or Secretary.

Re: Eligibility – the majority of members need to be people with disabilities (so for the Commission that means at least 5 members need to have a disability). There are no other special eligibility criteria.

**Meeting dates for future BCOD Meetings:** Did members want to keep meeting on the second Wednesday of every month or move to Thursdays. Elaine can't do Thursdays, so the dates will remain the same. The Transportation Board is moving their meeting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month.

**Announcements:** Select Board Meeting on September 28, 2021, Warrant Article 6 will be presented.

**Next Meeting:** October 13, 2021 @ 5:30 via Zoom

Meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM