

MAYOR'S COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
November 16, 2009

MINUTES – Meeting in Newton City Hall – Cafeteria

PRESENT: Rob Caruso (Co-Chair), Girard Plante (Co-Chair), Lucie Chansky, Jini Fairley, and Heather Platt
REGRETS: Jane Brown, Jeff Hutter, Rosemary Larking, Barbara Lischinsky and Jason Rosenberg
STAFF: Beverly Droz (Human & Vol. Services), Kathleen Cahill (Planning & Dev.)
GUESTS: Rob Muollo (Planning & Dev.) and Nancy Jodoin

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The meeting was called to order at 6:45 pm and chaired by both Girard and Rob. Introductions were made around the room and guests were welcomed.

MINUTES

Lucie made a motion to accept the October 19 minutes, which was seconded by Heather. The minutes were approved.

ANALYSIS to IMPEDIMENTS: IDENTIFICATION OF IMPEDIMENTS TO FAIR HOUSING IN NEWTON- Rob Muollo

The Committee welcomed Rob Muollo, who presented the Analysis of Impediments at the October 19, 2009 meeting. Since the last meeting, he has visited the Human Rights Commission and received a variety of feedback. He staffs with the Fair Housing Committee and has received their input. The MCPD has been helpful in identifying accessibility needs. He stated that he plans to outreach to service providers in Newton and to the growing Latino population. He indicated that the housing staff in his office is investigating the City's process for public and private buildings.

Rob Muollo also reviewed what had been discussed at the last meeting and asked the members if they had any additional input. Jini asked if there is an educational piece needed for landlords. Rob M. said that there had been some training a few years ago, but much more is needed. Jini stated that she does housing searches for people and is astounded that the landlords don't have the forms for reasonable accommodations. Further discussion ensued. It was noted that Girard will start attending the Fair Housing Committee meetings as the MCPD representative.

Rob Caruso mentioned ongoing problems with Avalon Bay. MCPD members visited the site on Needham Street and they were not in compliance on a variety of matters. Assurances were given, but no follow through has occurred. Rob C. suggested that a written assurance from large developers is needed before they build and they should be held accountable and liable afterward.

Girard recounted Ted Tye's visit to MCPD in September of 2004. He gave a presentation that showed what it would look like when it was built and said his manager was very knowledgeable about ADA issues but as it turned out, she was not.

Jini described lists for affordable and subsidized accessible apartments.

Rob C. said that National Development owns three sites: Arbor Point, Avalon on Needham St. and Avalon in Chestnut Hill. Sometimes the developer appears before MCPD and sometimes members visit the locations. There is no consistent process. Rob M. expects to reach out to some of these developers. Girard stated that some will be receptive and some will not.

Rob C. stated that if any developer builds ten or more units, a unit is sold to the City for a minimum value. That unit has no bells and whistles. When the Newton Housing Authority takes over that one unit in such a building, they get no help from the developer when NHA has to make changes to accommodate the accessible client.

The Committee thanked Rob Muollo for attending.

CITIZENS PARTICIPATION PLAN- Kathleen Cahill

Kathleen provided an overview of the seven-page document that was emailed to members before the meeting. The Plan has been developed to provide citizens and other interested parties with opportunities to participate in an advisory role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnerships Program and Emergency Shelter Grant programs, which primarily benefit Newton's low and moderate income residents.

Kathleen explained that federal funds go to the City and the City wants to hear from residents and provide residents with the opportunity to participate in various capacities.

The process for Citizen Participation included: individual citizens; citizen advisory committees; target Neighborhood Advisory Committees; Human Service Advisory Committee; the MCPD; Economic Development Advisory Committee; Newton Housing Partnership; Planning & Development Board; Board of Aldermen; and organization, agencies and the Newton Housing Authority. The focus is on the highest area where there are lower income residents.

Public meetings and hearings will be held according to the plan as described in the document. Their staff is concerned that the word is not getting out about the public meetings, so they are beginning email announcements as well as other methods. Availability to the plans and access to information will be as open as possible as will the ability for citizens to make comments.

Kathleen asked if the MCPD had questions, but the document was very thorough in outlining the plan, and there were none.

CDBG REPORT-Kathleen Cahill

This report was submitted to MCPD by email before this meeting for review. Per usual it is copied here within the minutes. Kathleen Cahill presented the report. Comments are noted after a project.

Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Project CD0703C. Expended, \$7,818; Budget balance: \$11,995; CD10-03D, Budget balance: \$6,000). Centre St. and Centre Ave. is a priority intersection; however that is on-hold pending a final decision by the Newton Corner Advisory Committee on VHB conceptual plans. Washington St. and Commonwealth Ave. is another priority intersection. The scope of changes at Washington & Commonwealth includes an upgrade to the existing traffic signal equipment; there is approximately \$65,000 in funds available for this work. If leftover funds are available after the above equipment is installed accessible pedestrian signals will be considered and the Mayor's Committee will be able to weigh in on options (a letter from the

MCPD to C. Schuckel was sent and the co-chairs will meet with C. Schuckel). Other priority locations submitted to traffic engineering include: Washington and Beacon as well as Washington Street by Newton-Wellesley Hospital. The City's contract with Republic ITS was recently renewed and these intersections are expected to be complete in late November.

It was noted that the location at Richardson and Centre Streets (near the Newton Corner Library) will have a pedestrian activated signal installed that will have flashing yellow lights to alert drivers that a pedestrian is trying to cross Centre Street.

The Traffic Council's new traffic signals (flashing yellow signals) are being considered at several locations including Crafts Street and Linwood Avenue, Washington Street and Harvard Street, Waverly Avenue and Franklin Street, Waverly Avenue and Arlington Street, and Centre Street near Pelham Street. Jim Danila is a new traffic engineer and will work under Clint S.

Heather spoke to Davis Koses today and feels as though these lights provide false security measures for pedestrians. While lights are activated by pedestrians there needs to be a red light to stop the traffic. Koses said that the red lights are more expensive. Heather cited Washington and Harvard, Walnut and Newtonville and Centre and Pelham. Lucie stated she believes that these lights came from a federal grant. Members discussed writing a letter to the Traffic Council stating that these flashing yellow lights are not the answer.

Rob recognized Nancy Jodoin, who gave an example of how she and a sighted person were in the crosswalk in Newtonville today and cars drove around them; they did not stop.

Charlesbank Playground (Project CD0903C, Budget balance, \$30,000). Project includes the installation of a ramped concrete walkway with metal handrails, designed to complement new play equipment, benches, and picnic tables and allow access through the park. Newton Corner Advisory Committee members made some recommendations on play equipment. Ray Dunetz, the landscape architect retained for the project is working to finish construction documents, a phasing plan will then be developed based on the budget.

Curb Cuts (Project CD1003C, Expended \$2,465 Budget balance, \$145,000). Committee earmarked funds for curb cuts on Everett and Gibbs and Sumner and Gibbs in Newton Centre. Construction on these curb cuts will hopefully begin within the next two weeks. MCPD needs to evaluate project goals for the 2010 construction season.

Retrofitting Curb Cuts (Project CD0903E, Budget balance, \$6,000). A list of 7 locations (Homer Street, Beacon St. @ Dalton, Centre Green @ Langley, 1188 Centre Green, 82 Lincoln Street, 100 Walnut Street, 28 Commonwealth St) (19 curb cuts) have been identified by committee members and staff. Project 10% complete; most locations require being ADA compliant.

Cold Spring Accessible Route (CD10-03A, Budget balance: \$36,000) Project includes accessible "L shaped" pathway from parking area to circle where the farmer's market is held. Project will be bid with other CDBG-R (stimulus) projects this winter and begun Spring 2010.

Crystal Lake Accessible Pathway (CD10-03B, Budget balance: \$9,000) Project includes funds for material costs associated with the construction of an accessible pathway along City's property easement on 230 Lake Avenue. Pathway construction complete and material bills are being processed.

Nahanton Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Space (CDR09-03, Budget balance: \$30,000) Project includes retrofitting park for handicap accessibility through the construction of an accessible pathway and the addition of a van accessible parking space. Project will likely go out to bid Fall 2009.

Newton Centre Accessible Pathway and Handicap Parking Spaces (CDR09-04, Budget balance: \$23,500) Project includes construction of an accessible pathway and the addition of two handicap accessible parking spaces. Project will likely go out to bid Fall 2009.

NEWTON ANGINO COMMUNITY FARM BARN REHABILITATION- Kathleen Cahill
Kathleen stated that Peter Barrer, President of the Board of Directors for the Farm, has presented a few times before the MCPD and would like a letter from MCPD in support of the plans at the farm. Kathleen provided the committee with a handout outlining the cost estimate and plans. She described where the barn is located and its three levels and various entrances including the front, the side facing the Learning Garden with doors from the basement, and the back entrance. Two accessible routes are being proposed. The Committee wondered about plans for snow plowing.

A lift from the first floor to the second level is planned, but questions arose about access to the basement level to the Learning Garden. Members felt that we were involved with their plans for the Learning Garden, but have been given little information about the barn and accessible routes. Members decided that they would like to make a site visit to the farm before the MCPD writes a letter of support.

HANDICAPPED PARKING – Bev Droz

Bev presented on Mr. Kliman's request for handicapped parking at the US Post Office on Washington Street in Newtonville. Lucie visited the site. Members want to know if the Post Office owns the property right next to it - in the new business' lot. If a space could fit in there, it would provide easy access to the P.O. Members were concerned that with an on-street HP parking space, the driver would be exiting the vehicle into the major thoroughfare. Also a street space will require a curb cut. Rob C. stated that the City put in a handicapped space in front of the Nonantum Post Office, but not a curb cut.

REVIEW OF ISD REPORT- Bev Droz

The ISD Report from Dave Norton was emailed to members earlier in the month. The 11/5/09 report covered Arborpoint, the Education Center, Horace Mann apartment, Golden Living Center, Hess Gas station, Paddy O's and the new Star Market.

Bev noted that in her conversation with David last week, he reported that National Development called him about Arborpoint and they are in the process of redesigning the front parking. Also, Dave spoke with Hess's attorney and they are sending a representative to the location to address the noncompliance of handicapped parking. Girard noted that there is no railing and not enough room for a wheelchair.

OTHER BUSINESS

Education Center

Lucie revisited the Educational Center and noted there was no table blocking the entrance, but that boxes on the floor are blocking the accessible button. Kathleen noted that they are designing a tactile directory sign.

Newton Police Station-

Kathleen and Amy Yuhasz visited the police station at Washington Street and noted that there is no automatic door opener.

Newton Parks-

Bev reported that she recently sent an email letter to Fran Towle and Stephanie Pelkowsky regarding the playgrounds and accessibility issues that were discussed at a previous MCPD meeting, and requested that they keep her posted on their progress.

Disability Policy Consortium Event-

The event on November 19 at Medford City Hall, from 5:30-7:30 pm, is to bring together local disability commissions to share ideas to improve access in the communities. Jini is on the board.

Committee vs. Commission-

Members discussed how we seem to be in limbo and are not moving forward to become a commission. Bev explained that originally when we sat with Mayor Cohen last year, he cautioned that we state we are willing to have existing levels of revenues from handicapped parking fines stay in the operating budget (the amount was about \$30K) and that we request any additional revenues above that could go to the Commission. One of the previous co-chairs advocated for all the revenues to go to the Commission. The Executive Office asked for some feedback on how other cities handle it and we provided them with information about Waltham and Watertown. Bev noted that this fall, we should have arranged a meeting with the current co-chairs and the Mayor to further discuss it but we did not, and she apologized. As Mayor Cohen is leaving office the end of next month, we should plan to meet with the new Mayor and request for this to move forward.

A motion passed to adjourn at 8:30 pm.

The next meeting will take place on Monday, December 14, 2009.

Respectfully submitted by Beverly Droz