

Minutes - DRAFT

Brookline Commission on Disability
Wednesday, February 9, 2021; 5:30 PM – 7:15 PM
Meeting held via Zoom

Members in Attendance: Jim Lee, Chair; Jim Miczek; Elaine Ober; Ann Kamensky; Rob Heist; Shawn O'Neal; Joan Mahon; Miriam Aschkenasy, Select Board Member; Nancy Moore, Transportation Board Liaison

Members not in Attendance: Henry Winkelman

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

Presenters: Meredith L. Mooney, Community Planning & Development; Desiree Patrice; Mark Shamon, Gwen Dunlevy; Andres Achury -- all MBTA GLT; Gregory Zapata, Housing Production Plan

Members of the public in attendance: Mary Flaherty; Jan Griffin; Nathan Myatt; Abby Swaine, Saralynn Allaire, unidentified call-in user

Meeting commenced at 5:32 PM.

Introductions/Public Comment: All panelist present (members and presenters) introduced themselves.

Presentation by Meredith Mooney re APRA Funding to increase Small Business Accessibility

Meredith Mooney, the Acting Director of Economic Development and Long Term Planning, in the Planning Community Development Department, first explained what ARPA was and how the money is going to be prioritized by the Select Board for distribution. For more information on Brookline's ARPA funding, go here:

<https://stories.opengov.com/brooklinema/published/alukqInNI>

The Economic Development Division, as well as the Brookline Chamber of Commerce are planning on submitting grant applications for a number of projects to support local small businesses and commercial area recovery that has been adversely affected by the pandemic. Parallel to ARPA funding was the State's Local Recovery Plan Process, which helped the EDD, BCC and others evaluate where funding was needed if funds ever became available, which is why the EDD has some proposals ready to go so quickly.

Local businesses have expressed that while funding/direct assistance is great, what they really want from the Town is to become a better partner by 'enhancing the public realm' by making it easier for people to come and stay in Brookline and spend their money at these local

businesses. As such, Meredith is bringing two proposals that focus on increasing access and accessibility in Brookline's commercial areas to the attention of the Commission:

1. Expanding the Outdoor Dining Program by providing a grant to restaurants to make their outdoor seating decking accessible. One of the requirements to receive the grant would be for the restaurant to complete the Access & Inclusion for Local Business presentation that was developed by the ADA Coordinator with the Commission's feedback.
2. Expanding funding for the Town's Façade Loan Program. The current program is underutilized. For more information about that program (in its current form), go here: <https://www.brooklinema.gov/1564/Facade-Loan-Program>. More funding may allow for enhancements to the program and make it more likely businesses would use it.

Commission members and members of the public asked questions about how the Façade Loan Program worked. It was also asked if businesses are asking for funding to assist with making their outdoor seating more accessible – Meredith says that the grant program is an idea, they don't currently have funding for it, but anticipate that restaurants would utilize it. The platforms are attractive to many businesses, but often out of reach financially.

Meredith was seeking support from the Commission in development of these ARPA applications, but did not want to pressure them since she did not have the ARPA applications for their review as of yet.

- **Action:** The Commission wanted to see the applications before they voted on whether or not to support them. Meredith will send the applications to the ADA Coordinator and this issue will be discussed at the next meeting.

Presentation by MBTA GLT Team re: Beacon St. Pedestrian Crossing Improvements; Hawes St., and St. Paul's Street Eastbound

The two crossings being presented to the Commission are linked to the Hawes St and St. Paul Street stops, but will enhance accessibility for all who use the crossings. The GLT Team has developed a solution that would rely on improvements to the roadway surface.

The Team evaluated the crossings and determined that the crossings can be brought into compliance by reworking the curb ramps and modifying the roadway surface. Slopes in both directions need to be improved in order to make the crossings compliant. The design is trying to achieve a 1.5% slope (currently it is at about 14% slope). Currently the curb ramp between the trolley tracks and the street very narrow, and the tracks are much higher than the road, so the GLT has proposed a solution which calls for raising the roadway elevations at these crossings. Both crossings have the same issues and the proposed solution is the same for both crossings. The proposal will not change the lane widths or traffic operations in the area.

The GLT Team showed an animation explaining the current issues and the proposed solution.

Design considerations include: create a smooth transition to Reverse Crown (RC) with proper run-off length; carry RC across the intersection; raise curbs; check surface drainage, remove and replace loop detectors and signal posts. In February/March, the GLT will work with Town Staff to finalize construction details, and both traffic and pedestrian management plans. In April/May they will engage a contractor, start construction – the construction effort should be completed in three weeks. The Green Line will remain open during construction and it is the GLT Team’s goal to be completed with the project by early Spring 2022.

Miriam asked who pays for the project – the MBTA is responsible for cost for this construction. She also asked about maintenance plans – the GLT shares maintenance responsibility with the Town. The double Crown will make it easier for a snow plow to plow the road in these areas. Clearance of snow at the MBTA stops is the MBTAs responsibility.

Rob pointed out that neither Green Line T-stop is accessible; the GLT conceded this point. Increasing Green Line access is a longer-term project, but addressing the street level issues will increase access on the street level.

Abby asked about storm water drainage issues and the Team has identified this issue as something they will need to look at with DPW.

- **Vote:** Jim Lee made a motion to support this project as proposed. Rob seconds the motion. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor of the motion. **Motion carried, 8-0-0.**

Presentation by Gregory Zapata on the Housing Production Plan: Gregory is with the Bartlett Planning Group, LLC and that organization has been hired as a consultant to develop the Housing Production Plan (HPP). The last HPP was developed in 2016 and by law it has to be updated every five years.

The HPP is currently in the Needs Assessment stage. Gregory has already met with the ADA Coordinator and Sean O’Neal to discuss housing issues. The first Community Engagement Forum was held on January 26, 2022. It was well attended by a variety of community members. The next Community Engagement Forum will be held on February 26, 2022. A third will be held on April 6, 2022.

Gregory came before the Commission tonight to hear what barriers exist re: housing in Brookline. If you wish to reach him directly, you can email him at gregory@barrettplanningllc.com.

Shawn spoke about her experience being left in her BHA apartment during a fire. She feels that the fires are getting increasing more frequent and worse and she feels that the current fire safety plan to be insufficient. Jim Lee also stressed the importance of an inclusive evacuation plans for all residents.

Elaine Ober asked how the HPP is implemented. This is beyond the scope of Bartlett Planning LLC, but Town Meeting could use the HPP to draft Warrant Articles.

Saralynn spoke about the cost barrier in Brookline is typically even higher for people with disabilities (many of whom have lower income). Saralynn also spoke about the importance of accessible parking near your home for some people with disabilities.

Abby pointed out the similarities between seniors and people with disabilities, both functionally and financially. She thinks there is an extra focus on senior needs in Town, but feels housing stock, especially accessible housing should be built with more people in mind, especially now that many people want to age in place. She wants to focus on Universal Design Principles to address a broad range of needs.

Jim Lee talked about the importance of outdoor space – balconies and communal space. Rob stressed the importance of following the ADA.

- **Actions:** Gregory sent the ADA Coordinator a link to a survey and his email to send to the members. Jim Lee asked him to return in the future to discuss potential locations of new housing stock. Survey link: tinyurl.com/BrooklineHPPSurvey

Review of the December 2022 minutes:

- **Vote:** Rob found two typos, which was corrected. Jim M made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Miriam seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor of the motion. **Motion carried, 8-0-0.**

Variances: None.

Old Business - None

New Business

ADA Transition Plan 2022-2023: It is time to draft another ADA Transition Plan. It was last drafted in 2017 before the current ADA Coordinator worked for the Town. The ADA Coordinator Plans to reach out to all Departments in March and begin setting up meetings. Physical inspections will be postponed. The ADA Coordinator is interested in focusing on helping departments increase access in their virtual interactions with residents and in Public Meetings. She needs a member of Commission to be present in all meetings with departments.

- **Action:** Shawn volunteered to help lead this effort, but all members are willing to assist if available. The ADA Coordinator will begin outreach in March.

Washington St Development Review Committee: Jim Lee has reviewed the requirements and would like to step into this role. He asked if anyone had an objection to him doing it. Nancy Moore supports his taking this on. There were no objections, so Jim Lee will serve at the Commission's representative.

Review of February 2022 Access Brookline column for TAB: Elaine shared her screen. She presented the draft column.

- **Vote:** Jim Lee made a motion that the column be approved as drafted. Rob seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor of the motion. **Motion carried 8-0-0.**

ADA Coordinator Update:

- Most complaints received relate to snow. The ADA Coordinator is working with DPW.

Report from Transportation Board Liaison: The Transportation Board will be voting on whether or not to commence a Vision Zero Study Committee. For more info on Vision Zero, go to: <https://visionzeronetwork.org/>

Announcements: Jim Lee wants to talk about Goals for the year in the next meeting; he is currently working on the 2021 Annual Report and may reach out for information; he asked about face-to-face meetings as on April 1, the ADA Coordinator is working to get answers on this.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, March 9 @ 5:30 PM via Zoom.

Elaine motioned to adjourn. Miriam seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.