

Minutes

Brookline Commission on Disability
Wednesday, August 11, 2021; 5:30 PM – 7:15 PM
Held via Zoom due to COVID-19

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

Town Staff in Attendance: Caitlin Starr, Assistant Director, Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations. Heather Schultz, Intern, Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Community Relations;

Members not in attendance: Joan Mahon; Nancy Moore, Transportation Board Liaison

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

Members of the public in attendance: Rita McNally, Jules Milner-Brage, Liz Neill

Meeting commenced at 5:35 PM.

Introduction/Public Comments: Rita introduced herself to the Commission and was welcomed by the Commission. Jules also said hello to the Commission; he is most interested in the Commission's discussion about the Beacon St. Bridle Path. Liz Neill introduced herself; she is a member of the Disparity Report Working Group. Heather and Caitlin also introduced themselves to the group.

Disparity Report Working Group Presentation: Heather led the discussion and showed a presentation via her screen. She named key members and stakeholders of the group. The goal Disparity Report Working Group is to:

- Identify disparities that exist in Brookline's programming resources and services, among traditionally underrepresented groups;
- Make recommendations on fiscal allocations for the Town budget;
- Identify concrete actions that can be taken by the Town to address and remedy these disparities.

Heather then showed a chart labeled Brookline at a Glance: Listing the population as 59,236. The poverty rate is 12.3%. 3.5% of residents under the age of 65 have a disability. All the data came from the 2010 Census - it is not an exact count, but it is a rough estimate.

The Disparity Working Group identified 15 areas of disparities that they wanted to go review. The order of the list is not a prioritization. The areas are as follows:

- Access to Technology
- Access and Availability to COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination
- Access to Food
- Educational Access and Achievement
- Employment
- Housing Status and Affordability
- Morbidity and Mortality Rates
- Mental Health and Substance Use
- Quality of Life Measures
- Access to Adequate Transportation
- Civic Engagement
- Public Safety Services
- Language Access
- Childcare
- Universal Access Design

The Disparity Report Working Group shared some of the recommendations they have already received. She then opened the floor to recommendations from Commission Members and the public.

Rob spoke about Access to Food and spoke about the improvements he has noticed to the Food Pantry.

Miriam spoke about the need for Access to Technology - she believes that even as we return to in person meetings, she thinks investing technology is an ongoing equity issue and is important to be able to allow hybrid meetings and better meet the needs of residents in Town and she said this is an ongoing discussion at Town Meeting.

Rita spoke about her desire that more public meetings be put onto BIG (local public access television). She also thinks we need to find a better way to advertise what is going to be on BIG. She also talked about need for more youth programming, especially in the parks and maybe also possible employment for youth in the Parks, and touch briefly on youth mental health needs, especially due to COVID-19 isolation.

The ADA Coordinator spoke about the need to support BIG with funding so they can add closed captioning to their programming.

Miriam spoke briefly about the American Rescue Plan and how those funds are only available for a short time and should be used in relation to disparities that became more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Miriam also gave two examples of sports leagues that are available for youth in Brookline. Caitlin says she sees these as examples of Quality-of-Life Measures.

The Chair spoke about accessible recreation and in the Commission's last meeting it became clear that there is no specific recreation programming for people in wheelchairs or people who are blind.

The Chair asked about Universal Access Design. Caitlin spoke about how the working group wants to encourage the Town to look at UAD principles, beyond ADA compliance when designing new spaces in Town.

The ADA Coordinator spoke about the Commission's concerns about parking cuts and how that affects access and inclusion for some people with disabilities in Town. She specifically spoke about 40B units and negotiations in parking regulations.

The Chair mentioned the need to increase funding for reasonable accommodations in public meetings to increase civic engagement. She specifically spoke about assisting those who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. She also spoke about consistent funding for installing and upkeep Accessible Pedestrian Signals.

The ADA Coordinator spoke about the Town encouraging public bodies to post about their meetings more than 48 hours in advance (as required by the State) in order to allow members of the public to request reasonable accommodations and get those needs met.

The Interim Disparity Report can be found here: <https://brooklinema.gov/1898/Disparity-Report>

Review of the July 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. All members present voted in favor of the motion. Motion carries.

Variations: The Chair received a report from the Architectural Access Board (AAB) about The Park School.

- **Findings re: The Park School:** The AAB is granting the variance relief though Aug. 2022 under the following conditions:
 - The service elevator is approved for passenger use.
 - Accessible routes are explained to AAB, including an alternate route, if the service elevator is not deemed useable by students.
 - Information regarding accessibility is posted on the school's website, including audio descriptions
 - Automatic door openers are added to the service elevator if it is to be used as an accessible route
 - Directional signage for access routes are posted
 - The Park School is required to develop a comprehensive access plan for the 2021-2022 school year, including a clear protocol for those using the

accessible route to alert staff for assistance and guidance for staff on how to assist those that need help

The Park School is required to submit proof of all of the above for approval by AAB as soon as is practical. The Chair feels that the AAB are being very firm with the Park School.

- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator asked the Chair to forward the email from AAB so the minutes are correct.

Old Business

Access Brookline Column in The Tab for August 2021: Elaine presented the column she worked on with Abby Swaine. Comments from the Commission were as follows:

Miriam wanted to make sure that it was clear that Assisted Listening Devices are available for in-person events only. The ADA Coordinator cannot currently add the 9-1-1 Disability Indicator form to the Commission's website but will send a link to Elaine when it is posted. Elaine said she couldn't find the 9-1-1 Disability Indicator Form on the Brookline's Police Department website either. Rob mentioned wanting instructions for the form at the beginning. The ADA Coordinator told the Commission that once the column is posted online she posts a link to her office's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

- **Vote:** Henry made the motion to approve the amended column and Ann seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion carries.
- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will reach out to Emergency Preparedness about posting the 9-1-1 Disability Indicator Form to their website and ask about the instructions. She will send a link to Elaine when it becomes available.

Changes to the BCOD Webpage: The ADA Coordinator has met with Ben Vivante and is working on getting access.

- **Action:** The Webpage Improvement Subcommittee is meeting on September 26, 2021 @ 1 PM to discuss the changes. The website will be presented to the whole Commission at a future meeting.

Follow-up on Accessible Recreation: The Chair does not think that Accessible Recreation needs a scholarship fund at this time. The ADA Coordinator said that the Therapeutic Recreation Specialist emailed her to say that he is reaching out to existing programs to see if they would like to use recreation spaces in Brookline but has no further update.

- **Action:** The Commission will help the Commission with marketing. Also, the Commission could highlight Easy Chair Yoga offered by the Library.

ADA Update:

Complaints:

- The ADA Coordinator took a walk with a resident and cataloged several complaints on her street and sent them to DPW
- Sent several complaints regarding restaurants to DPW and Public Health for inspection
- Received questions regarding masks and worked with Public Health to get the resident answers.
- A resident requested an accessible curb cut near their apartment – trying to get answers from Todd Kirrane at DPW.

The MOD Grant for FY 2022: The grant is open from August 2, 2021 – October 8, 2021.

The ADA Coordinator showed the following link via shared screen:

<https://www.mass.gov/municipal-americans-with-disabilities-act-grant>

The ADA Coordinator asked the Commission what project they would like to focus on. Miriam asked if the grant could be used for an accessible park. The ADA Coordinator said yes, but cautioned that last time the Commission submitted a grant it was for almost 250K and it was not accepted. The ADA Coordinator will bring it back to the Commission for approval in September 2021.

Discussed briefly was the Commission's history with the grant. Caitlin Starr helped secure two grants – one was a planning grant to hire IHCD to evaluate the accessibility of Harvard and Beacon Streets and then the Commission submitted a prioritization list to DPW. The other was to redesign four curb cuts in Coolidge Corner. The grant the Commission wanted to work on last year was the Lynch School – but the ADA Coordinator and her boss were not able to get assistance from anyone at the Lynch School (likely due to COVID stresses), so that grant was not submitted.

Jim Lee suggested requesting funds for APS at Gardner Road @ Washington Street near Davis. The Chair suggested Station Street as a secondary possible location.

- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will reach out to Todd Kirrane and Dan Martin of DPW to ask about those intersections. If that intersection has been addressed, she will work with them to find a good location for the APS request if these locations are funded or handled. The Chair feels that Jim Lee's testimony would improve the grant, so the ADA Coordinator will invite him to a meeting with DPW to work on the Grant.

Report from Transportation Board Liaison: None. Nancy was not in attendance.

New Business

Beacon Street Bridle Path: The Chair wants to invite the design firm (Toole) to discuss designs for the Beacon Street Bridle Path. Jules talked about his knowledge of the project. Jules suggested checking out <http://beaconbridleway.org/> for design ideas and more information.

- **Action:** The Chair plans to invite Toole Design to the next Commission meeting.

Revision of the Sidewalk Obstruction By-Law: This revision is still being worked out. It is not yet a Warrant Article, so the Commission can't vote on it yet. If the Commissions want to take an official position they have to plan an announce a Public Hearing on the Warrant Article. Jim M. read the draft and he thinks it looks good.

- **Action:** A special meeting may need to be planned to hold the required Public Hearing; TBD.

The Accessible (HP) Parking Fine Fund for FY 2022: The police department identified \$18,185 of revenue to go into the HP Parking Fine Fund in the 2021 FY. The new balance for the fund is now \$37, 373. 87 for FY 2022. In previous years, the Commission put all the HP Fine Fund money under Professional Tech. Any money spent last year was on CART services for Town Meetings. The ADA Coordinator suggested putting some under Special Projects for non-technology related purchases.

The members discussed it and the Chair suggested putting \$10,000 under Special Projects and \$27, 373.87 under Professional Tech.

- **Vote:** Henry made the motion to approve the amended column and Miriam seconded. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted in favor of the motion. The motion carries.
- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will inform the Purchasing Department of the Commission's allocations.

CART for Fall 2021 Town Meeting: Miriam informed the Commission that Fall 2021's Town Meeting is going to be completely by Zoom, not hybrid. The Town does not have the capacity hold a hybrid Town Meeting. Miriam does feel we should go to the Town Moderator for an estimate and we should ask her to estimate generously, so as not to get caught without services at the end of a meeting. The ADA Coordinator spoke about how under estimating has cost the Town a premium in the past. Also, she believes cancelation requires at least 24 hours' notice. The hourly rate is \$256.25 at HRI, Inc. The members debated if they should be paying for the service or if this is something the Town should be paying for because a formal request has been made by a resident.

- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will seek an estimate as to the number of days/hours of Town Meeting from the Town Moderator and then seek an estimate from HRI for that amount. She will bring it back to the Commission to vote on in September.

Disability History and Inclusion Library Display: Ann and the ADA Coordinator developed the display. The bottom half has Special Olympics information, a uniform, and medals from Therapeutic Rec; as well as information about the Commission and MA Office on Disability. The top half of the display showcases both fiction and non-fiction that centers people with disabilities and/or is written by people with disabilities. A blurb will be put on the Library's website.

<https://www.brooklinelibrary.org/2021/08/19/disability-history-and-inclusion-display/>

A discussion about the Commission developing a book list and buying books for the Library system. The Libraries in Brookline lack basic books on the disability experience. The display will be up until September 17, 2021.

- **Action:** The ADA Coordinator will work with Ann to develop a book list that centers stories about people with disabilities and also books written by people with disabilities. The ADA Coordinator will send the blurb to Elaine for the Brookline Access column.

Announcements: None

Next Meeting: Scheduled for September 22, 2021 @ 5:30 PM via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM