

Burlington Committee on Accessibility Minutes

July 16, 2013, 4-6pm

City Hall, Room 12

Committee Members Present: Ralph Montefusco, Ron Redmond, Ned Holt, Jen Francis, Michael Watson, Mark Irish, Elaine Zimmerman

Committee Members Absent: Patrick Standen, Bradley Stephenson, Ardelle Cabre, Russ Scully, Sheryl Bellman, Shelly Waterman, Bob Rusten

Non-Committee Members Present: Mabel Prine, Kesha Ram, Claire Chevrier, Ellen Zeman, Miriam Stoll, Eva Stoll

BHS Accessibility Tour Recap:

Miriam: The accessibility tour with the Mayor went very well. About 25 people were present, which was more than we were expecting. It included a number of parents, students, a graduate, school district employees, and board members. Mayor started by introducing himself. Initially there was an issue about whether or not the Mayor should be in a wheelchair. Ultimately, it was agreed that he would do whatever the student leaders wanted and they decided he should be in a wheelchair. They took Sophie's regular schedule and went through it as a group. Her schedule, even though it was adapted for her convenience, was rather difficult. There are steep inclines and getting from one class to another can be a struggle. It also took a very long time for the group to get from one place to another because the group included people with different mobility challenges so there was time for a lot of conversation, which was nice. At the end of the tour people were asked to fill out a form. Most people agreed that it was informative and we also now have a list of people who agreed to work to try and make BHS more accessible.

(It was noted that the results from the survey can be compiled.)

Ellen: It may have put something back on the table that may have previously been dismissed due to cost. I also introduced the event by stating that I hadn't realized how hard it was for my daughter to get around until I really saw it.

Mark: We also learned that the ramps are not ADA compliant due to their incline.

Eva: I think this is a really long process. I am probably sure this won't happen but I would like to tear down the school because the view is great. I think it will be hard for me to get around because I normally have a para-educator but I may not in the future and I will have all my stuff with me. They should tear the school down and make it so that it is more level.

Miriam: Well, there was a talk about using the green space as a place for a new building that would connect with the old structure.

Ralph: To me, we did an outreach thing without even realizing it was outreach. It's great.

Michael: I wonder if it is possible to get this on the in-service docket.

Kesha: There is also a Partnership for Change team that works on learning space design and we should ensure they are aware of challenges for students with disabilities.

Public Comment:

Nobody present for public comment

CCTA ADA Presentation:

Liz: I manage all of our grants, which has to do with requirements of compliance. At the time of the ADA most of the infrastructure that leads to public transportation and the trains and buses themselves were often not accessible. Any public transportation system that receives federal funds and has a fixed route system must provide ADA service for people who can't use the fixed route system. There is a process for determining whether people are able to use the fixed route system some or all of the time and that is known as the eligibility process. The way we provide the paratransport system is through a contract with SSTA who then provides the ride for people who are eligible. There are different kinds of eligibility. There is unconditional eligibility for someone who is determined to never be able to take the fixed route system. This is specifically for the general public. For instance, a school cannot call us to ask that kids with disabilities get picked up because they have their own compliance requirements. Passengers are, however, asked to pay twice as much as the normal fixed route fair. There is also a conditional eligibility, which means there are certain conditions that make it so that they are able to use fixed routes for some reasons but not others. The goal, however, is inclusion with the mainstream transportation systems. Initially there were arguments that people didn't want the paratransportation but initially it was necessary because the infrastructure didn't exist but now we are working toward updating it to include everyone. There has also been communication with the people who do the updating of sidewalks and other areas that give access to transportation services so that things are being fixed that make routes more accessible to more people. The goal is that the more we make infrastructure accessible, the less we will have to use the paratransportation. CCTA is now giving the paratransportation data to the commissioners and those who make decisions about infrastructure. There is also a direct cost impact incentive; if we are able to change the infrastructure to make paratransportation less necessary we will save money.

Ralph: How is paratransportation advertised? I didn't know about it.

Liz: we get about 10 applications a month because a lot of people who are stuck call the bus company and ask them for help. There are also physicians who get their patients in touch with it.

Santina: And this is separate from the Medicaid transport?

Liz: Yes. That is an entitlement program whereas paratransportation is a civil rights program.

Michael: I just got back from Asia and they had clear signs about people giving up seats, there are the buses that go to the floor. It's great.

Liz: Every time we replace a bus we get a low-floor bus. Our federal laws also don't specify that people have to move so we can't do anything more than ask.

Santina: I have worked with people who have felt that some bus drivers are better than others.

Liz: we would want to know immediately if something happens with a bus driver. The best way is to take down the bus number. There is also an ADA advisory committee and it could come up here. Bus drivers are trained every 6 months so it is possible that there are gaps with training.

Ralph: I've also known a few bus drivers and I've heard a bus driver get yelled at for being behind schedule because he took the time to help someone in a wheelchair.

Claire: I think the other problem is that the older buses take a long time and it inconveniences others on the bus which is not helpful to the community if people are frustrated by the presence of a person with mobility disabilities.

Liz: 30% of our fleet is still within their normal life spans and we don't get funding unless a bus has lived out its normal span.

Ralph: In what capacity would you like to be further involved?

Liz: we can submit to you the database of information that we have been accumulating. Certainly, if anyone wants to meet with our ADA advisory committee they can.

Elaine: I rely on CCTA and other public transportation. I am legally blind and I have found that 99% of the people are wonderful. There was only one driver who needed to learn something. There is also a woman named Cheryl who does wonderful things. The only thing you need to do is have a bus to Montpelier on the weekend. It is one of the places I can't get to on the weekend.

Liz: We have a commuter service during the day to Montpelier, which is funded by a federal program for work. A weekend bus would fall under intercity transportation. There is an initiative to look at how to pay for that. If a representative hears from you that you would use that system it might put that thought in their head.

Ralph: Elaine also sits on the AARP transportation committee so she is in a good position.

Liz: I really appreciate the invitation to come, thank you.

ADA Awareness Day on July 26th:

Santina: I don't know everything about it because it is mostly being organized by our Montpelier office, but it is next Friday the 26th at the Black Box Theater. You can buy tickets through the Flynn website. There are \$20 and \$50 tickets. There will be a raffle. More info is on our website. But I have an unofficial flyer. Are there any questions?

Ralph: Who is the contact person?

Santina: Our Montpelier office, Steph Monte or Linda Mileddee (sp?). I can also direct you to who can answer your questions. We also have some scholarship tickets for those who can't afford the tickets.

Ralph: It would appear that there is going to be a Mayoral Proclamation and it would make sense to have it read. So we want to coordinate so we don't just show up.

Liz: Steph Monte would be the person to contact.

Kesha: The Mayor, unfortunately, will not be present but hopefully someone can put us in contact with someone who can let us know the plan. Any request to the City would be welcome, but we just haven't been contacted.

Ralph: I assume there is publicity?

Santina: We did a bunch of releases that are now going out.

Ralph: I'm going, who else will be there?

(Most will be out of town, but hopefully those who are not present today will be present at the event.)

Ralph: I will be there but I understand that the ticket prices are steep.

Santina: The ticket prices go to helping VCIL and there are scholarships available.

Parks and Rec/NDAA Joint Events:

Jen: we are looking at jointly sponsoring two clinics. One would be a sailing event in August. Another would be in the fall either at the Miller Community Center or the Leddy Center. These will be clinics dedicated to getting the disabled community involved in activities they may not participate in every day. I would like to talk to this group on the next agenda about the park's master plan. Any thoughts?

Claire: How would you publicize this event for people who would not necessarily fall under normal mobility challenges?

Jen: We will be publicizing through our own websites, Front Porch Forum, we are a little bit constricted with how many all neighborhoods we can send out. Maybe we could put something on the city's website.

Ralph: We all have our own groups so I can contact the MS society and we can send information out.

Jen: I'm passing out business cards that have the park's information on it.

Santina: Do you know if it would be a free clinic or who it would be made with?

Jen: It will be with NDAA

Santina: I know NDAA just got a grant for youth sailing

Ellen: we also have this beautiful bike path. I think it would be interesting to have different kinds of hand propelled biking options.

Michael: I just bought an electric assisted bike but it is liberating.

Ralph: My wife goes out on a scooter and she ran out of charge on her scooter because she was chasing a rare bird.

Kesha: There is an idea of rolling town halls to meet up with officials. There is interest in maybe using a bike path so people could use lots of different forms of transportation to meet up.

Michael: I think what you are doing is great. There is no one disability community there are many different kinds. I think the real challenge is trying to figure out what the different communities are and how the overlap.

Jen: we will start with the list we have and if anyone has any information or suggestions please let me know.

Michael: I have had lots of conversations with adults who have social learning disabilities and their needs are so different it is difficult to figure out what is needed. For instance, people on the autism spectrum, the needs are immense.

Kesha: Maybe one of the best ways to go to the places where people are. Maybe we can talk to VCIL about where we could go that would be appropriate.

Jen: Side note, Miriam has been working with people who are spearheading the accessible playground group and they got a grant of about \$2500.

Ralph: And we can also, I am sure, get someone to go to your meetings if you're interested.

Jen: We will start visiting NPAs in august.

Santina: We may be able to have information tables available during the July 26th event if anyone is interested.

Ad Hoc Working Group Updates:

Ralph: We were talking about this because the ad hoc working groups have not quite gelled yet. We got the e-mail about a woman having problems with her scooter because of road quality. I guess she had to use the street because of problems with the sidewalk and then someone stole her flag.

Ned: The updates had already been made so we are not really clear about what area we are talking about and we can't do much without specifics and I haven't yet gotten feedback.

Ralph: It sounds like this woman moved out and then moved back and so she may have been talking about a problem that existed previously. We followed up with the street but it seems like the street is fine.

Ned: Brad and Patrick and I were in communication about specific issues but there has not been discussion of specific activities.

Kesha: I think maybe the next time we can have a lead person give updates about what has been happening.

Santina: Can people from the community be a part of the group?

Claire: I will pass out the roster for people to update and then I can send it out so we have everyone's information. Here are the groups so far:

School group: Shelley, Michael, Miriam, Mark

Infrastructure: Ardelle, Bradley, Elaine, Ned, Patrick, Jen

Programmatic Inclusion: Kesha, Shelly, Michael, Ron, Elaine

Community Awareness: Ralph, Bob, Bradley

Kesha: A programmatic update is that we are compiling a checklist for accessibility for events and meeting. I think it would be great if the whole committee can share input. So people could give their own stories and information.

Claire: I have created a google doc and I would love to add qualitative experiences into the checklist because something that may satisfy compliance requirements may not actually be accessible. I can add you as an editor to the google doc or I would be happy to sit with anyone and interview them about their experiences so that I can add information.

Elaine: I spoke with First Night and I think we need to have conversation with them about accessibility. I think if an event is in a church it is often accessible as far as entering a place but then there are other problems with accessibility once inside.

Ralph: One of the things I talked to the Director of First Night about is looking at venues that maybe there can be a super venue that is actually accessible, or maybe find switch up the acts so that it works for different people. He is also going to be training volunteers.

Kesha: I think this is a good opportunity to use First Night as a pilot for making things accessible to many different disabilities.

Ralph: I guess that is all for the ad hoc working groups. Something I wanted to talk about is that I want to go to all NPAs with the cultural awareness group so please book me. I would also like to start going to boards and committees to talk about our committee.

Jen Francis: I would love to come with you, I'd be happy to be your back-up.

Ralph: I don't know if there are subcommittees within the council that we could talk to as well.

Jen Francis: Well for PAC or the Parks Commission I can get you on the agenda.

Ralph: people have heard me mention the Accessible Adventures website

Ron: it is in a good place. We need to get passed the finger pointing and just normalize the conversations about it. We have entered all of our websites into the Accessible Adventures website. It's like Yelp but it gives business owners the opportunity to see what is said. What I am excited about is getting people to start thinking about it in a more positive way.

Next Steps:

Kesha: We have a regular meeting date. It is the 3rd Tuesday of the month. August 20th, September 17, October 15th, November 19th, and December probably won't happen. It is 4-6 and in this room. People asked if we could hold this room for longer to have leeway with the timing but the city is reluctant to do that. We can alter for specific days if we need to.

Ralph: but maybe we need to poll members. About their availability

Michael: I have been talking with representatives from the Alzheimer's Association and I was wondering if it may be a good idea to invite someone to come and talk to us about their accessibility needs.

Santina: Has there been any talk about bringing money to the committee?

Ralph: I think we need to figure out what it is that we need. I will be in touch with Kesha and Jen about NPAs and various committees.

Jen: one question. I know we talked about the Strategic Plan outlines action steps but I was wondering if we were going to discuss what specifically the ad hoc committees will be tackling.

Kesha: I think we need to really push for these things to be defined in August because I think this is a hard time because people are in and out.

Meeting Adjourned.