



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
***HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT***

**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

**COMMISSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

**13 Oct 2020**

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

**Present:** Nancy Salamoun, Staff Liaison, Mgr. of Equity Diversity and Inclusion  
Bonnie Denis, Chair  
Colin Killick, Commissioner  
Brian Postlewaite, Secretary, Assist. Director of Engineering

**Absent:** None

**Guests:** Lian Guertin, Resident  
Katie Milton, Resident  
Adam Polinski, OSPCD Mobility Division  
Tim Snyder, Somerville Incident Command

Note: Due to COVID-19 Shutdown, all attendees were remote via Zoom Meeting.

**General Business**

- Meeting commenced on 13 October at 6:35pm.

## Guest Presentation

- Tim Snyder, representing the City's COVID-19 Policy Team
  - The Administration is concerned about disproportionate impact with some communities, such as People with Disabilities, due to rapid policy making. The administration would like to have a more open communication with the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities.
  - What is the Commission's perspective on mask wearing?
    - People with disabilities are generally in favor of mask wearing.
    - It is unreasonable for individuals to be maskless at this time.
  - What would be considered "reasonable accommodations" for people who, for health or disability, cannot wear masks?
    - Mask orders should not be enforced by police officers.
    - Businesses selling goods could deliver their goods outside for those unable to wear masks indoors.
    - For services that require indoor operations, they could operate after hours, provide face shields to the customer, or wear transparent mask (for deaf that read lips).
  - A few policy options the Administration is considering:
    - No exemptions for outdoor mask usage.
    - Fines for businesses that do not expel customers not wearing a mask.
    - Increased mask usage and enforcement at restaurants.
  - Though the Commission favors stronger mask policies, the Commission suspects that current restaurants may be a larger cause of COVID-19 spread than any current weakness in mask wearing.
  - Commission asked how is proper mask wearing communicated and enforced.
    - The best is to build credibility with communication and education. In the long-term this is more effective than punitive enforcement.
  - Commission asked why City COVID-19 testing takes 2-3 weeks while local drugstore testing takes 2-3 days but is more expensive. This is not acceptable for Persons with Disabilities, and also the more susceptible and poorer populations.
    - The Department of Health and Human Services has been reducing the testing time, though over the summer reagents

were difficult to acquire and lead to longer wait times. Current wait times are generally shorter for all testing providers.

- Adam Polinski, Transportation Analyst with the OSPCD Mobility Division
  - Western Washington St (Beacon St to Webster Ave) will be the subject of a COVID-19 response pilot that will include:
    - Signal priority for busses,
    - Bus lanes at intersections, and
    - Bike lanes.
  - The project will remove parking, but has studied the parking over the past few years and will maintain an acceptable vacancy rate.
  - The Commission has the following concerns:
    - Removing parking on Washington St requires Persons with Disabilities to use side streets, which are generally less accessible:
      - Narrower sidewalks,
      - More trees,
      - More driveway curbcuts,
      - Less accessible curb ramps.
    - Could more designated accessible spaces be created on Washington St and around Lincoln Park?
    - This project will reduce pick-up/drop-off and loading areas (designated or not), which Persons with Disabilities and the elderly disproportionately rely upon.
  - The Administration is planning to restart the Parking Committee and city-wide parking study after a COVID-19 delay. This Committee is intended to help resolve these issues.

### **Chair's Report**

- Bonnie & Nancy met with George Proakis – OSPCD Director, Tom Galligani – Economic Development Director, and Nick Antanavica – ISD Director about outdoor restaurant seating.
  - Bonnie, we cannot wait till spring to remedy inaccessible restaurants. The City needs a more proactive process for ensuring accessibility and not a reactive process that relies on citizen complaints.
  - Nick, there are more COVID-19 complaints than ISD has inspectors, thus they are prioritizing life safety issues. ISD is trying to hire more

inspectors, with the intent of having more inspectors capable of inspecting accessibility compliance.

- George, will attend the November meeting to provide an update on progress with restaurant accessibility compliance.

### **Director's Report**

- None.

### **Old Business**

- The Mayor's Office is reviewing the proposed ADA 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Proclamation.

### **New Business**

- Lian, is there a way to restrict the Salvation Army bell ringing?
- Nancy, the Commission needs to solicit for new members.
- Ithzel will be returning in the next few months to discuss accessible inclusionary housing.
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**Motion to Adjourn Meeting at 8:00pm; approved unanimously.**