

City of Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities
10/12/2021 6:30 PM

CONFIDENTIAL ROUGHLY EDITED REALTIME FILE
Compliments of HRICART.com

This file was created in real time by a Certified Realtime Captioner for the purpose of communication access. It is not a certified legal transcript and may not be entirely verbatim. It is intended for use by the consumer only as notes of the proceedings. A consumer should check with the presenter for any clarification of the presentation.

>>Bonnie Denis: Good evening, everyone. It looks like we're waiting for Colin. And Brian will not be on video this evening and Katie will not be joining us. Let's give it two more minutes to see if Colin joins us. And also Holly.

>>Holly will not be attending --

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I said no, I think we're waiting for Holly. The only person that said they would not be attending is Katie.

>>This is Denise, I want to note that we have Nancy with us this evening and she will be doing the live transcription.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie, thank you.

[Pause]

>>Bonnie Denis: Great. So welcome, everyone. Okay. Closed captioning has been set up so we are good on that front. Great. So I think if -- I'm sorry to put you on the spot, but Councillor Clingan if you are here to discuss the accessible parking funds I'd like you to go first. Or I see in the chat you said you're here to listen. Awesome. Well, thank you for joining us.

>>Thank you for recognizing me, Chairwoman. I'm on the finance committee to listen in. If anything comes up that you want to call on me for, feel free. Thank you.

>>Bonnie Denis: Great. So I think I'm going to go slightly out of order and have Director Capers give her report first.

>>Denise Capers: I'm sorry. Can you start with Brian or the next item?

>>Bonnie Denis: Sure.

>>Denise Capers: Thank you.

>>Bonnie Denis: Sure. Brian, do you want to --

>>This is Brian. I'm happy to go first. Let me -- would it

be easier if I put the sketch up on the screen or not?

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. If you're able to do that, that would be great. I'm not sure if everybody's had a chance to look at it.

>>Brian: I think I can do this. Oh, Denise, you'll have to give me the rights to share screen.

>>Denise Capers: This is Denise. I just did. Double-check.

>>Brian: Oh, yes, there it is. I think you can see my Adobe screen, is that correct?

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. That's correct.

>>Brian: Thank you, Bonnie. So, again, for those who don't know me, I'm Brian Postlewaite, I'm the secretary for the Disability Commission, a member and also the director of the engineering division for the city of Somerville.

So from the perspective of the streets projects that the engineering division constructs annually, one of the elements that we have been trying to incorporate into projects for the past couple of years is accessible parking in the public way. So though we may have what's known as handicapped parking spaces, they are -- they are not designed any differently typically and they're just signed as handicapped spaces for those with handicapped placards and are available to those members of the community.

But one element that we are trying to incorporate is to make -- to make some, if not the majority of these handicapped parking spaces, on new construction projects --

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Can I just pause for one second, Brian? I think we are all in agreement that we'd like to use the term "accessible parking." "Handicapped" is a very outdated term. Thank you.

>>Brian: I'm fine. I was referring to that in the historic sense, but yes.

>>Bonnie Denis: Thank you.

>>Brian: So what we can -- what I'm trying to do is find a good detail, construction detail our contractors can use to construct accessible parking spaces in the public right-of-way. And our engineer has come up with, our consulting engineer for this year's streets contract has proposed this particular detail.

What you see in red are my additional comments that I -- that I've added that we've brought to our consulting engineer's direction to revise where we can. So what the concept is, is to create -- is to essentially -- this one is for narrower sidewalks and the thought is that we would lower the sidewalk to roadway grade, essentially, so that there's a flush condition between the accessible parking space and the sidewalk.

The -- the width of the sidewalk would be whatever the width

of the sidewalk is. And generally, it is in excess of five feet. And in these locations we would minimize to the extent practicable any sort of furniture in this zone or locate the parking space outside of any existing furniture. And we've -- we're moving towards a 25- foot length with the logic being -- though that's longer than the required accessible parking space, the logic is is that an accessible vehicle is never in excess of 20- feet long and, thus, there would -- if the vehicle was parked either up to one of the two ends of the ramp, there would be sufficient room around the other end of the vehicle to access the ramp without their own vehicle being in the way. And then it's -- and then the operator has the flexibility of where to park in that space.

In addition, the -- shoot -- sorry, lost my train of thought. Oh, in addition, most parking spaces are on the right side of the road and would be primarily available -- or most convenient to passengers, though we do believe this would be a substantive improvement for the drivers or operators of vehicles that have disability -- that have disabilities.

So this is the condition that we typically see in the city where we have a rather narrow sidewalk. In areas where we have a wider sidewalk, we would look to shift the curb inward and reduce the sidewalk width to a minimum accessible distance dimension and that would allow us to have the access aisle in the paved roadway, and then that would afford the operator of the vehicle to either park in the middle of the parking space, or, alternatively, they could parallel closer to the curb line. Again, we have the 25- foot width plus space on either side for the curb to transition, so I believe that parking all the way up to the curb would be a possibility, thus, affording the operator of the vehicle to have a more safe space to exit the vehicle outside of the travel lane.

One thing to facilitate that, I'm requesting the engineer shift the accessible curb ramp to one end or the other of the parking space so, again, there would be the ability to go around the front or rear of the vehicle to enter the sidewalk. If it remained in the center, the operator of the vehicle -- or the vehicle could potentially be in the way of accessing the ramp.

So those are -- that's what we're looking to propose, and I'm bringing it to the -- we're bringing it to the Commission for comment and feedback.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Brian. Henry, I note your hand. I've just got a couple of comments and then I'll call you next.

Brian, that was very helpful. I had seen this, but having the actual description kind of clarifies it for me. So a couple of things. I'm wondering if these are going to all be put in places where there is nobody parked behind the spaces, if that's the case,

that's great. If it's not the case, I would recommend, if we can, increasing these to 28 feet, because many advance are 20- feet long and folks who use rear access ramps, it is often a full eight feet to deploy the ramp, so that would give them more access than currently.

And I'm curious, two things. One, what you're saying is the minimum width of the sidewalk, because I know there's some discrepancy on what people think that is and if we're talking about narrowing sidewalks, I want to make sure that's still wide enough. And then just lastly, is there a reason we can't in this second design keep the lowered curb the full length as well?

>>Brian: So I'll take the last one first. The lowered curb, we could extend the lower curb the full length of it. What I would -- in that case since there is an access aisle, we would prefer if we have the width to do it, we would prefer to have that, it slope up so that the back of the sidewalk remains as close to sidewalk elevation as possible, so people who are walking, wheeling or rolling by don't have to drop down to level and back up, at least to the extent practicable. But it really depends on the width of the sidewalk.

And so in this case, this solution doesn't work for sidewalks less than 12- feet wide, so that would leave roughly, if my math works, a 7- foot sidewalk here because you need a 5- foot access aisle. And 7- foot sidewalk is the, I would say the typical sidewalk width in the city of Somerville. We do definitely have narrower ones. So that would leave a -- an accessible sidewalk, even though we've narrowed it. If it's less than 12- feet wide, we would be in this situation. And in this situation, the entire sidewalk has to be lowered because the access aisle becomes part of the sidewalk. And so this area can't be sloped, which is why I've crossed this out and slope varies is not acceptable. It has to be a cross slope of one- and- a- half percent.

And then I think your first comment was the 28 feet, and we will look into that. I think that's probably reasonable. What we may do is we may incorporate that into design guidance as opposed to having the parking space so that we can utilize curb roundings or other features where people couldn't otherwise park.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I think that's great. Because I think that also takes into account that often people park really close, so if it can be done with design guidance where there's literally nowhere else to park but there's that extra bit of space, I think that would incorporate it really well.

>>Brian: Yeah. This is Brian. I just want to be clear that at parking spaces exceeding 25 feet, at the 28- foot, it is possible to fit two cars in the parking space, and if both cars had accessible placards, I'm not really sure how traffic -- or how

the parking enforcement officers would treat that. And if that becomes an issue, we may want to provide a recommendation to the parking department.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. That's already a condition that's happening, so --

>>Brian: Two cars with accessible placards parking in a single accessible parking space?

>>Bonnie Denis: Yes.

>>Brian: Is that a positive or a negative condition? Because I could see it going both ways.

>>Bonnie Denis: Yes. This is Bonnie. I mean, I think it depends a lot. If you need rear access, that's a negative. If you don't, then it can be a positive. The place I've seen it happen most often, and granted, I haven't been over there in years so they may have changed it, but there is a row of spaces along a side street off of, oh, I'm going to forget the name of the street, but it's where Manray used to be, it's a side street going towards Mass Ave where you would have the middle east on the right when you get to the corner with Mass Ave and there's a row of accessible spaces that people double up.

>>This is Brian. In Central square, Cambridge.

>>Bonnie Denis: Yes. This is Bonnie. I think your point is valid, but I also would love to see if there's any way to do it because I think ramp access is huge and difficult to find outside of lots.

>>Agreed.

>>Bonnie Denis: All right. Henry.

>>Henry: Yeah. This is Henry. Brian, could we go back and look at the first diagram for a minute, please?

>>Brian: Okay. This is Brian. This was the first one, but I presume you're referring to this one?

>>Henry: Yeah. Okay. So these are both 25- foot parking spaces and is that the standard length?

>>Brian: I'm sorry. Say that again?

>>Henry: Are these 25- foot in length on both diagrams?

>>Brian: Correct, they are.

>>Henry: Okay. Yeah, I would just second the comment that, you know, if people are using a van for transport, a standard short sprinter van is 20- feet, so, you know, I would encourage what was mentioned earlier about making some provision for people to load and unload.

And as for people doubling up, kind of seems like splitting hairs, but I guess, you know, Somerville parking being what it is, if people can do it, they will do it. So someone will have to think about that. I don't particularly have strong feelings other than it seems like if two people are jammed in there, it could be an

access issue.

That's it.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Henry. Holly, and then after Holly, Lian.

>>Holly: Thanks, Bonnie. This is Holly. My issues with parking with my daughter's van was that her van was a rear access van and parking, accessible parking never takes into account unloading from behind. There's no space to. And then you have to somehow, once you get the person out, wiggle back to find that access road, access area and then onto the ramp piece, like where -- I can't point, but where this image is. So having that full length is good, but if you cannot on the back sort of turn and then get back in, it's difficult.

So what I would always have to do was sort of block the street as much as I could, and one of us would, like, literally hold traffic and the other one would try to get the person out, and then move the car, get them to the side, and you can imagine what it's like in weather. So I don't know, I'm literally looking online at the dimensions of the average advance and how far they extend out.

The other thing that -- so this is just feedback. I think these designs are a huge improvement over things that I have seen in the past. Could you just go back to the other one for a second? So in this one -- okay. So that one it's all across.

What are the bollards?

>>So -- this is Brian. They are here at the back sidewalk because we don't have a curb or any other sort of feature, and if we need to protect and keep people from driving into this area, we would put up bollards. And the piece that I'm particularly concerned about is this looks very much like a driveway apron and I wouldn't want people coming up and driving into somebody's yard or starting to use it as a driveway. So if there's any reason to protect or keep vehicles from driving up over the sidewalk, we would put the bollards at the back of sidewalks so as not to hinder access.

>>Holly: Okay. Could you just flip to that picture real quick again. So when this has that three or 4- foot- wide, right, at the end where the ramp goes up, not every van lands in that spot, so sometimes, you know, you're the driver, you brought the van down, it goes into -- you know, it's a side entry. You may be so off from that, so that would be my only concern about a piece of strip versus a full or wider, you know, kind of like what Bonnie mentioned, going all the way across, if possible.

>>Brian: You mean all the way across from here to here?

>>Holly: No. From the handicapped placards straight up there is an arrow, so go straight up.

>>No, at 12:00, 12:00 and below. Right there. Stop. Back up. It's really hard to get your ramp to go out and hit --

>>Brian: Okay.

>>Holly: That piece.

>>Brian: And this is Brian. And that's what Bonnie was suggesting to take this ramp and make it the full width of the parking space.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Also, I think the access aisle being five feet won't capture the full length needed for all vans, but I think it would provide enough to get it landing on the sidewalk itself instead of on that ramp.

>>Brian: Uh huh.

>>Bonnie Denis: But, yeah, I would love to see it full length. Holly, was there anything else?

>>Holly: I think it's a great redesign. What I've seen lately is when there isn't an accessible parking spot, there's either something or multiple things blocking the sidewalk so you can't put down a ramp. So thank you for sharing this.

>>Bonnie Denis: Lian.

>>So I just have a question as far as how to make sure that there is room for rear access ramps without running into double parking issues. So first, a question with existing parking spots sort of at the end, is there already just like whatever standard parking spots, are there issues with people double parking farther past the back of one than you're supposed to or is that people generally understand that?

>>Brian: Yeah. I couldn't answer how parking enforcement officers -- I'd say anything under the sun happens.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I can speak to that. Yes, people park behind these spaces all the time. And the one in David Square is -- it has been alter natured with where the bus stop is and that has caused a lot of confusion and people pulling into both spaces and -- yeah.

>>Lian: I'm not talking about existing accessible spaces. I'm just talking about standard on- street parking, if there's a spot at the end of the road that there's not a spot behind it and it's, you know, marked off as this is not a parking spot, do people try to double park there anyway? Or if we put these spots at the end, could we get that extra space without it turning into another parking spot?

>>Brian: I would say you couldn't rely on it, Lian.

>>Okay. So I guess the follow- up to that is from a, both a using the spot for using a rear access ramp and being a pedestrian trying to cross the street, would it work to put these spaces at the end such that if you were using a rear access ramp you could get a little bit of extra space temporarily by going into the

cross-off space but it would be clearly this is not a parking spot that hopefully, and probably be too often -- to say nobody will park in a crosswalk, but hopefully that would reduce some of the double parking. But like would it cause too much of a conflict to have people using the crossed off space to get the ramp out?

>>Brian: This is Brian. So that is -- that is a design issue that kind of goes beyond what a standard detail could provide because it's a locational issue. And one of the items that we had brought to the Commission a few months ago was highlighting our goal for handicapped parking spaces -- sorry -- accessible parking spaces and especially in business districts, to be located as close to -- or at least one of the metrics was locating it as close to a cross-walk as possible and that would be an additional benefit of doing so.

But the primary reason would be to maximize the locations that somebody could get to easily by being at an intersection as opposed to being further away from the intersection, having to go all the way to the intersection only to go all the way -- to cross -- to only go all the way back to perceivably just go across the street. So I think that's a good additional benefit of that preferred design.

>>Lian: Uh- huh. Yeah. How wide are cross-walks normally?

>>Brian: Our minimum preferred width is 10 feet. They can be wider in busier areas.

>>Lian: Okay. So that would -- I think if I'm remembering numbers right, that would probably be enough for someone to have a little bit -- a couple extra feet to deploy a ramp without completely walking the cross-walk?

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Yeah. And I would agree with --

>>Lian: Yeah. So I think if -- if there's concern about you can't make the parking spaces longer because then there might be double parking, then I think trying to prioritize putting the first spot on the street so that they butt up against the cross-walk would probably be the next best.

>>Brian: For the record, I'm not overly worried about double parking. If two people with handicapped placards are both driving small vehicles and they fit, then you fit two -- you've served two disabled people with one parking space and that, you know, there is some benefit to that.

>>Lian: And I guess this is where my knowledge isn't comprehensive enough. Are there, like, rear access wheelchair lifts that wouldn't be obvious from the outside, such that --

>>Brian: I think that would be -- this is Brian. I think that would only be a problem if there was a rear access vehicle that was 15- feet or less, because -- and --

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. There is one, it's not very common, but there is a conversion of a Sion that is rear access that is smaller.

>>Brian: That may be the only case where I could see that would be a problem. I think we do have to be careful of -- we can't protect for every potential edge case.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Yes.

>>I was going to say, I don't know how common it would be that it would be unobvious that you shouldn't park behind something. But if it's not actually common, then that's probably not a huge issue to worry about. I think that's all I have to say.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Lian. In the chat Jesse asked Brian if you could speak to locations that these are being proposed at.

>>Brian: So this is Brian. We do not -- so in this particular contract that this detail would be used for, I think we probably don't have many, maybe one on the Pearl Street reconstruction.

Mostly I wanted to -- we had a consulting engineer, so we wanted to make sure that they were developing this detail for us for the future, since most of the work on the Pearl and 6th project are small areas being improved, there's not a lot of parking improvements in any of them.

But Pearl Street, especially around Somerville east school might end up with one. If we can get this detail finished in time we may use this on Holland Street next year, since the detail is similar but not exactly the same as the detail we are already using. And I'm trying to remember offhand where the accessible parking space is on Holland Street. I do not know. I don't remember it offhand. The primary accessible parking space I know in the current contract is across the street from the library.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you. If there are no other questions, I'd like to move us on through the agenda so we can hit more things. Great. Thank you, Brian.

Director Capers, are you ready to give us your updates?

>>Denise Capers: Yes. Thank you. This is Denise. So we are moving forward with the ADA coordinator interviews. Currently, we have been able to interview two candidates and we have one, two, three, four, five more to go, all of which have been already scheduled for this week and next week. So we are moving along with it.

If out of those five candidates we are unable to find the right fit or something happens, because sometimes candidates drop out, we are actively still looking at applications that are coming in. The position is still posted, so feel free to continue to share it. And we will continue to update everyone on where we are with

that.

The orientation is on a bit of a hold because one of the persons that would help out with the workshop is on parental leave, so I will also keep you guys posted on what potential -- what that would look like -- when that looks like it will happen.

What else did I have here? I just received the names for recommendations of new commission members, and so I will be presenting that to the mayor and I will let you know. I believe the next meeting for confirmation of appointment is in November.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, sorry that took a bit to get to you.

>>Denise Capers: No worries.

>>Bonnie Denis: It's all on me. We had one other request for if there's an update on the document library and what we might do in that regard.

>>Denise Capers: I'm sorry, can you say that again, Bonnie?

>>Bonnie Denis: Yeah. We had a request to find out what's going on with the document library and if we have any further thoughts on how to accomplish having a comprehensive library of our documents and meeting materials.

>>Denise Capers: Yes. Apologies. My brain has a lot. But I have looked into that. So part of the work that I've been doing to that end is, obviously, speaking with the clerk and starting to arrange a meeting to talk about how we can start to develop that, which is -- our initial conversation, she said absolutely, that's something that we can start to figure out.

I've also spoken to our webmaster, so he's on alert that we will be having that conversation about how we can arrange that within the website. The other thing that I've done is I've reached out to other cities to see what kind of document -- what kind of library they have in place so that we can take a look at best practices.

So I've been doing what we would call research to see what are all of our options, is this something that we would have to like purchase an application for for the city, for the department, or is this something that we can develop with our webmaster because he's a very intelligent, great person, and I'm sure that he could come up with something. Even if we decide to do something in the interim and then when the ADA coordinator comes on they decide it's better to purchase something, then obviously we will keep that option open.

But in the meantime, I'm doing my research to make sure that when I do meet with the webmaster and the clerk that I have as much information as far as best practices and regionally what's being done around that that's possible for us. And we can figure out what are some options to present to the Commission.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you so much. Great. So my own report. A couple of things. There was a neighborhood meeting for Boynton Yards recently and I brought up the issue that most of the parking is being done in underground parking garages, which presence, you know, an access issue in terms of if you need to travel further distances and it also presents an issue in terms of cost because, as we all know, people with accessible placards do not pay a parking fee and parking fees can be prohibitively expensive for people with disabilities who often are unemployed.

So the developers are going to be discussing with the city councillors and I need to follow up as well, creating an area prior to the gate system for accessible spaces and also Councillor Scott is proposing an amendment to city zoning to require free accessible parking in all of these new transformation areas because there are master plans that limit the amount of parking for all of the development in the area. So places like Assembly Square, Boynton Yards, brick bottom area, Gillman Square, it's important to think about these holistically as we're designing every neighborhood to ensure they're added in. So I will follow up with Councillor Scott on that as well.

I see, Jesse, you had a hand raised.

>>Thank you. I went to Assembly for lunch today and parked in the parking garage that has the same gate mechanism, and it's been there for many years now. How do we deal with that existing infrastructure with the same issue?

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Well, we have a lot more development coming up at Assembly and that is one of the things I was going to mention is there is a community meeting tomorrow evening regarding the proposed development. I think changing what's there is going to be incredibly difficult, though I do think we should be looking at the streetscapes themselves and trying to add in more accessible spaces. And those gates do exist, but they, as far as I know, I haven't -- I'm not sure how many garages there are in Assembly, but the couple I have been to offer the first three hours for free, which is not perfect, but does give a decent amount of access, especially if you're not residing in that neighborhood or visiting somebody who resides there and like staying overnight. I think it provides a decent amount for most people. So it's a good starting point and I think we need to look at it while creating the new spaces.

Holly.

>>I was also at Assembly last weekend and in many cases accessible places parking has been taken away either for another purpose, let's just say. But there is a hotel that's on the farthest newest sort of end and they have these big, giant planters that they've put out and they have rocks in them right now.

They're about three or four feet high that have very small, few inches in between, they block the whole sidewalk. They also have this big, like, sign that says, you know, valet and it's all blocking the HP spot. The paint is really worn out but then this business, you know, is without -- without meaning to, but they're blocking the access to that and then those pieces on the side really make it impossible for anyone to get around.

So there are some issues with some of the parking that's there now and I've only been in one gram at Assembly -- no, wait, two, but one of them only had two spots where they're on the street level. The parking is at street level and you do find a space, you may have issues with access and maybe an elevator out, which happens, but you can't really take the stairs and you can't walk through.

So if we're looking at design we might encourage more first floor maybe as more HP spots than just on different levels.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Holly. All great points. I would add in that I think there needs to be better signage in the garages for what the accessible route out of them is. I did find that a challenge like figuring out where the doors were and not needing to walk extra blocks around because I was visiting that new end of the development, but the public parking garage that I could find was like two streets over and the only door that I could find that had an accessible entrance that was obvious required me to walk like three blocks to get over to the building that I needed to be at because there was no accessible street parking near it. There was that one space by the hotel, but it was blocked.

So, yeah, I think Assembly needs looking at. There is, as I said, a community meeting happening tomorrow night. The other thing I want to advocate strongly for, I found it disappointing is not a strong enough word, but it's the polite one, that despite years of clear advocacy from the disability community, there are brick sidewalks that are brand- new in Assembly Square. I don't know why anybody thought that was a good idea and I'm encourage other folks to show up with me and advocate strongly for not continuing that practice when building the other chunks of Assembly.

So the other thing that I wanted to report on, there is an ad hoc group of individual members of a few local commissions that have met a couple of times and, you know, talked about what each of our commissions is working on individually and trying to come up with ideas of things that we could potentially do in our individual commissions to further things on a larger level.

And one of them is ADA compliance on sidewalks and streetscapes and how we often are met with there's not a lot of

funding or it's difficult to do things without being part of a larger project. And an idea, and I'm curious to see what Brian has to say about this, because I did some research, but I'm not sure if I found everything, Chapter 90 are state funds that are given to municipalities for doing this work and I believe, Brian, correct me if I'm wrong, that there are not currently any designations for dedicating portions of those funds to ADA compliance.

>>Brian: So this is Brian. So I think it's probably worth a quick explanation of how the city uses Chapter 90 funds. So Chapter 90 funds are required to be used for the -- I don't know the exact wording but it's basically the improvement, maintenance and upgrading of public streets, so that ranges anywhere from reconstructing sidewalks.

And so the way that the city uses it is we create a -- as frankly as large of a construction project as we can and we pull in multiple funds from many places, including both Chapter 90, as well as city appropriations are the two largest groups of funds and we create the biggest project we can so we can get the most advantageous rate with contractors. And I would say approximately of those funds that we pulled together only about a third of them are Chapter 90 funds, but the costs that we put into projects, which are probably over 60% go into sidewalks and the primary effort going into sidewalks is bringing noncompliance sidewalks and cross-walks into ADA compliance.

So depending on how you want to split -- how you want to mentally split those dollars, we more than spend all of Chapter 90 on some sort of accessible improvements in the city.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you for that explanation. That's helpful. I think the concern is that these things are not getting addressed outside of larger projects and that means that there are continued host of issues and a continued sort of bumping down the priority line of things that are in dire need of repair.

Like I'm going to use Davis Square as an example because I myself got flung out of my wheelchair today on to the bricks because of the broken sidewalks in Davis and I wasn't even in a particularly bad spot. And now my knee is split open, the bottom of my leg is bruised and swollen, I'm in a lot of pain. I can't wear my prosthesis. And this is something in the state since I moved to the city 18 years ago and I keep hearing that there are other things that have been prioritized and we can't make any changes because we still have to argue over whether or not bricks are appropriate. So I personally am less where the funds come from and more concerned about are there ways we can have separate funds that make it so that we don't have to wait for a larger project to get these things

accomplished.

I'm sure you'll have rebuttal, but I saw Lian's hand go up.

>>I have a question about what you mean by larger project? Here.

(Technical difficulty)

>>Does it need to be we have identified these, you know, hundred curb cuts that need to be replaced ahead of time and identify each specific one at the beginning of the project or can it be we have contracted with this company to do this repair this many times and as things get reported, they can be added to that project.

>>Brian: So I think I can answer both of those questions, comments, and Bonnie, I'm really sad to hear that you had a crash, if pedestrians can have crashes, that's not -- that's not good and that's not appropriate.

>>Bonnie Denis: And it's not the first one that's happened this year. It happens frequently and I'm sure I'm not the only one. I appreciate that, but I'd appreciate more change.

>>Brian: Yes. So as far as doing construction projects -- making smaller projects will take -- we used to do small projects, DPW did small projects and one of the problems with that is that they didn't have the skills and expertise to construct sidewalks compliantly. So while DPW is figuring out how to train their staff to be able to construct sidewalks compliantly, which is ongoing, we have pulled those sidewalk repair jobs into -- and yes, Councillor Clingon, this is where I bring that in, into our annual street contract which is a book job, which is a term that basically says we buy doing X amount of repairs in sidewalk work throughout the city. And we have a certain amount of flexibility of where those repairs are located.

For the ease and expediency of a contract, we select those locations prior to a contract being let. So this next contract going out we're calling Pearl and 6th, it's the fiscal year '22 contract and that will not only include a large element, which is Pearl Street, it will include the six smaller intersections throughout the city that we discussed earlier this summer and it will also include about a dozen other accessibility, sidewalk and accessible curb ramp repairs throughout the city.

That is the most efficient mechanism that we have for improving sidewalk compliance issues. And if there are elements that come up during the year that we believe are more important than elements that are in the contract, if we have the quantities of sidewalk that we can trade and the work hasn't been scheduled yet, we can swap those around, but we are limited, of course, to the budget, so we can't spend more than the money that we have. But we do have some flexibility with where we execute the work.

Lian, now I forgot your question.

>>This is Lian. Is it possible to have that sort of, whatever you call it, like book job or I don't know how that works, but is it possible to have that where instead of being the here is the job for Pearl Street and the surrounding area to have here's the job for this sort of sidewalk repair specifically, but all over the city so that it is a job that is specifically focused on just doing those repairs wherever they need to be done rather than is this an area that has other stuff that can happen, too?

>>Brian: Yeah. So -- this is Brian. So, that is -- it is feasible to split up into multiple smaller projects, like one that just did roadway reconstruction, one that just did intersection reconstruction, one that just did sidewalk and accessible curb ramp repair. It doesn't change the total amount of money we have available for each of those elements.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I think that would be our goal with this is to have a specific percentage of these funds at the state level dedicated solely to ADA compliance. And I hear you that there are other funds you draw from as well, but if we had those funds dedicated solely to that, perhaps it would be possible to have the funds to do a book job totally based on this.

>>Can I clarify the question a little bit?

>>Brian: When we break up projects like that, everything costs more so we get to do less total. So that's why we bring everything together and that's the fact of the cost of bringing out concrete trucks and asphalt trucks and that sort of expertise. We wouldn't be able to -- we would really be challenged to bring contractors into the city to do the work for really small jobs.

>>This is Lian, can I clarify my question slightly, by asking another question? Is the thing that makes it cheaper to do a larger job that it is all in one place or that you can get a better contract if you are, you know, contracting with a company to do more?

>>Brian: It is a little of both. I would say the larger benefit is having a larger contract dollar amount.

>>Lian: Okay. So can you have a larger contract for a lot of small jobs that are all one contract so it's a large contract?

>>Brian: We don't have -- so -- so I think what you're getting at is could we -- so, yes, if we had a three to \$4 million budget for just doing ADA improvements around the city, that would be a reasonable contract alone to have. We don't have that quantity of money on an annual basis to just do ADA improvements.

Now, the majority of the work that we do are ADA improvements, but we don't have a pot to just do that work. If we did, that would be perfectly reasonable to do.

>>Bonnie Denis: Okay. This is Bonnie. Thank you. Colin.

>>Yeah, thank you. I had a couple of questions on the subject

of having a finding dedicated money for some of this work. So Mass Office on Disability has its municipal ADA improvement grant program and, you know, these are grants from the state for the municipalities to make access improvements and I want to know if Somerville applied this cycle, which is closed on the 8th, or if not, like could the city commit to this time next year, right, applying for a grant from that program specifically to expand the volume of accessibility improvements in public rights of way?

I'd also wonder if we were eligible for the community development block grant program and if accessibility improvements might be at least a part of a proposal under that program? I bring up both of these because I remember when we did the last transition plan, it being estimated the city had more than \$20 million backlog to come up to full ADA compliance. And obviously, a lot of work has been done over the last, whatever it's been, six or seven years, but it doesn't seem like that full 20 million has been cleared. It would be great, you know, there seems to be a quality of work there still to do and those seem -- both of those seem like potential sources of revenue to at least address some of it.

>>Bonnie Denis: Thank you, Colin. Director Capers.

>>Denise Capers: This is Denise. In response to Colin's comment in regards to the grant, the city is looking into that grant and we actually started to look into applying for it this year, but we've applied for it in previous years and have been denied. So moving forward what we're trying to do is we're trying to really have a more in- depth look at what would be our case in our next grant application. And we have reached out to our chair and included her in beginning to start this process because we're -- for the amount of work that we had to put into writing up the grant to make sure that we are more successful at being considered than in previous years, it's too late.

So what we're doing is we're going to start meeting now in order to include the Commission in that planning and what exactly we would be requesting the money for for next year. So we're on it.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you. Henry.

>>Henry: Yeah. It would be helpful to have some metrics or even a rough sense of do we know how many outstanding ADA compliance issues there are? Do we know how often new ones crop up? Do we know how many that we're solving per year? Will we ever -- are we making progress or are we falling back? How long will it take us at the current rate of funding to address the known and documented issues?

Can we just get a sense about that? Because that seems like that would be a way to divide the issue into, yes, for purposes of funding we have this kind of everything in this area, including

ADA compliance falls together, but the metric I want to see is are we spending enough to ever solve the problem. Thank you.

Oh, and this was Henry. Did I say that?

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. You did. Thank you. Those are excellent questions. I don't have answers for you.

>>Brian: I can -- it's not an answer in so much as that is something that we have been working to develop. And though I don't think I can get you something by next month, that is something that I am working on to figure out how we can quantify how many sidewalks we have. And I would say roughly compliant because our -- it's difficult to actually measure every single panel of sidewalk, so we have to do some estimations in our analyses, but we do -- we are slowly coming up to a semi- decent metric.

Right now, last year we assessed one- third of the city. This year we're assessing the second third of the city. And next year we'll have finished reviewing the entire city, so we'll have a fairly decent metric by the end of that.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you. I'm going to make a quick comment and then, Holly, I see your hand. I'll note that sidewalks and accessible parking are not the only things that the city is out of compliance on. There are a lot of building issues. There's a lot of issues that, I'm not sure if the city has tracked because as I've recently found out in regards to outdoor dining, if you don't submit very specific forms despite not knowing they exist, the city is not classifying things as official complaints. And I suspect that carries over into other areas as well.

Like I have brought up for years the lack of actual true compliance on the brand- new accessible housing; nobody's doing it in a fully compliant fashion. So there's a lot in regards to the built environment. There's school buildings, city buildings. Somebody just mentioned a ramp at the Central library, which I have not been able to go and look at myself because I can't access it right now due to lack of parking.

So, yeah, I just want to note that sidewalks are not the only thing that we need to come up to compliance on. And I believe our ADA transition plan addresses all of these others as well, so. Let's just keep that in mind that it's not just one issue.

Holly.

>>Holly: Correct me if I'm wrong, but in 1993, the city created their self- evaluation, and in 1995, they were supposed to have completed those issues. It was '93 and '95, so it could make the -- they do self- evaluation and then you create a transition plan and summarize all the things that need to be -- this is a lot. This is something that was laid out and that we did. Not every city and town has done it, but we have done that.

But where the gaps are is that transition plan is sort of a living document, and Brian and Jesse, and correct me if I'm wrong, but it's not -- it went from being that transition plan to having some things updated into some revision and then it became the 20/40 plan, I believe. So there's pieces of it that have kind of moved around and it has in some places been updated, so there is something things that are happening. I don't think it's consistent or maybe I'm not aware of which documents to look at. And maybe others on this Commission can answer that for me. But I think we don't really have a great tool to supplement what our engineer teams are doing with what citizens are doing, you know, using either the three/one/one system or other tools to track issues or concerns.

Brian, Jesse, do you have any comments about that or can you clarify what tool the city is using to document that?

>>Brian: I don't quite -- this is Brian. I don't quite understand what you mean by what tool the city is using to document that.

>>Holly: So what document do I look at, there's the self-assessment from '93 and then there's the transition document and then there's -- I'm going through my -- some revision 20/40 is where that's supposed to live now, that transition section?

>>Brian: So there is a newer accessibility title 2 transition plan, I think that might be what you're referring to. And I'm trying to find the date on it.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I dropped a link to it in the chat. I have not been able --

(Technical difficulty)

>>There's a long way to go in terms of being fully compliant, as some folks had mentioned. The ADA goes into quite a bit of detail around a bunch of different things. So to Holly's point about tracking, I know that, you know, my day job where I work for the state, you know, if we have to reasonably accommodate somebody, like essentially like a bathroom door they may use a pressure gauge that under ADA says it should only take five pounds of pressure to open up a door. I can imagine how many of our city doors, you know, either -- if they don't open automatically by button, I can't imagine that they're, you know, up to ADA.

So I think we can all agree that there's quite a ways to go and I think -- but I think to Holly's point, how are we tracking those individual situations, but I also think coming out of this situation I definitely heard a call for dedicated funding, as well as an updated plan, maybe if it's a plan that is specifically around streets versus buildings, like I think we need to kind of break that down because it really is -- it's a vast area to cover so many different things on the city side, so many different areas around ADA.

So I appreciate the discussion and I'll continue to listen in. Thank you, Chair.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, councillor. I would add in that, you know, there's some pretty basic things. I mentioned the adding in accessible parking as part of the zoning. I think another one of those is there's this requirement right now to build structures two feet off the ground. That's a pretty easy way to strike -- a thing to strike from the zoning so we're not continuing to build inequitable and inaccessibly.

So, yeah, there's a lot of different ways to approach this and compartmentalize it so that things can be tracked based on the specifics of what they're addressing. But, yeah, we do, we need dedicated funding and we need a lot more data not in terms of waiting until we have data to do things, which I think often happens within the city, but just to really highlight the scope of the problem, and we need to know how to follow up on things.

I think some of what Holly was getting at is that things are reported in different fashions. There's three- one- one. There is the ADA complaint form. There's making phone calls. There's reporting things to city councillors. And we are not sure if there's any colation of those concerns or if they're kept individually and it's hard to get a sense of just how many ADA- related complaints are coming in.

Is that a good summation, Holly? I'm seeing a head nod.

>>Holly: Sorry. I was multitasking. I was scanning that document. Yes, I think, you know, no one's here to blame someone else. We're here to bring things forward and find solutions, and I think we have a lot behind us that hasn't happened that needs to be chipped away, and some of it's quite urgent.

But I think if we can really prevent these things now and forward from happening in the first place, you know, Brian's redesign of a space, bringing things forward, those are things that we can control and manage, but if we can't communicate or document things freely, we can't all -- we can't do our jobs properly. And it all doesn't sit on one of us.

So if this Title 2 document is the living document, Brian, it definitely needs some updates to it. It still shows Betsy Allen as the contact, it talks about Stan Cody's involvement and a lot of things have changed over the decades since this plan was first drafted. And if there is an actual -- you know, if there is a tool that would classify what sidewalks and we score them, what becomes priority, there has to be, excuse me, a master list where it shows every street and when it was last paved, every sidewalk when it was last repaired.

And I think a lot of, some of the issues stem from us having to use a lot of contractors and it makes the bid process longer,

it makes the time to actually start the work longer. I'm not sure if it increases the costs, but I know it takes the control away from the city in a sense that who's reviewing it afterwards and signing off on it and I don't think there are enough feet able to do that.

So I would say that it is not just a budget, but it's also staffing and it's training and it's education, and I'm going to be quiet now, Bonnie.

But if that is actually the document, then maybe in fact that's where we need to start. Sorry, Jennifer. You have a hand up.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Holly. And Jennifer.

>>Jennifer: I just wanted to ask/comment, maybe I'm cautiously optimistic that once the new ADA coordinator is hired and up to speed that maybe there are some aspects of his or her job requirement that would meet some of these requests and goals kind of to be kind of that staff that would own this and advocate for these interests, but actually in a formal dedicated role that may have been lacking in the past.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you. I think, you know, we have not had somebody whose so focus is this for a long time, but I will note that we did have that previously with Betsy Allen and we did have a lot of it dedicated from Nancy Salmoon and I am hopeful we will have a new ADA coordinator and this will be a huge portion of their job.

But as I put in the chat, it is also incumbent upon every single city department to start caring, start listening. You know, we can talk about our staff not having the training, but the ADA is 30 years old. Why does our staff not have the training? Like why did we hire people after the ADA was created and not make sure they knew how to do this? I find that a problem in the highest levels of the administration. This has not been prioritized and valued.

And so that needs to change. And I will say that this ADA coordinator will only be one person and they're not going to be able to look at every single thing. We have to have, like Holly said, the people to review it that understand it, you know.

One of the issues I submitted about a noncompliant ramp at outdoor dining recently was closed and I went back and looked at it today and I will say that a different ramp is there and it's better. It's still wildly noncompliant. I don't yet know who signed off on that, but I can tell you that it's not compliant. It's clear to the naked eye that the slope is nowhere near what it should be. It's not safe. Nobody would want to even roll their baby down on a stroller holding onto it, let alone someone in a

wheelchair to navigate it on their own.

This is a big issue that's not going to be involved by one person and this is not -- we haven't done any education, because I guarantee everybody in the city has heard my name at this point and has heard the things that I've been complaining about, which is what we're all talking about.

I know that Holly has been advocating about broken sidewalks for 16 years. So it just -- I just want to be clear that we can't expect one person to solve this. This is a top-down thing and I really hope that the next mayor and more people on the city council really prioritize this because that's what's going to make it change.

Holly asks in the chat who is the ADA coordinator for the city schools? I'm not sure if we have one.

>>Holly: So there has to be an ADA coordinator that covers all school issues and there has to be an ADA coordinator that handles all non-school or city issues. Typically in a city of our size that's densely populated, you'd have two people. So if we only have one, then actually that coordinator has to do both roles.

So I was hoping someone could say, oh, we have a separate person. But they have to be full-time dedicated to schools. They can't be like, and they also do that. So that's really important. And I'll tell you, I've been at that new high school, it's a mess. It is an absolute mess. The entry to get in is a mess. You know, I can't open a door. I couldn't get actually in to the front of the high school and the mechanisms aren't working for the people in the office to actually buzz you in properly.

There's just a lot of things that could have been done better. School buildings, Jesse, I'm not sure. So do we know if there's an ADA person assigned to our city schools?

>>This is Jesse. I can look into it. Are you talking about maintenance issues or just issues in general?

>>Holly: Anything related to an education in the city for those who need access, whether it be, you know, computer access or physical access or allergies. You know, think about someone who's allergic to certain foods, that coordinator has to make sure that all the menus have the ingredient or that a wheelchair can fit in every area or that the bathrooms are the right size. So some of it's physical space, but a lot of it is how they access the materials and that -- even though it is part of the Special Ed department, there still has to be a coordinator for compliance.

And if it's helpful, I can try to pull that out of the -- I did two days of training with the MOD, the community access monitor program, which it would be wonderful if we could have MOD join a meeting, like a separate meeting and then sign us up for that training because it's so useful. It is kind of breathing from a

fire hose -- or drinking from a fire hose. And one thing that Jesse and I have been doing for a couple of years now is sort of working on our own ward 4 group to say within our circle, let's look at these things specifically, because they carry over to other areas, but if we sort of draw a line around what we can try and manage and look at that, maybe other wards will start to do the same.

And so we've had multiple conversations, if Jesse wants to add to that afterwards. But I'll let someone else talk.

>>Bonnie Denis: Thank you, Holly. Henry.

>>Henry: Yes. This is an interesting document and the question was raised rhetorically is this the living document. And it may be living, but if so, it's been comatose since February of 2017 when it was first archived at archive.org. There may have been minor changes but it's still 364 pages, still has the same title page mentioning people who are long gone.

So, you know, I've looked at some of the past documentation that Bonnie has provided and what I could dig up, and it seems like the city has gone in starts and fits, but like many of the social programs that the city runs, this is basically performative. It's enough that you can run and say that you did it, but unless whoever is administering this has the budget and the statutory and administrative authority to do things, they're just going to be the person that problems are shoveling off on to without actually being able to solve them. I mean, that's my concern.

I'm sorry if that seems overly cynical, but it's based on looking at these kind of good efforts to assess and to plan and then we look at where we are and it's like, oh, let's do this planning thing again, because that's just churn. It makes it look like there's some progress. But that's why I want to press for goals and metrics that are measurable and achievable and costable and budgetable.

And I'm glad to hear from Brian that we're moving in that direction and I would like to learn more about that effort. Thank you.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Henry. That moves us nicely into the next topic. We have about 10 minutes left and I'm just going to start by saying that next month's agenda I'd like to dedicate primarily to some priority setting. Holly has sent me a list of some things that I will share after this meeting. And I'd like others to send in as well potential things that might not already be on there.

And then as a group we can work together to start setting the priority for what we want to address, if we want to bring in guest speakers or if some of these things we want to focus more time dedicated to, because it's clear there are a lot of issues. We

never get through the whole agenda and we're just going to have to decide what to tackle first and what we want the incoming ADA coordinator to kind of jump on right out of the gate.

So, again, I will send that out after and just reply solely to me. I'm going to not put people's e-mail addresses in, but you'll all be copied on it so that we're not having discussion outside of the meeting.

So the one last thing, and we're not going to have much time to get into it, so I will also put this at the top of next month's agenda is potential use of parking violation funds. I know that this was partially discussed at the finance committee meeting this evening. I was not able to attend, but I was following along on Twitter, and it sounds like a fund has been created for those funds, which is a great first step. And there was some discussion about who controls those funds and who directs them. And as we know, the law is very clear that they are to be directed by the Commission itself.

So we as Commissioners should decide what we want to do with those funds. And I know Holly and Katie had been looking into some options. So, Holly, I don't know if you have an update or --

Also, I just want to note that Councillor Clingon says Thursday's city council meeting will have the report.

>>That's great progress. What I can say is that the guidance or the law is that it must be in a separate account and it is not -- it is our discretion to decide. I'm sure there's a process to making those decisions, but it is not to replace compliance, it is to educate and do more outreach about compliance and such. So I can forward that to you and you can share it with the committee.

It would be great if we had a way to put that publicly facing or if we had put that in this document portal, that would be like a great thing for us to be able to see, along with things like the -- plan. But I think it's a great opportunity. I'd love to know when that funding has started to move and how far back it's going to go.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I believe it's just the past year, which I will note that we put in a separate request over a year ago through Nancy Salmoon and we could probably find when that was put in and I'd personally like to see the funds go back at least that far because we were stonewalled by the administration in terms of doing anything with it and I don't think we should be penalized for that because we did try to start this process previously, so.

>>All we can do is ask for the data.

>>Bonnie Denis: But in terms of what we do with the funds, we definitely do not want to see it as replacing compliance on the city's part. We're not going to use these funds and install curb

ramps. But we can do more than education with it. We can get accessible workout equipment, accessible playground equipment. I'm sure there's many other things.

Colin.

>>Yeah, exactly. One thing that I heard when I put together that guide years ago on the subject -- these funds shouldn't be used for things like curb ramps because if that happens, you know, then it just moves that money, then those things will be redirected.

Yeah, I think accessible equipment is fantastic. I think that, you know, it could also be used for arts and culture stuff because there's accessibility features, if there are areas, things that are happening in private spaces where the city doesn't have jurisdiction but spending money on access there would be for the benefit of people with disabilities in the city and that's exciting. I know they've done scholarships for graduates at their high schools. There are lots of possibilities.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Colin. Do you remember what the name of that document is? I don't recall if you put it in a link in the chat or if you e-mailed it and I just want to be able to find it.

>>I think I e-mailed, but I can certainly do so again. The parking guide is in the file name, but I forget exactly what it was called.

>>Bonnie Denis: Okay. Thank you. And I saw Jesse's hand go up and then Brian.

>>This is Jesse. Will this committee be looking to the public for ideas on how to spend this money? Or will this body be just the ones who decide?

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. I think it's a great idea to involve the public. I'd like to see us come up with some general ideas first. I think, you know, as we've discussed, we don't have enough time in our meetings and if we can perhaps, like we had done a forum on disability at one point, maybe if we can come up with a starting point and put together a separate forum that's not taking up this meeting and we can give it the time it should have to run a public meeting, I think that's a great idea.

I mean, ultimately, we will be directing it, but I think, yeah, it's not a bad idea to get city input.

And Brian.

>>This is Brian. I thought I was on mute there for a moment and didn't speak. I just wanted to agree completely with Colin that these funds should not be used for things that are otherwise required for the city to do. I mean, I think the Commission is -- does good and I like to hear that we are trying to advocate the city to prioritize more funding to improve ADA compliance, and

I agree that this funding should not go to that. This funding should be going to make, make things better for people with disabilities above and beyond what compliance would otherwise dictate.

>>Bonnie Denis: This is Bonnie. Thank you. We've got two minutes if anybody else has something quick, or we could end on time. I'm going to advocate for that one.

>>I move.

>>Are we sure that's allowed? I second.

>>Bonnie Denis: Great. Have an excellent month, everyone.

>>Take care.

>>Thanks, everybody.

>>You all, too.

>>Bonnie Denis: Bye.

[Human realtime captioning by HRI CART.]