

Burlington Committee on Accessibility: Public Forum
Tuesday, February 12, 2013
City Hall, Contois Auditorium

Committee Members Present:

Ned Holt, Ralph Montefusco, Paul Sisson, Russ Scully, Shelley Waterman, Patrick Standen, Ron Redmond

Committee Members Absent:

Michael Watson, Ardelle Cabre, Bradley Stephenson

Others in Attendance:

Margaret Paul (ASL Interpreter), Santina Leporati, Kate Stein, Marcy Ryan, Phil Baldwin, Jim Bury, Barbara Prinan, Miriam Stoll

Introduction of Committee

Patrick introduced the committee and its charge for the City of Burlington. Each member of the committee introduced him or herself and provided background information as to how they became involved in the committee.

Patrick added afterwards that the committee was staffed to create a strategy and plan for accessibility in Burlington. Ralph reminded that what the committee was to show in the public forum was a draft and any input is encouraged.

Presentation of Draft Plan

Kesha began to explain the strategy and plan via projector. She read the mission statement verbatim. After the explanation of the draft, Kesha added that two other aspects that could be worked one are: how often the committee needs to report to the city council and the actual process on how to make the city accessible. Kesha encouraged people to discuss these issues to provide better insight to the committee.

Public Comment

Marcy Ryan commented on the need for different methods to communicate with the police and emergency services. She noted that "Tap to talk" was a good example of a technology that could be used. Marcy also brought to attention her concern that the committee might not have enough power to bring actual change in Burlington. She commented that past committees faced the issue of simply not achieving anything.

Barbara Prinan, a staff attorney, had a list of issues that the committee could incorporate in their draft:

- Buses and SSTA: different types of complaints
 - Scheduling is cumbersome for some people
 - Not all buses can accommodate due to the weight standard
- Accessible housing in Burlington

- Making sure a structure is accessible to all should be incorporated when someone is attempting to receive a building permit.
- There should be more accessible housing within the City.
- Downtown businesses
 - Church street, original funding was that everything would be accessible and not everything is
 - Not all businesses on Church Street are accessible, especially for those in wheelchairs.
 - Businesses need to know information about service dogs and service dog rules
 - What is legal and what isn't
- City as an employer
 - The City needs to provide education and training to its employees.
 - People with disabilities can sometimes feel vulnerable when asking for accommodations or saying that they are working with a lawyer.
 - There needs to be a better interactive process with employees and employers.
- Sidewalks are just as important as streets
 - Snow removal needs to improved
 - Treatment of sidewalks needs to be equal to streets.

Phil Baldwin commented that he appreciates people's comments and if there are any specific areas that need more attention than others, to let public works know. He brought to attention the fact that sidewalks do not have a drainage system, which can be difficult to clean up when it snows.

Kesha added comments from Front Porch Forum from people who were not able to physically attend the public forum. Comments such as: awareness for fragrance and synthetic chemicals, parents who are working on a universal design playground so that children can have more recreational access. Lastly, the issue of sidewalks and crosswalks that are inaccessible and handicap parking that is not near a ramp.

Barbra commented on the idea of a universal playground; she stated that each playground should have one element that can be accessible instead of creating only one universal playground. It is cost-effective and not very time consuming.

Kesha stated that for people watching at home or that are present, to email her for any additional comments, concerns, or opinions.

Patrick referenced the Facebook page as a way to communicate with the committee.

Miriam Stoll commented on the need for the creation of programs in school that are inclusive to all. Unified sports, for example, attracted different cultural programs and it was successful. She noted how in past programs the parents would have to do much of the work and it was not helpful. There are very few social and recreational

programs for people with disabilities. She also said that outreach was necessary in creating these programs. She advised the importance of talking specifically to parents. She also mentioned that those who would be running the programs would need to undergo proper training.

Santina, a peer advocate counselor for Vermont Center for Independent Living, said that she could help in spreading the word for forums like this, to just let her know ahead of time.

Kate spoke of an urge to motivate and take action rather than talking. She also spoke of a global approach to the issue of accessibility; to view the problem in the most holistic way possible.

Public Forum ended.