

BURLINGTON ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY

Tuesday, November 18, 2014

Minutes

Committee Members Present: Ralph Montefusco (chair), Brad Stephenson, Elaine Zimmerman, Michael Watson, Ben Johnson, Ned Holt, Maggie Leugers

Others Present: Barbara Mulligan, Kesha Ram (staff), Julia Hughes (intern), Anna Koshen (First Night), Sarah Stickler (First Night), Cleary Buckley, Nate Besio (VCIL)

COME TO ORDER at 4:09 pm.

Introductions

First Night

Representatives from First Night came to discuss accessibility efforts from last year's event and lessons learned for the upcoming annual event. There was a survey last year for accessibility of First Night that only had three responses. Committee members discussed ways to improve the response rate this year. First Night would like to have more of a response from an accessibility standpoint. There will not be a walk through again this year, unless there is a request for a walk through.

The only complaint from last year was lighting in some venues made it difficult to be seen. There will be a training of site managers to focus on lighting, with an emphasis on walkways. Site managers also are trained to stay vigilant on walkways and entry points. Elaine noted it was difficult to navigate certain venues.

Brad reminded the committee that 242 Main St (Memorial Auditorium) was not accessible. It will not be a venue this year, so it appears that all venues will be accessible this year. Barbara Mulligan noted that there was a poorly marked step at First Night last year and she will send the address to First Night so they can look into it. Elaine announced that a donation of money would be used to help seniors attend First Night. There will be transportation available for people from senior housing and discounted button prices. Ralph Montefusco says First Night has done a great job in being accessible, and it would be great if other events in Burlington could take direction from First Night.

School District Discussion

Ben Johnson was welcomed as the newest committee member and representative from the School District. He is the assistant principal at Burlington High School and the former coordinator of special education.

Michael Watson spoke to repeated issues in the high school for parents, students, and staff with mobility issues. The high school is a major concern along with Edmunds Elementary School. Maggie Leugers noted it would be great to know if there are plans for accessibility changes in schools and what the future building plans are.

Cleary Buckley noted some of his major concerns that he would be sharing at a District meeting later in the evening. He had his 5 year-old accepted in Edmunds, and during a tour he realized there is not elevator in the building. He is under the impression there is a plan for an elevator within the next couple of years. His major concern is that the plan is always predicated on getting the bond passed, although it may be possible there are other ways for this to be funded. Money is an issue, but the school has been aware of the situation for a long time. He would like the elevator to be made a high priority. Ralph Montefusco says this is a major theme, and Michael Watson noted this is a problem that has existed for at least 20 years. Cleary notes this also does not allow for a diverse learning environment where children who are able-bodied interact with children who are in wheelchairs.

Brad asked what the priority was for the schools, and Ben Johnson said a major priority is building a new high school. Michael Watson said it is important to realize stairs are not only difficult for people in wheelchairs, but also for others who have other mobility challenges.

Public Forum/Announcements

Brad announced that he and some others had asked for accessibility information in the “Art Map of Burlington.” After follow-up, nothing was done. He wanted to know if there was anything else he could do. Kesha said that if they receive City funding, there may be more opportunity to follow up. Ralph announced that the Shumlin Administration has updated the code for Title I and Title II with ADA coordinators and their contact information.

Kesha spoke about Election Day and accessibility. There was a complaint that Ward 6 wasn’t accessible, and that the Clerk’s Office deployed staff to ensure volunteers are trained with accessibility information. She also mentioned that downtown parking changes took place on November 1. She can take feedback to those in charge of parking. Barbara Mulligan mentioned that accessible spots can become inaccessible when planters and bike racks are placed next to them and she cannot put her ramp down. Ned agreed to look into the issue.

Communication re: Accessible Meetings

If there are community meetings, they should be in accessible venues. The Accessibility Committee will communicate this to City Council members. Brad offered to draft something for Kesha to forward.

Next Steps

Kesha will be going to the Legislature in January. She is working on replacing her staff capacity to ensure proper staffing of the committee. The committee will not meet in December, and will revisit holding meetings on the third Tuesday of the month in the new year.

MEETING ADJOURNED at 5:48 pm.