

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ACCESSIBILITY

Minutes for Tuesday, September 16, 2014

COME TO ORDER at 4:05 pm.

1. Introduction and Welcome to New Members:

There are four new members of the committee who attended and were introduced: Sam Handy, from the Scuffer Steak and Ale House, Maggie Leugers, from Parks, Rec. and Waterfront, Julie Laplume from CAO, and Paul Irish, from the Burlington School District.

2. Vermont Association for the Blind and the Visually Impaired Presentation:

The presentation started with observations and issues noted around Burlington. First, there is a lack of audible signals to safely cross at T-intersections. This creates a problem because those who are visually impaired use sound to cross the street, but at a T intersection there is no audible through traffic. Another issue is that the current audible signals that are in place often break down and it takes substantial time to get them fixed. It was mentioned that there is a system called “See, Click, Fix” where those who notice an issue can report the problem for it then to be tracked by the Department of Public Works. The most notable suggestion is to put in audible crossing signals at T-intersections around the city. Suggestions were made for them to be put in on all of Pearl Street, including Pine St, St Paul St. and Battery St.

Another problem is the plethora of construction zones. One issue is tripping hazards (e.g. cones, feet of chain link fence etc.) and a lack of warning for the physically impaired. For visually impaired, there is no signal that the sidewalk is closed or that there is a construction zone. One proposed solution is to have the ADA checklist become a well known and important part of the building process. Sam Handy commented about the lack of information he had about ADA guidelines when he was rebuilding his restaurant. Another suggestion was to have a barrier that can guide the visually impaired into a “safe lane” or bumps that can be felt with canes. Another suggestion was to have “walkers” – people in place to help at crossing areas. Lastly, it was suggested that bulletins are sent out into the community to warn about a closed sidewalk. The presentation ended with people expressing gratitude for new, raised concerns.

3. Announcements:

The commission has approved the language change from “Handicap” to “Accessible Spaces”. The concern was raised that this would confuse other citizens, but they will

continue to use the same insignia. There has been a loss of a bus stop in front of Hotel Vermont, thus making the closest bus stop require an uphill walk and an added difficulty in accessibility. The entrance to Henry's Diner has finished construction and is now accessible. Chittenden County and Rutland County are under funded for Alzheimer's care.

4. Public Comment:

A comment was made that there is a lack of accessible parking and a lack of police enforcement. He believed there is an overuse of placards and no strict regulations of where the placard goes when someone passes away or loses one. Also he felt that there was a lack of enforcement of illegal parking in handicap spots and that the committee should have a dialogue with BPD.

5. Ad Hoc Committee Updates

There was a meeting with Burlington High School special educators. Problems at the high school remain in transit. Students are being directly affected. The group consensus was that it is important to keep an open discussion and pressure.

6. Next Steps:

A vice chair or co-chair is needed for the committee; members were urged to consider the position. The issue of public restrooms in the community was brought up. It would be nice to work toward a folding down table mounted to the wall for children and adults (an adult sized "Koala Care") to aid in using the bathroom and changing.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 5:40 pm.