



## City of New Bedford Commission for Citizens with Disabilities

### Minutes Commission for Citizens with Disabilities March 20, 2018

#### **Members Present**

Jaunna Adesso  
Martha Bouchard  
Melissa Branco  
Linda Carreiro  
Dennis DeMarinis, Jr.  
Sonny Eddleston  
Marsha Fernandes

#### **Others in Attendance**

Eric Cohen, Esq.  
Manny DeBrito  
Henry Bousquet  
Donald Gaudette  
Heather Heffernan  
John Lobo  
Councillor-at-Large Linda Morad

#### **Members Excused**

Josh Amaral  
Rev. Pam Cole

Dennis DeMarinis, Chair, called the meeting to order @ 6:30 PM; Election Commissioners were introduced.

#### **Polling Sites**

Architect BG Shanklin provided a summary of the polling locations he has visited to date; it was confirmed that the list of sites he is using (dated 2015) is the most current. He suggested that a uniform checklist be used for each location to ensure compliance and also stated that voter complaints about accessibility are filed with the Secretary of State.

Mr. Shanklin stated that new guidelines have been issued that are stricter. They include:

- Double access and egress are required
- 70% of the exits must be accessible

Mr. Shanklin presented his findings on the sites he has inventories to date:

- The doors at Campbell School are the wrong size
- Dottin Place has minor egress issues
- Station 5 has no handicapped parking spaces on the street and the wiring used on Election Days are unsafe Mr. DeBrito stated that he would visit and propose solutions to Station 5. *(Our Lady of Fatima was revisited; however, the church doesn't want to be a site and Mr. Shanklin stated that there are accessibility issues anyway.)*
- Buttonwood Warming House has parking issues

Commissioner DeBrito said that he will try to visit and review all sites, to which Mr. Shanklin responded that the Transition Plan must be finished before 6/30/18.

Attorney Eric Cohen asked for an updated, comprehensive list of polling places. He reemphasized that Station 5 has always been a problem and asked Commissioner DeBrito how many ADA-related complaints were filed this past election. The response was none, except Station 5 and Buttonwood.

Commissioner DeBrito reiterated that 2017 was his first election cycle, that a pollster had suggested creation of a Training Video (*similar to Martha Bouchard's suggestion made last fall*), and that most of the pollsters are older. He stated that when he visited Carney during the November election, there were no problems, but then stated that the ballot-marking device was unplugged.

Attorney Cohen asked about the process of how pollsters are assigned to locations; Commissioner DeBrito responded that he doesn't know because staff takes care of it. Mr. Shanklin asked how polling locations themselves are identified; i.e., it is by population, walking distance, other demographic information? Commissioner DeBrito responded that he did not know. Commissioner Bousquet stated that he thought more schools should be used as sites. Mr. DeMarinis suggested having Professional Development days on Election Day so minimize parking issues. Commissioner DeBrito said he would be in favor of consolidating sites. Attorney Cohen stated that any changes need to be advertised/publicized well in advance. Mr. Shanklin said that accessibility issues should also be publicly noticed; i.e. no handicapped bathrooms at Station 5. Mr. DeMarinis suggested asking pole workers to take parking spaces away from the closest parking spaces to the polling place.

Dennis DeMarinis pointed out that many of the issues are not new; rather, they have been problematic for at least 6 years, stating that the Commission had held several meetings with Mr. DeBrito's predecessor and filed several memos about accessibility/conditions. Mr. DeMarinis asked if disabled voters have been or should be told to go to City Hall to vote. Commissioner DeBrito responded that it would be inappropriate to do so.

Councilor Morad asked to address the members. She stated that she expected the Election Commission to work on these matters and would like to see a consolidated plan, as she feels there are too many sites. She encouraged use of public schools where appropriate and wants training for all pollsters/staff. Councillor Morad further stated that there is a problem of parking at the schools especially at the end of the school day; Normandin was cited as a modern school that has this problem of competition with bus and parent pick up confounded parking for polling.

Attorney Cohen reiterated that the plan has to be done "sooner rather than later". John Lobo asked why temporary handicapped parking signage aren't use for polling sites.

Commissioner Gaudette suggested that Station 5 voters be relocated to Christian Fellowship Center, more signage is needed and that poll workers should be working together. Mr. Lobo suggested relocating Station 5 to Campbell School where voters had been assigned in the past.

Mr. DeMarinis asked Commissioner DeBrito (et al.) to report back on their findings by May 8.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Martha Bouchard moved to accept the February 20, 2018 meeting minutes; seconded by Linda Carreiro. Motion carried.

### **Architect's Report**

- BG Shanklin provided an update on the SRTA Garage elevator and explained what was needed to be done at the State level. Jaunna Adesso moved to ask the Commission to file a formal complaint with the MA Architectural Access Board. (MAAB); Martha Bouchard seconded. Motion passes unanimously.
- Transition Plan work is ongoing and the School Department formally requested that he do the schools inventory, so that has been added to his Scope of Services.

Martha Bouchard moved to accept the Architect's Report; Linda Carreiro. Motion carried.

### **Adjourn**

A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Bouchard and seconded by Ms. Adesso. The meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha J. Bouchard". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Martha Bouchard  
Acting Secretary