



ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

MINUTES

October 13, 2015

MEETING LOCATION

The October 13, 2015 meeting was held in the Flynn Pavilion at Belle Isle Park in Detroit.

PRESENT FOR THE ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (AAC)

Rick Briggs, Chair
Al Bobrofsky
Vendela Collins
Jonathan Edgerly
Scott Norris
John Witzke
Kim Woolridge
Duncan Wyeth

ABSENT

Bill Sheffer, Vice Chair
Ken Buchholtz
Cindy Burkhour
Dave Campbell
Ann Conklin
Daryl Domke
Carolyn Grawi
Michael Harris
Michelle Mull
Sarah Peurakoski
Marc Russell
Amy Trotter
John Witzke

PRESENT FOR THE DNR

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor
Dan Lord, ADA Coordinator
Yolanda Taylor, Assistant to the AAC
Ron Olson, Chief, DNR Parks and Recreation Division

PRESENT FROM THE DNR ACCESSIBILITY TEAM (A-TEAM)

Erica Moore, A-Team Chair, DNR Technology
Vicki Brown; A-Team Co-Chair, Wildlife
Lynne Thoma, Fisheries
Tamara Jorkasky, Grants
Julie Ellsworth, Marketing and Outreach
Diana Engle, Michigan Historical Center
Jordan Byelich, Parks and Recreation
Mike Evanoff, Parks and Recreation

INTERPRETERS

None Requested/Required.

OTHERS PRESENT

Jon Shefferly, Friends of Detroit Rowing
Jacqueline Stefko, Disability Network of Wayne County
Stacey Locke and Sandy Wolfe, Peckham Inc.
Rebecca Powell and Sylvia Elliott, Michigan Department of Civil Rights
Sharon Ellis, State of Michigan Safety and ADA Compliance Director, Department of Civil Rights

REGULAR MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Briggs called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He then took roll call, made introductions around the room and asked if there were any additions or adjustments to the agenda. It was noted that Sharon Ellis from the Department of Civil Rights is present and will provide an update on current legislation at the end of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Briggs asked the Council if they had any additions or edits to the August 4, 2015 Minutes. No additions or edits were offered for the Minutes.

Chair Briggs requested a motion to approve the August 2015 Minutes; Al Bobrofsky motioned to approve; Kim Woolridge seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and the August 4, 2015 Minutes were approved.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Executive Update

Sharon Schafer, AAC Sponsor and Chief of the DNR Finance and Operations Division, reported that the department hired an environmental engineer to assist with projects related to dams, bridges, environmental permitting, projects with the Michigan Department of Transportation, and other infrastructure and environmental issues. Michelle Crook, senior project engineer, will be housed in the Executive Division.

DNR Accessibility Team (A-Team) Updates

Dan Lord, the department's ADA Coordinator, reported that the department participated in the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) celebration that was held September 17 on the Capitol lawn. The department set up a booth on the Capitol lawn along with an accessible hunting blind from one of the state parks. The booth was manned by employees that are on the department's A-Team, and it was the most popular booth at the event. He further commented that staff was surprised by the lack of participation at this event.

Dan further reported on the status of the department's Accessibility Strategic Plan. The A-Team has held three meetings to review the strategic plan and compare it to the recommended changes that were offered by the Council. A final, blended version of the plan will be presented to the Council at their next meeting as information only.

PARKS AND RECREATION DIVISION INITIATIVES

Schafer reminded the Council that we are going to try to get a department chief at each meeting to give an update on their division's initiatives and what they are doing to make their programs more accessible. She introduced Ron Olson, chief of the Parks and Recreation Division.

Chief Olson gave the Council a brief overview of how Belle Isle became a state park, and the many challenges they faced when it became the 102nd state park in 2014 as part of a lease agreement with the City of Detroit. Of the many infrastructure improvements required on the island, including structural, electric and heating systems, Olson acknowledged there is much improvement needed in the area of accessibility, not only for this park but for the other 101 state parks in the system. He explained that the division is incorporating accessibility as they make improvements or upgrades to the parks and their facilities; however, these improvements take time and money and the state park system is currently facing a \$300 million infrastructure backlog. Olson further mentioned that they have partnered with the Grand Prix to create accessible walkways around the island. They will begin repairing and replacing sidewalks in the early spring of 2016. The park is also working on ADA and barrier free parking, accessible restrooms and picnic shelters. Olson further commented that they have three major sponsors that are looking at creating a fully accessible playground near the Nature Zoo, repurposing the slide by the beach and creating an accessible spray park, and installing accessible fishing docks and piers.

Olson further reported that the Parks and Recreation Division is partnering with Michigan Rehabilitation Services to engage with individuals participating in special programs held at various state parks. They are also creating opportunities for concession stand operators and providing beach access. Grants and donations have played a big part in the success of bringing these opportunities to state parks, and a lot of friends groups have also adopted accessibility into their programs and events.

Olson thanked the Council and welcomed them to Belle Isle Park. He also commented that while they tour the park, he would appreciate and welcome any observations, improvements or suggestions on how to make Belle Isle Park more accessible so that all users can enjoy the experience.

Olson then gave a brief overview of the Outdoor Adventure Center vision and how this education center became a reality. He did not want to go into a whole lot of detail since the Council would be touring the facility that afternoon and he wanted them to enjoy the full experience.

The Council thanked Chief Olson for attending the meeting. The Council agreed they would capture needs on their tour of the island and address how access can be provided without taking away from the beauty or aesthetics of the island.

Many members commented on the improvements to the island and congratulated Chief Olson on how well they have managed the park thus far.

COPPER HARBOR LIGHTHOUSE

Dan Lord reminded the Council that the Copper Harbor Lighthouse was a topic that came up at their last meeting. He gave a brief overview of the issues raised regarding accessibility. This location is within Fort Wilkins Historic State Park, but is co-managed with the Michigan Historical Center. There are only two points to get to this location. One is through a concessionaire that provides boat service from the fort to the lighthouse, and the other is a service drive through private land that park staff is allowed to utilize as needed for maintenance. Dan further reported that, since the last meeting, he reached out to Parks and Recreation Division and Michigan Historical Center staff to talk about making changes on the web site and the possible use of the service drive to get visitors to the lighthouse. Dan explained to the Council that he is hoping to use today's dialogue to come up with recommendations or creative ideas to improve the experience.

Dan turned this discussion over to Diana Engle, Michigan Historical Center, to talk about the accessible features at the lighthouse and the residence as they are both managed by the Michigan Historical Center. Diana explained there is an accessible pathway from the landing dock to the lighthouse and the residence. The residence is accessible, but the lighthouse is not due to the terrain and steps. Some of the accessible features that are in place in the residence include two touch screen computer terminals that have on-line exhibits to learn about the residence, the lighthouse, geologic features of the area and the more modern, currently operating U.S. Coast Guard lighthouse and range lights. While people are allowed to use the stairs in the lighthouse, nobody is allowed to climb the tower. Therefore, the computer program that is available in the light keeper's residence offers a stunning 360 degree filmed view from the top of the lighthouse tower. Also, within the Fort Wilkins complex, 15 of the 18 buildings that are open to the public are accessible. On the side of the buildings, there is signage and interpretation and Fort Wilkins also has a ten week costumed interpretation program to show people what life was like in the fort in the 1870s.

Discussion continued and ideas were shared to assist with mobility and accessible access to the lighthouse. Duncan Wyeth, as a member of the Keweenaw Historical Society, offered to reach out to Diana, the park manager and the Michigan Historical Center to talk about some of these issues as the Keweenaw Historical Society has also struggled with some of the same issues and may be a good source of information or guidance. They may even be willing to become a partner in this endeavor.

Some of the improvements that were discussed include improving the web site to add more detail. Ground transportation is already provided by contacting the park office but maybe enhance by also offering a DNR escort for those that have to use their own vehicle and equipment for mobility reasons, and getting an individual with an assisted mobility device onto the concessionaire's boat. Chair Briggs commented that at Camp Liberty people can reserve track chairs on-line which may be another alternative.

Any members that have ideas or suggestions for accessibility to the Copper Harbor Lighthouse or the complex can submit them to Diana Engle with the Michigan Historical Center. Jordan Byelich also welcomed comments or suggestions on behalf of the Parks and Recreation

Division. Diana can be reached at engled@michigan.gov, and Jordan Byelich can be reached at byelichj@michigan.gov. All ideas and comments are welcome.

AAC COMMITTEE

Revised Bylaws

Schafer reported that revisions have been made to the bylaws based on conversations at previous meetings. A draft of the revised bylaws will be assigned to and reviewed by one of the Council's subcommittees once they have been established.

Subcommittees

The five subcommittees proposed for 2016 based on this Council's brainstorming session in June include:

- Communication and Outreach
- Funding
- Education and Training
- Policy and Legislation
- Infrastructure and Natural Resource Programs

Chair Briggs expressed that he would like every Council member on a subcommittee. He would also like to launch the Policy and Legislation subcommittee as soon as possible to address legislation and policy issues as they are introduced or brought to the forefront.

Members that expressed an interest in being on the Policy and Legislation subcommittee include Scott Norris, Duncan Wyeth, and Jon Edgerly. A recommendation was made to consider electing council member Amy Trotter with the Michigan United Conservation Corps (MUCC) as the chair of this subcommittee based on her knowledge and expertise, and the fact that the MUCC addresses all conservation legislation as it is introduced. A recommendation was also made to include Council member Ken Buchholtz as he is very active on policy issues. Chair Briggs will reach out to Amy to determine her interest in chairing this subcommittee. Sharon Ellis expressed her interest in working with this subcommittee, especially on legislation related to accessibility, civil rights or the ADA.

Each subcommittee will have department staff assigned to them to assist, and the new format for meetings next year will allow time for the subcommittees to meet prior to each meeting. Conference calls can also be scheduled in-between meetings on an as needed basis.

Subcommittee assignments will be held for the next meeting.

Membership

Schafer reported that the department reached out to each member regarding their interest in continuing their membership on the Council. All except for two members responded that they are interested in continuing on the Council. Therefore, we will report back to the Council with a new list of members and discuss terms at the next meeting. Schafer apologized for all the confusion regarding this Council's membership and term limits, but the responsibility for this Council shifted many times over the past couple of years and we are trying to decipher those records.

Council member Duncan Wyeth suggested the Council first review the list of remaining members to determine if there is good representation or if there are other organizations that should be represented on the Council. The membership list will be reviewed at the next meeting.

Schafer also reported that a cap on membership has been proposed in the revised bylaws and the turnaround on membership also needs to be considered.

2016 Meeting Dates

The Council discussed the proposed meeting dates for 2016. All four proposed dates were approved by the Council with the understanding that there may be a need to slightly shift some of the meetings based on executive level department meetings that may be scheduled in 2016. The list of approved meeting dates will be shared with the Council once the dates and locations are confirmed.

SHARON ELLIS --- UPDATE ON CURRENT LEGISLATION

Sharon Ellis, state Safety and ADA Compliance Director operating out of the Department of Civil Rights, and ex-officio consultant to the Council, gave an update on a four bill package that is currently passing through the Legislature. House Bills 4521 and 4527 are tie-barred with Senate Bills 298 and 299. All of the bills deal with service animals for persons with disabilities, including certain veterans. Each bill contains new definitions of "service animal," "a person with disabilities," and "veteran."

Sharon explained that the bills were mostly introduced to address imposter service animals and false representation (i.e. claiming their 'pet' as a service animal), including false claims of being a service animal trainer. This legislation can also be used as an educational tool for business owners and their employees so they understand the laws regarding service animals. The bills initially wanted to require trainers and service animals to be certified, but they had to explain that the ADA does not require certification or license fees for service animals.

These four bills will basically impose a penalty for the mistreatment of a service animal, eliminate the requirement for certification or license fees for service animals, impose a fine of up to \$500 for false representation, create identification tags for service animals, provide a mechanism for reporting false claims or service animal abuse, enforce misdemeanor penalties and imprisonment, and provide clarification on specific definitions.

As a result, the Department of Civil Rights will be responsible for and are in the process of designing identification patches or tags for service animals, and setting up a complaint hotline.

Without going into extensive detail about each bill, Sharon suggests the council review the bills on-line.

Subsequently, all four bills were approved in October 2015 as Public Acts 144, 145, 146 and 147, with all of them going into effect mid-January, 2016.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Stacey Locke with Peckham and mentor for the Self Advocacy Team, commented that when they meet with Congress, they include in their fact sheet that they support and attend all of the Council's meetings. Stacey also attended the 25th ADA anniversary celebration on the Capitol lawn and she agrees that the DNR had the most popular booth at this event. She also

addressed Jacqueline Stefko with the Disability Network of Wayne County and Chief Olson, stating she is excited about the partnership between Michigan Rehabilitative Services and the DNR, and her hope is to get more people in the outdoors and also hired in the state parks.

Council member Wyeth shared information about a fairly new web site called "Commit to Inclusion" or www.committoinclusion.org. It is a global campaign to end the exclusion of people with disability from physical activity and all associated areas. The U.S. based campaign supports the implementation of guidelines and programming to empower people with disability to lead healthy, active lifestyles. They are now trying to expand this campaign internationally. Duncan highly recommends that council members check out this site and, if they choose, show their support for this campaign. The site also has some very interesting facts about children and adults with disability related to exercise, obesity and overall quality of life.

Sandy Wolfe, also with Peckham, recommended that the Parks and Recreation Division consider making the curbs at Belle Isle Park accessible. She had trouble getting up over the curb onto the sidewalk. Chief Olson acknowledged her suggestion and he will consider this when they make improvements to the sidewalks.

Duncan Wyeth also recommended to Chief Olson that they improve the signage on the island so that people can more easily find the accessible areas, and it may also be helpful to place a list of upcoming improvements for the public's information.

Council member Al Bobrofsky commented that, on behalf of Council member Ken Buchholtz from the Upper Peninsula, he has requested that the Council continue to pursue the discussion on reduction of hunting fees but will hold this discussion until the proper subcommittee has been created.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Chair Briggs congratulated Council member Ken Buchholtz for receiving a Volunteer Service Award from the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education for the wonderful work he has done at the Pocket Park in Escanaba, with the Wheeling Sportsmen, veterans and the multitude of other activities and events to get veterans and others in the outdoors.

The Council was also reminded of informational materials that were provided as part of their meeting packets that include the Department's monthly Legislative Update, a press release about a second chance lottery drawing to hunt the Pierce Road Unit of the Sharonville State Game Area during regular firearm season, and a copy of the approved Natural Resources Commission memo allowing for special hunting opportunities at this unit for three years.

Chair Briggs thanked everyone for their attendance, participation and input. He also thanked DNR staff for coordinating the tours of Belle Isle Park and the Outdoor Adventure Center that will take place after the meeting adjourns. He also thanked Chief Olson for his presence and for providing the staff to conduct both tours.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 8, 2015. However, the Council agreed to cancel the meeting due to lack of agenda items and availability.

Duncan motioned to cancel the December 8, 2015 meeting; Norris seconded the motion; the motion unanimously carried and the December 8, 2015 meeting is cancelled.

Chair Briggs adjourned the meeting at noon and reminded the group that they need to load the tour bus at 12:30 p.m.