

City of Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities
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>>Bonnie: We're just giving a brief who we are.
>>Adrienne: Sure. I just wanted to make sure our captioner has joined us.
I'm Adrien, ADA Coordinator and staff liaison for the Commission.
>>Bonnie: Ginny.
>>Hi, I'm Ginny. I'm the current Vice Chair of the PTAC committee and will act as the liaison for the disability commission.
>>Are you a host or something?
>>Bonnie: No.
>>It normally shows up in the bottom and it is not there this time, so I don't know if Zoom just changed things or --
>>Bonnie: I am seeing it to the right of the record button. I'm not sure if the captioner has another option for viewing in a separate screen or -- I think that would be Denise.
>>This is Denise. My apologies. I didn't realize I was the host. Hold on. I didn't sign in through my Zoom. I signed in through the regular -- give me one second. My apologies.
>>This is Harriette. What does PTAC stand for.
>>Pedestrian and Transportation Access Committee.
>>Got it. Thank you.
>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Are we set to use the StreamText right now or do we need to wait until this has been assigned.
>>Lian: I can use that for now and just whenever Denise is able to get to it that would be great.

>>Bonnie: Great. Okay. So Crystal. Katie.
>>Do you want to give just a quick --
>>Say something. I thought you were just like --
>>Bonnie: No. We're doing a quick like who you are.
>>Hi, everyone. I'm Katie and I'm a commissioner.
>>Bonnie: Great. Thank you. And Holly.
>>Holly: Hi. I'm Holly and I'm also a commissioner.
>>Bonnie: Great. So I'm going to officially call the meeting to order, in case I didn't already do that. We have as always a packed agenda. So I'm going to go with the Pearl Street project first. And I see in the chat that Crystal is having trouble with connection, but hears us, so great. And welcome Jamie as well. Brian.
>>Brian: This is Brian. We should do some general business first, as far as --
>>Bonnie: Oh, thank you, yes, for the reminder. We need to elect a secretary for the meeting. So the options are myself, which would be incredibly difficult given I'm running the meeting, Lian, Katie or Holly. Does anyone want to nominate themselves to be secretary for the evening?
>>Katie: I didn't do a great job last time.
>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. I'm not sure we have anyone that would do a great job. This is a problem that we've discussed before and might require getting an official extra staff person from the city, I believe staff are allowed to take notes, although the legal department has said it needs to be a commissioner. I'm unclear.
>>Katie: Okay. I'll do it.
>>Bonnie: I think if you can take it on, that would be great. Somebody want to second that nomination?
>>Lian: This is Lian, I will absolutely second that because you'd do a much better job than I would have.
>>Bonnie: Great. All in favor, aye. I see thumbs up from Holly, Lian and Katie. Great. Katie will be the secretary for the evening. Thank you, Brian, for the reminder.
So now, Adam, if you'd like to present.
>>Adam: Sure thing. This is Adam. It looks like screen sharing has been disabled.
>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Denise, can you assign Adam the ability to screen share, please.
>>This is Denise. Yes.
>>Bonnie: Thanks.
>>Adam: Great. All right. This is Adam. So I will be brief for everyone. I believe the Commission received the slides last week, so I won't go into detail. It's with sort of the context of the project. But for anyone that remembers,

I was in front of you all April or May of last year to talk about the upcoming Pearl Street project. We have since then come up with a design proposal. So I'll quickly run through that.

I'll talk about what we are -- what our scope and our plan is for the eastern section of Pearl Street. And then open it up to comments and questions.

First, for some familiarity, in case everyone isn't familiar with the nomenclature that we use for some of the treatments that we install or design our streets with, we have speed humps up in the upper left of the screen here, which is more or less just a raised piece of asphalt on the street and is particularly good at slowing down vehicles between intersections, when they're prone to speeding the most and really getting very high speeds.

On the top right here is an example of a curb extension, which is extending the curb and the concrete further out than the sidewalk is at other points in the street, particularly for the sake of making crossing distances shorter for pedestrians and also to slow down vehicles that are turning around a corner at an intersection.

On the bottom left is a photo of a neighborhood traffic circle. These provide an opportunity to put some greenery in an intersection, and they're a good option for lower volume intersections where you want to make sure people are slowing down but that you're still giving priority to pedestrians.

And then in the bottom right is a raised intersection, which is something I think most people are familiar with because these have been around for a while now and that's when you raise up the full intersection down from the typical asphalt level all the way up to sidewalk level, forces vehicles to drive up and over it and also just gives a feeling of priority to pedestrians as well.

So those are the treatments that we have proposed. So now I'll walk through each of these. So on the westernmost -- so the project is not the full length of Pearl Street. We're starting just shy of McGrath Highway and it extends eastward towards Mt. Vernon Street, all the way up to Mt. Vernon Street. Currently there is parking on both sides of this western most section which is McGrath to Cross Street. It is two-way traffic, one traveling in each direction.

For anyone that travels there regularly or at all knows that the sidewalks are in poor condition. The pavement is in poor condition. The curb ramps are very old and definitely not compliant or really usable for a lot of people. So that's the first thing we're going to come and fix. So all of the

sidewalks highlighted here will be reconstructed. That includes concrete across a couple of the private ways, Pearl Street Place and Pearl Street Terrace, so those instead of being asphalt will be concrete and look more like a driveway apron.

We'll then come back and pave the full section of street in this section. We'll also be adding a speed hump halfway to slow down -- slow the vehicles down mid block, and then fully raising the intersection across in pearl.

We are not proposing substantial curb use regulation changes as part of this project. The emphasis is on fixing the sidewalks, paving the street and implementing traffic calming and giving -- making -- adding features for pedestrians. So largely, the current residential permit parking regulations that are out there today will remain the bus stops that are currently on this section. This is actually the only section that has bus lanes. Those were proposed to remain as well.

On the middle section of the project here between Cross and Franklin Street, this section is a little bit narrower. There is currently parking on the north side, on the Somerville school side of the street, it is still two-way traffic and the sidewalks and pavement are not in any better condition than the westernmost section.

So again, we will be reconstructing all of the sidewalks in here, putting concrete across another private way, the one at Hillside Avenue, new pavement. We are proposing a couple more speed humps between intersections, as well as one of the neighborhood traffic circles that I mentioned at the beginning of the presentation at Glenn Street. It will still remain an all-way stop in our current proposal. So you'll still -- vehicles will still be required to stop when approaching the intersection, and yield to all pedestrians would be the case in whatever we do, but they will be required to come to a full stop and then navigate around the circle.

And lastly, we are proposing a fully raised intersection at Franklin Street as well. And again, very minor, almost no impacts to parking regulations. We may have to restrict parking very nearest to the intersection at Glenn to ensure that vehicles have enough room to maneuver around.

And also, just at the very closest points to intersections, we have a citywide policy that we're starting to implement which is called daylighting, for those who aren't familiar with that, we're simply trying to enforce the existing regulation of no parking within 20 feet of a crosswalk or intersection, and so we want to make sure that

pedestrians are fully visible as if you were -- particularly as drivers are approaching crosswalks.

And so even though that's not something that's been really strongly enforced, we don't have a lot of signage or paint on the street to indicate as such, we're going to be a little bit more deliberate about making sure vehicles don't do that, whether it's with paint, signage, flex posts or the like, concrete if we have the ability to.

And so lastly here on the eastern most section of the project from Franklin Street all the way to Mt. Vernon Street there is parking on both sides, two-way travel and sidewalks and pavement that are in sore need of replacement. So replacing sidewalks, paving. A couple more speed humps on the eastern section, one between Florence and Pinkney, one between Pinkney, and curb extensions which I forgot to mention to really tighten that intersection up and make sure vehicles don't turn too quickly through there, so a neighborhood traffic circle at Myrtle as well. And again, very minimal change to existing regulations.

There is an accessible parking space I believe for one of the residents here that will remain. We are not proposing to move that. One loading zone over by the convenience store here on the corner of Franklin and Pearl will have to be shifted slightly to make sure we're meeting those daylight requirements I mentioned, but other than that really not going to be touching curb regulations as part of this project.

And if we do need to do anything like that on Pearl Street in the future, we'd likely look to the parking and curb use study that we're undertaking right now to figure out how we would modify those regulations, but really focusing our emphasis for this project on redoing the sidewalks, repaving the street and the traffic-calming elements.

So here's an image of the full scope that I just talked through and with that, I'll open it up to comments, questions, feedback, however the Commission would like to go from here.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Adam. So I have a couple of comments on my own. And then if people want to use the raise hand feature or physically raise a hand, I will try to scroll through and see and take in order of noticing.

So I'm curious, I noted in all of these that it said the sidewalks would remain the same width, but I don't actually see anywhere that calls out what that width is. So that would be my first question.

>>Adam: I think it varies a little bit, but I believe it's no narrower than seven feet from curb to property line on any segment. I think seven feet is about the average width. It

may be eight in some sections.

>>Bonnie: Okay. So it's all wider than 60 inches?

>>Adam: Correct.

>>Bonnie: Great. Thank you. I did also see that, you know, the City -- there was a lot of feedback about the level of parking remaining and the lack of bike infrastructure. I personally think that there should be more parking removal and also added bike lanes. I note also that you've addressed why that's not happening now, but I'm just stating it for the record.

So the only other thing that I have is I've talked about this a lot when the City is sort of redoing the streets in this large fashion, I don't think it goes far enough to not remove accessible parking spaces. I think that there needs to be an addition of them. There aren't enough in the city as it stands. There are none currently near that school.

I know that they do have some off- street parking, but as somebody who has gone to community meetings there, it is not very easy to find and it's not near the doors that are most often used for that. So I think that there should be some consideration to add some of that in. That's all I have.

Does anybody else have comments? Lian and then Holly.

>>Lian: This is Lian. Actually, I have a follow- up question to Bonnie's question. With the, like, seven feet of sidewalk, how much of a given sidewalk is generally eaten up by like utility poles and things like that? So of that seven feet, how much is actually expected to be passable travel?

>>Adam: That's a good question, Lian. I believe the typical tree -- I think the tree wells are the biggest pinch points right now and I think the typical is somewhere between two- and- a- half and three feet. So I don't think we'd make it any larger than that. Brian actually might know better than I would the typical width that we've been using for tree wells going forward for part of these projects.

>>Lian: And are there trees along this stretch?

>>Adam: There are on -- there are on the sections from McGrath to Cross and from Franklin to Mt. Vernon the wider section of the street. I don't believe there are trees. Or if there are, there aren't many trees on the middle section.

>>Lian: Okay. So is whatever sidewalk refinish plan has that already taken into account making sure that sections with trees still have a wide enough travel lane?

>>Adam: Yes. So that's definitely a base part of the project. These types of projects at this point, it's -- I'm only hesitating a little bit because that's not -- we kind of have done these -- we don't design everything at this stage

of the process. Some of these things in the sort of medium scale scope project are designed by -- or they're taken care of by the contractor in the field. So we'll give them a standard width and they will make sure they don't go any wider or narrower than that for whatever it is. So we'll make sure they aren't going any -- aren't going below the sort of typical minimum that we use.

>>Adam, this is --

>>Lian: And I --

>>Brian: Adam, would you like me to fill in a little?

>>Sure, that would be great.

>>Brian: This is Brian Postlewaite, director of engineering. The sidewalk reconstruction will maintain the existing trees to the extent practicable. The pinch points around the trees, especially in the narrow sections will never be less than 36 inches. We strive to get them as wide as we can without having to kill the tree. And we will also be using a porous paved material in those locations to minimize any sort of lifting of the panels that may happen over time. But I will be frank, if we cannot get a 36- inch passage around the tree, we will be removing the tree.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Thank you, Brian. I'm curious why you would not first consider installing a bump- out around the tree because I don't think any of us advocate for killing trees and we also wouldn't advocate for putting in brand- new sidewalks and still having only 36 inches. Like that's -- that's not really the best.

I see your hand, Harriette. I want to have Brian answer, and follow and Holly, I'm noting you as well. Okay, Brian.

>>Brian: Specifically regarding the tree bump- outs, we currently don't believe that there's a need to do that from a prospective of saving the trees. That is a strategy that we would use if it was on the side with existing parking, we would be fine doing a bump- out and displacing parking to allow a sidewalk to go around the tree.

But if we don't have parking on that side of the street, that's not an option available to us because we can't bump out into a travel way.

In addition, if we did choose to do that, we would maintain a path of travel against the back of sidewalk and primarily for people with vision impairments that we understand allows them to better navigate around the tree if they don't have to bump out around it. And the 36 inches isn't as necessary for people with vision impairments.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Thank you. Yeah, I think that might end up warranting further discussion as you get more

details about the actual areas of conflict with the project because, you know, as a wheelchair user, 36 inches, especially when you add snow, is pretty narrow. And it sounds like those two things are going to be competing for how to give the best access, so.

Lian, was that it?

>>Lian: This is Lian. That's all I had. Thank you.

>>Bonnie: Great. Thank you. Holly and then Harriette.

>>Holly: From what I understand the city is stating they strive for -- (bad audio) -- not 36, not 48. How does that -- I don't see that in this plan. Also, it's sort of a marketing, mock-up visual. I think I might understand it better if I could see more of like a blueprint of width and obstacles. But the whole -- let me back up a second.

Is this a book job? You called it a medium job, Adam?

>>Adam: Yeah. I'm surprised you're familiar with that term, but yes, it's a book job.

>>Holly: I'm a commissioner. I'm supposed to know things like that. You don't need to say where it's like medium and small. You can use the trade words and we'll have better language skills; right?

>>Adam: Totally.

>>Holly: So you said that a medium build you will look to the contractor to make sure the walkways meet the width. And I've seen other book jobs where the walkways don't make the width and/or a hole is cemented into the middle of a panel. And I'd like to do it right the first time than have someone come back.

How does the process work on a book job when a contractor is given some guidelines? Who goes back and inspects? And who from the ADA makes sure that everything is accurate?

>>Adam: Brian, do you want to chime in again on that one?

>>Brian: Yeah. This is Brian Postlewaite again. So on all of our annual streets projects both the portions of the job that have full designs and the portions that are designed more akin to a book job that is based on standard details, we have a separate engineering firm who is the, essentially the clerk of the works. They do the SDC service, engineering services during construction, and they measure all of the ADA compliance issues ranging from sidewalk width, even at the pinch points, including the slopes of the sidewalks, including all of the accessible curb ramps for compliance, and provides us a report that we -- that is then any noncompliant sections are returned to the contractor and they're required to remedy those locations prior to the end of the contract. And there are times when the contractor observes a particularly

challenging section and we will bring in either staff or the ESDC to come up with a specific design for that location if it is warranted.

>>Holly: Do you get a variance from MOB or -- I may have -- (audio bad) -- do you have to go to the state to get a variance if you can not find a way to meet what's required?

>>Brian: Yes. I believe we are required to go for a variance if we are unable to meet a specific MAAB requirement.

>>Holly: And you said it's the same contractor that goes out and does this work that the city uses? The engineering group that oversees sort of the intermediary.

>>Brian: Correct. The engineer -- the engineering consultant does the work and our team reviews it.

>>Holly: And what's their name? Excuse me.

>>Brian: What is their name? The contract for this job has not been released yet, so we don't have a consultant assigned to this one yet.

>>Holly: Okay. And then the reports of work that's already been completed in other areas of the city, that must be public information and it came back from that engineering group, was reviewed.

>>Brian: We may have that, yeah.

>>Holly: Okay. Thank you.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. One quick follow-up to what you said, Brian. Was Medford Street a book job?

>>Brian: Yes.

>>Bonnie: I'll just note as Holly points out that there were some problems there and that was a pretty recent build, so. Harriette.

>>Harriette: Yes. I'm obviously here mostly as an observer, I mean entirely. So I don't know what a book job is. I'm sort of presuming it's a formula that you can utilize when you're designing the project. Is that accurate?

>>Bonnie: Brian or Adam, would you like to --

>>Brian: Yeah. I would -- I think that's a fair characterization. We use standard details primarily from Mass Highway and the MAAB, but I think considering it a formula, it makes -- it is a good analogy.

>>Okay. And then my other question, a couple questions. One is, I guess until you do the contract you don't have a projected time where you have -- for a time. And I have one last question.

>>Brian: Yeah. The contracts are generally expected to take two years to complete, but we do not require -- we do not stipulate a specific construction schedule prior to, in the contract bid itself. That is a conversation that the city

has with the contractor to develop a schedule that works best for the community and the city.

>>Uh- huh. My last question is, are there any and does a plan like this cover traffic lights? And are there any traffic lights in those intersections? I don't know the area well enough to picture it.

>>This is Adam. There is one traffic light, traffic signal within the project area at Cross Street. So actually McGrath is signalized as well, but we're stopping short of that, it's owned by the state, so we're not touching that. There is a signal at Cross Street and Pearl Street, however, no signal work is not included in these book jobs.

>>And this is -- yeah. This is Harriette. Even though it's not in your purview, does anybody know if that's a sound signal or purely a light signal?

>>This is Adam. Are you asking if the pedestrian push buttons are audible, if they make a noise when you're supposed to cross?

>>Yeah.

>>Adam: So, no. This one I'm fairly certain is not audible; however, outside of this project effort, even though it's not within the scope, and Brian you can chime in as well because this is being led by your team, but I believe it is a priority to start to upgrade locations that don't have audible pedestrian systems at signals to being audible. I just don't know how far we've gotten in that effort yet.

>>Harriette: Thank you.

>>Brian: Just to follow, this is Brian, you're correct, we are doing a full inventory of traffic signals in the city with the intent to, in part, look at APS signals to see which ones we need to upgrade and trying to get them as similar as possible.

>>Thank you.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. So I see Colin and then I want to wrap this up so that we can get to the rest of the agenda.

>>Colin: Just to note that the city has had a policy on the books since I think at least 2016 that whenever a pedestrian signal is replaced, it has to be replaced with an accessible signal and one that makes noise. I don't know what the triggering requirements are for when signals boxes have to be replaced, but that's useful context.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. All right. Thank you, Adam. I think if you want to stop screen sharing. I would say keep the Commission updated on when this is more fleshed out in terms of widths and having those designs. Thank you.

>>Adam: Absolutely. Thanks for the feedback, everyone.

I'm going to hop off. But have a good night, all.

>>Bonnie: You, too.

>>This is Kate. I just want to add to Adam's presentation that there is also on the project website a feedback survey available. So if you'd like to dig in and provide more input, please make sure to check out the survey and sharing your networks, if interested. If it's helpful I can share the link in the chat just in case if anyone is interested.

>>Bonnie: So next, Adrienne, do you have anything to report?

>>Adrienne: I do. I have some communication from the Mayor's Office that I would like to pass along. Just to say that Mayor Balantine is keeping as part of her hundred-day plan priority of diversifying and allowing more access to all of the commissions in terms of membership, and that public posting of any new open appointments or open spaces will be part of that once she lifts that hold. And if anybody has any questions, you may e-mail Hannah and she is happy to answer them. So that is my update for this evening.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. Is there contact information for Hannah? I'm unfamiliar with who Hannah is.

>>Adrienne: Hannah is the legislative liaison out of the Mayor's Office.

>>Bonnie: So not Anish, who is the legislative liaison for most people attending City Council meeting are familiar with.

>>Adrienne: Right. They sort of divide and conquer depending on the need. She specifically said for this portion reach out to her if you need anything clarified. And I can -- I think I'll probably just put that in the chat, if that's easier for folks to access. And then I can also send it to Bonnie to pass around. And Anish is director of governmental affairs. He does work hand in hand with Hannah, but Hannah is probably the best contact for this. So I will put those information in those two spots.

>>Bonnie: Thank you.

>>Adrienne: You're welcome.

>>Bonnie: And that leads into my report and new business. So jumping back to old business, we had reviewed the variance for Mass dot, their rather large project. I just wanted to give folks the update that the MAAB did decide to move that to a full hearing. It was not on the agenda for yesterday, so we expect it will be on the agenda for their next meeting, which is February 28th.

They unfortunately do not put out agendas until two days prior. They stick really close to that 48 hours required for OML. But I would happily share that link once I receive it or

once they post it. But I encourage folks to just sort of book mark it on your calendar. You might want to show up in support of asking them not to grant that variance.

>>For my notes, can you remind me, MAAB --

>>Bonnie: Yes, MAAB --

>>What was the variance.

>>Bonnie: It was the variance on Mass dot and their proposed changes on McGrath and Poplar in terms of sidewalk slope, they were looking to not be in compliance.

As Adrienne mentioned, so at the January meeting, we were told that Henry would be put on the City Council agenda to be confirmed or sent to the confirmation of appointments committee to be confirmed as a Commissioner, and I received a phone call the afternoon shortly before that City Council meeting saying that there was a pause on all new appointments to Commissions. We were the only affected Commission in the city.

I shared with everybody the letter I wrote. I firmly believe we need to increase diversity but I also believe this Commission has been sorely lacking in commissioners for years and has struggled to function, and even as we presently sit, we do not meet the state requirements to have three people with a disability and to have a family member of a person with a disability, and we still have multiple open commission seats. So I think there is a lot of room for increasing diversity and adding new members while keeping functionality.

And I noted in the letter that currently we meet a lot of diversity in terms of socioeconomic status, education, gender, sexuality. We are lacking racial diversity as are pretty much all of the commissions in the city, and I find it difficult that the City is pausing the appointment of somebody who meets the disability requirement that our Commission is specifically tasked with having while at the same time reconfirming somebody as the appointed official on the Commission when the City has direct control over increasing diversity with that and is instead putting somebody in for another three years without taking the opportunity to look at that as well.

But that's where it stands. So what I'd like to do is take a vote on Henry as an associate commissioner, which would not be a voting role, but would give him some more official capacity on the Commission. So commissioners, do you want to do that? I see a nod from Holly.

>>Yes.

>>Lian: This is Lian. I think that I don't want it to stop there. I do want him to actually be able to be affirmed as a full commissioner. But given that voting him in as an

appointed commissioner is something we have power to do here ourselves, I think we absolutely should.

>>Bonnie: Great. Would somebody like to make a motion to that effect?

>>Holly: This is Holly. I'll make a motion.

>>Bonnie: I think you have to spell out the full thing.

>>Holly: I'm sorry. I will make a motion to vote in --

>>Bonnie: Henry Hardy.

>>Holly: -- Henry Hardy as a commissioner --

>>Bonnie: Associate.

>>Holly: -- as an associate commissioner.

>>Bonnie: I make that a motion. Voting members are myself, Lian, Holly and Katie. Aye.

>>Aye.

>>Aye.

>>Bonnie: Great. The motion passes unanimously. Welcome to being an associate commissioner, Henry. And I see that Colin wants to speak, which is great. I was going to do that next. So I'm happy to have you speak on your own.

>>Colin: Great. Thank you, Bonnie. So as some folks probably know, I have been on this Commission since 2012. I served as chair for six years, from 2013 through 2019. It sounds as though -- so I wasn't at the January meeting because my grandmother had just died and I was, you know, in mourning and not really in the shape.

But I understand it was discussed at that meeting that my term has expired and I cannot be reappointed to the Commission having served multiple consecutive terms, which I understand, but also was something that we had discussed as a group and I think even had attempted to amend our bylaws to allow me to remain on the Commission.

But if that's -- please, go ahead.

>>Bonnie: Yeah. So, Colin, we reached out to the city clerk and your term officially ended at the end of December, but there's some -- it was also marked on the spreadsheet of commissioners that that might have been out of date even then. We did discuss this previously. And the manager of diversity, equity and inclusion, Nancy Salamune had reached out to the city solicitor's office and it is our belief that there was permission granted to give you another term. However, the city clerk's office has no record of that and it would take talking to the city solicitor to see if they have any record of it.

So if that's something you would like to pursue, I think you would need to work with Adrienne and the city solicitor. I didn't want to pursue it on your behalf given I don't think

the city solicitor's office would find a request from me compelling. So I didn't want to get in the way of that.

>>Thank you. That's useful information. I know the possibility was brought up as me serving as an associate commissioner. I don't think I would be willing to do that, with no disrespect to the role, I just -- working 50 to 60-hour a week job doing disability rights advocacy, this is a significant additional time commitment, it's one that's been worth it to me for, you know, coming up on a decade because this is, you know, a body that I really care about.

But not being able to vote, not being able to be a full member, I think that tilts the balance somewhat. So I'm happy to write an e-mail, but otherwise I think this may be my last meeting on the Commission.

I just want to observe that, you know, I have seen a whole bunch of eras of this Commission. There have been times we were effective. There were long stretches when because of lack of members we did nothing for months to years at a time. There was a policy then from the city's legal department that quorum was five, regardless of how many members the Commission had, which kept us from meeting for -- you know, achieving quorum for over a year consecutively.

Yeah, membership has been a struggle this entire time. But this last couple of years since Bonnie succeeded me as chair have been the most effective in the history of this Commission, the most impactful, the ones that have gone beyond being a body that put on, you know, disability employment month event a year that didn't do a whole lot else, to one that has had a meaningful impact on the accessibility of Somerville. And I would hate to see that go away.

And I think that the Commission, you know, that was achieved on the -- advocacy and the devotion of the members of this body. And the recent policies coming down from the City, while I understand their intent, seem really to be undercutting that and I hope that this is able to be resolved in a way that doesn't derail all the momentum this Commission has built over the last two years or so.

That's it. Thanks.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Colin. I appreciate your kind words and acknowledgement, and I want to take a moment to appreciate your service to this Commission. I would not have been on it without you literally running me down at a city meeting and begging me to join and pushing me to dive in more and take over as chair. So thank you. And I think the Commission is losing multiple good people.

That leads into the next thing. I think everybody on the

Commission is now aware -- I see Henry's hand. Do you -- okay, if you want to take a moment before I -- we can't hear you, Henry.

>>Oh. Thank you. This is Henry Hardy. Colin, we need you. We need your institutional memory and we have no way to replace that. Of course, if you're not happy, if this isn't fulfilling, I understand why. I'm similarly perplexed, but I'm willing to trust the mayor and trust Adrienne that the process is going to move forward. And I urge you to do the same.

I think that on the merits, we're stronger with you than without you. And I would like you to stay, please. Thank you.

>>Colin: Thank you, Henry. Let me think through this. I can certainly reach out to the state solicitor's office and see if that leads anywhere. I can follow up with you one-on-one after this. I appreciate that. And thank you, Bonnie. It's been a pleasure working with you.

>>Bonnie: Thank you both. So I think my fellow commissioners are aware at this point that at the end of the month myself and Lian will be moving to Malden. I don't want to speak for Lian, but I want to say I will miss Somerville tremendously. I'm excited to still be close by and I'm happy that we were able to find a house to purchase, but I will miss being a part of this group and working with all of you.

In terms of institutional knowledge, you all have my e-mail and I believe you all have my phone number, and I am happy to continue being a person with that knowledge and sharing it. I'm not disappearing. I will still remain in close contact with many city councillors and I'd be happy to facilitate introductions to the new councillors for anybody here who would like that.

So it's going to be sad to leave you all, but. Moving on. So I shared with everybody something the city of Boston does -- oh, sorry. Lian, did you want a chance to speak as well?

>>Lian: This is Lian. No. I think you covered everything.

>>Bonnie: Okay. So I shared, it's the article 80 checklist, the city of Boston has done something where they have an accessibility checklist for most projects that are being built. And I wanted to share that as something that I think this Commission should look into creating. I had some conversations with a planning board member. The planning board covers a lot of private development in the city, not the city construction projects, so not like the plazas, but the

private developments that go above a certain point. And they are interested in increasing their knowledge on accessibility and implementing what they can to try and do better.

So I think that this would be an excellent template. I think it would be great to invite them to come to this meeting. I know that they will be reaching out to Adrienne and the Institute for Human Center Design about trying to put together a presentation for them. I think it's important to have both the technical aspects that Adrienne can cover in regards to ADA and MAAB and the more personal, like, how do you approach universal design from the standpoint of somebody who needs those features.

But I think it's exciting. They have several new members, and I think this is a great thing to go down that path with them. I'm happy to go over some of the finer points if people reviewed it and want to do that, but if not, I'm happy to move on to letting Adrienne talk about her role as the coordinator.

So I see Holly's hand.

>>Holly: Hi, Bonnie. It's Holly. I thought what you shared was fantastic. I know it is something that the city of Boston has, but it was very thorough. It had all the current information in one complete document. And it had checks and balances, which, you know, we're a very busy city. We are constantly in chaos when it comes to our physical spaces, our construction, our utilities. And I think that it has great value and should be discussed further and how we move forward with that. Unless someone can tell me what we have that fills that now, I don't know if Adrienne or Crystal or Denise who work within this realm could share their thoughts or maybe take on the follow-up to report back and let us know what is in place.

And I still have one other thing to add. I have never seen a commission or council in Massachusetts that says you're done with your seat unless they have someone to fill it.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. It is in our bylaws that you have to be a Somerville resident and it is in the bylaws that after serving two consecutive terms, you are required to take a break.

Now, I believe that there are exceptions for if there are empty seats and there are no prospects to fill it and that's where the legal department comes in because unfortunately, at the time our Commission -- that was still at the point where we were accomplishing some things, but there was a lot of sort of push back in terms of not being able to speak directly with people within the city and naivety on my part about being able

to reach out to people.

So all of those conversations would have been between Nancy Salamune and legal department and we just got reports back and we are unfortunately missing the meeting notes for the meeting where that was reported back to us, so.

>>Holly: That's why the transcripts are very important. Thankfully having live transcripts we can download those files.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Yes. And I note that Councillor Clingan put in the chat he has put in an order asking for an exemption. Is that specifically for Colin's appointment? Oh, for the residency requirement.

>>Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I put in an order regarding specifically the commissions that are bound by law to exist and that they -- we make an exemption, the city draws up an exemption allowing current members if they are displaced or for whatever reason have to move that they can serve until such time as we are able to replace them.

As for the term limits, I hadn't -- you know, I know that can sometimes be a good thing. I think in the current situation it's not a good thing because I think that, you know, oftentimes we are sort of starved for folks who are willing to do what you're all doing this evening and basically volunteer your time. So I think maybe it deserves another look. But I can see the intention behind having the limits.

I know other folks from women's commission and so on that have had to step aside and then rejoin after the fact. But this would be specifically for the residency requirement, if somebody was to leave in the middle of a term.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. I was unaware of that. Thank you for letting us know. Great. Were there any other comments or questions before we move on? Okay. Then Adrienne, if you'd like to share with us. You've waited patiently for multiple agendas.

>>Excuse me, Bonnie. I didn't get my hand up fast enough. So as you and I agreed that Colin would give you my contact information. And I'm most interested in finding out through the contact among other things if there are any limits to the invitation to commissionerhip because I want to do some outreach for diversity to support us. Anyway, you and I will converse. I like text or phone calls best, and I can do e-mail, too.

>>Bonnie: I am happy to connect you to Adrienne. I will tell you how we have previously done it. This Commission spent a lot of time last year talking about the process for bringing on new commissioners. The way that commissioner

appointments work for all commissions in the city is the mayor has to officially recommend somebody for appointment, and our Commission, and I know some others in the city, found it problematic that there is no sort of involvement with the commissions and it's very ad hoc in terms of what each commission does.

Some of them have a very detailed process. They have a lot of discussion and they make sure somebody is going to be a good fit in terms of being able to show up, being able to participate, fulfilling the needs of the Commission. And some of them there's no involvement whatsoever. And we've kind of been somewhere in the middle.

So we went through a process last year where we talked together and created some questions so that we could eliminate the resume requirements because we found that kind of unfair and unhelpful because lived experience can be extremely useful on our Commission. And there were some of us, myself included, that to get on the Commission I found it very daunting to supply a resume. I do not have a traditional work history. I'm not a high school graduate. And I don't believe that that affects my ability to serve the Commission.

So we talked a lot about that. And we created a standard set of questions to be either filled out or we offered phone calls or Zoom to discuss them where we would type the answers. And I did that with Henry and one other person who has since rescinded their application. And we will let City Council know that we were going to be doing that so that when they go to confirm somebody they can at least ask is the Commission aware of this recommendation, do they support this recommendation, do they have any concerns.

You know, again, that's officially, we don't have any power in terms of who comes on to the Commission, but the commissioners here agreed that that's the process we wanted and we wanted people to show up to at least a couple of meetings prior to make sure that they knew what they'd be getting into. And that's where we stand. And I see that Councillor Clingan wants to chime in.

>>Thank you, Madam Chair, for the time. That's a good idea as far as the specific Commission. I remember one of my colleagues brought that up. One of the ongoing issues in general is dealing with the mayor's appointment committee. I think that's the exact name of it, but it's a three-person commission that essentially fills appointments of that come in, the mayor selects everyone, they send them to the Commission. The Commission then -- sorry, go ahead.

>>Bonnie: Sorry. I believe that that only addresses

certain commissions and not ours.

>>Well, everybody goes -- my understanding was everybody goes through that particular three- person commission, whether it's for any appointments.

>>Bonnie: So it's listed on the city website that it covers a specific list of them, but I'm not sure, maybe it does go through all of it. We have been told that it goes directly from the ADA Coordinator to the Mayor's Office. Adrienne can correct if that hasn't been the process. I'm not sure if we'd know if the Mayor's Office then sends it to that group.

>>Okay. Well, just to elaborate then, definitely that's something that needs clarification. But ultimately, I've advocated for making that commission from three to five because they oftentimes have quorum issues themselves as well as, not to speak to anybody's lack of commitment, but oftentimes they -- you know, they're unable to get together to meet.

So I also asked for a specific day, like the second Tuesday of every month. And again, this is with the hope that more regularity will allow for -- so people don't languish in that process.

Anyway, to your point, and again, with clarification if it does turn out that they all go through the mayor's commission, I think that could satisfy a couple of issues, which would be you could expand it, you know, from three like to four and then have the fifth person being from one of the respective commissions that would sit on that for that particular commission. But again, that's all tied in.

You may have mixed that, Bonnie, Madam Chair, with your -- you may be right about that. I had always assumed that they all went through that three- person commission because that's the mayor's commission and basically, it's essentially like goes back -- you know, they just screen them out or whatever.

You may be right, but this is something that deserves a lot more look at and conversation. Thanks for the time.

>>Bonnie: Thank you so much, Councillor Clingan. I think we know from the first confirmation of appointments meeting -- appointment -- I'm unclear on what the acronym stands for right now, but subset of City Council that goes over the recommended appointments, they themselves are looking at the process as well. So I think there is a lot of clarity to be had around the whole thing.

I see Henry, I just want to try and move through this quickly. Confirmation of appointments and personnel matters,

thank you Jamie. Okay, Henry quickly, and then I want to move on.

>>Henry: Very quickly. Councillor Clingan, just as a point of information, a year ago I was invited by Nancy Salamune to apply for this Commission and to start participating in meetings. And at one time we had a number of candidates. Bonnie, was it five people that we had?

>>Bonnie: There were eight at one point.

>>Henry: There were eight. And I don't really want to comment on the process except to say that the outcome has been that I'm the only candidate of that eight remaining. And the path forward to my confirmation seems to be unclear, but I'm not going away. And I'm honored to be an associate commissioner, thank you very much.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Henry. Yeah. It took me well over a year to be confirmed, and Lian as well and Katie as well. And I will say that the people who were persistent have provided a lot of good to this Commission, so I'm happy that you're not going away, Henry. But I also think that that needs to change. I would like to see it not take that long for people.

All right. So moving on to Adrienne.

>>Adrienne: Thanks, Bonnie. I think the priorities part of this conversation probably needs more time. So I am politely requesting for this to be added for a longer period of time, meaning at the top of the March agenda.

There are some new faces here this evening and I'm going to maybe just reintroduce myself, so some of the people I didn't see the past couple of months know who I am. I am Adrienne Pomeroy, the City's ADA Coordinator, I started mid November. And I come with a master's in public policy that focused on disability advocacy and policy, so that's formal education.

I am also the daughter of a mother who has become disabled because of aging and she lives in Ohio, my hometown of Cincinnati, so I've been facilitating her care and aides and all those things, Medicare, from here which is challenging when you're not in the same state as that family member.

In addition to that, my previous employment with Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong, which is a disability advocacy organization statewide, but the office is in Boston, and I did operations and training with them.

I've been taking a lot of time, especially with our transition with mayoral administration to meet with City Councillors who requested at time some members of this Commission. I meet with Holly and Katie next week. Bonnie and I met at the top of my tenure, the start of my tenure.

And just really sort of listening and learning about the needs of this community and the best way to serve this Commission as the staff liaison.

So I will leave it there for this evening, and we can continue in March.

>>Bonnie: We have 13 minutes, and that was the final agenda item. We could approve minutes from previous --

>>Adrienne: I think, considering the earlier conversation about recordkeeping, that probably would -- I would recommend then as your staff liaison and good use of time. I am working on getting the transcripts so we can add that to the record as well.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Thank you. One other note is recordings. So I know City Council gets theirs up pretty quickly. Like usually they're up by the next morning, and I have never seen one of our recordings posted. And yet, we have been recording for quite some time. So if you could look into that as our staff liaison as well, that would be great.

>>Adrienne: Sure. I can do that as well.

>>Bonnie: And I think, Harriette, did you want to speak or was that --

>>Harriette: Yes. I just wanted clarification. So, Bonnie and Lian, are your presence at the March meeting dependent upon Councillor Clingan applying for an exception for you all, whether temporary or extendedly to continue as commissioners?

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. Short answer, yes. Longer answer is I was unaware of that motion being put in, so I would need to consider my capacity to continue serving, though I love the idea of having the option. I will remain as chair through the end of the month. I forgot, in my report that tomorrow, my presence has been requested along with I believe Brian and Chair Lynch who arrived as we did introductions but you are welcome to introduce yourself now, is the chair of the licensing commission.

And there's some outstanding business regarding outdoor dining. So we've been requested to speak at the licenses and permits committee meeting tomorrow. And I'm not sure if there will be any follow-up to that. So I intend to serve at least through the end of the month. And then I guess if this motion goes through, I will need to consider whether or not I stay on the Commission until they can find more people to serve.

But, I am happy to do the work of connecting you to Adrienne, who should have more information on what the mayor's plan is in terms of adding new commissioners. I'm happy for you to connect directly as well, I just didn't want to ask you

to share your personal contact information in a recorded public meeting.

>>Oh, that's fine. That's fine. And just one more thing, Bonnie. I guess I was saying the exemption, whether you just are patient and extending enough to stay with us, stay with the Commission for one or two months on the off chance we can get another few commissioners appointed, you know. I don't know. I can see how you've experienced enough to know that who knows how long it might take. So thank you. I appreciate it.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Harriette. Chair Lynch.

>>Bonnie, I knew you could see me in the audience there. I knew I wasn't going to escape your view. Bonnie, the reason I'm attending tonight is a little birdie told me that you would be exiting the Commission, and regardless of what happens as a result of Councillor Clingan's motion or how the mayor moves through this, I just wanted to take the time tonight, I am chair of the licensing commission and it's been my pleasure to be working with Bonnie and the Commission mainly since the beginning of the pandemic with outdoor dining.

And Bonnie, I wanted to add a couple of words of thank you to you and the Commission for the job and the work that you've done. It certainly makes my life easier when I have advocates such as your commission bringing to our attention things that our licensees as chair of the commission of what we need to be aware of. And I'm going to promise you this, I know I will see you tomorrow night at our command performance in front of the licenses and permits for the City Council, but I promise you this, Bonnie, whether you stay or go, we're going to continue working to advocate for all ADA requirements when it comes to our restauranteurs and our licensees. So thank you for the work. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at your meeting. Thank you.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Chair Lynch. I appreciate the kind words. And I'll definitely hold you to that, you know that. And I look forward to seeing the completed version of the outdoor dining plan, which I sincerely hope incorporates most, if not all of our recommendations.

I know there is some you might not have control over that are specifically pandemic related, but in terms of the other things, I really look forward to seeing not just my comments, but I think that there were a lot of fantastic comments that the other commissioners and our new associate commissioner put forth, and Ginny as well. And I really can't wait to see the program do better next year and not need to be complaint-

driven.

>>Our work is never done, Bonnie.

>>Bonnie: That's so true. But hopefully there will be less work on an ongoing basis. So Councillor Clingan says I can introduce it in Maldon. I think whether I stay on this Commission longer or leave in March, I'm looking forward to taking a much needed break after my service to this community is done. And then I'll consider Malden.

But I'm not looking to immediately jump in. I'm looking forward to, I don't know, being a new homeowner and doing so much work on a new house. But not to get too sidetracked, we have meeting minutes. And there was an issue in terms of Director Capers' name that I'm hoping Brian got a chance to fix. But we could also vote on approving the minutes with that change, so Brian.

>>Brian: This is Brian. I was not able to go in and change that, but that is what will happen.

>>Bonnie: Great. So I believe those were July, August and September minutes. I can go look at my e-mail.

>>Brian: July, August, September and December, and the supplemental meeting in January were the minutes that I was able to complete before the meeting started.

>>Bonnie: Great. Thank you so much. Were my fellow commissioners able to review those minutes?

>>Lian: This is Lian. I looked them over. As much as I can remember what happened in July, they all looked good.

>>Bonnie: Okay. Holly and Katie?

>>Holly: I did not have a chance to look them over.

>>Bonnie: Okay. So do we want to put this at the top of March's agenda to -- okay. And I think also, this might be another thing that you can look into, Adrienne, we had talked about having a better system for sort of keeping documents and notes, and we're told that would have to be looked into with the city. So I don't know if that's something you can bring back in March.

>>Adrienne: So just to clarify. So beyond posting what's available on the website or can you just clarify for me?

>>Bonnie: Sure. So right now the agenda gets posted. And then there doesn't seem to be anything kept on the website in terms of our Commission. Like I could be looking in the wrong place, but certainly if there is, there's not an easy way for us to kind of go back and look at things. And there have been a lot of questions about bylaws and minutes and presentations and just having an accessible way to kind of view all of that.

>>Bonnie, this is Harriette. I would just like to underscore that because websites are very difficult for me in

general. And you went into it to find the time of the meeting and commented that there were no links to past history, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So that would be wonderful.

>>Adrienne: So I just put in the link that's directly from the main Commission website that lists, it's just very much I can call it a laundry list and it lists what they have or what has been sent to OMI. And I think Councillor Clingan just did the same thing.

So the way they categorize it currently is they have agenda and then they have meeting minutes, and then they have meeting items, so that's anything supplementally. So if you're reviewing like the Pearl Street design, yeah. So it's sort of -- it's a laundry list. I could definitely look in to see if it could be labeled more specifically, if that would be helpful.

>>Bonnie: This is Bonnie. That would be helpful. Also, I just want to clarify, is this under "additional resources" on the bottom right of the page?

>>Adrienne: Yeah. So you have to click additional resources and I think it's to the right, it's like agenda and minutes.

>>Bonnie: Thank you. I had not seen that before and I have looked repeatedly. I think we all haven't. It's not intuitive or clear. It is kind of standard format for the city website, but I think that this might be a great area to talk to the web team about if that could be changed. Like I think not just for us, but, you know, City Council meetings. And it's just kind of if you don't know where to look for things, it's really difficult to figure out where things are. And I think there's got to be a better way. But thank you. I'm glad that's there. I think we've all struggled and haven't found it.

>>Adrienne: Yes. Thank you for the feedback, Bonnie. I will definitely pass this on for consideration as the website as a whole begins to go over its redesign.

>>It's a major access thing, I'll tell you. Thank you.

>>Hopefully whoever does your web design will actually learn how to write the code correctly because Somerville's website is inaccessible, holy mess. And I'm speaking for someone who has to use screen reader. And I'm tired of buttons labeled buttons, stuff not labeled or just an image. Come on, do a better job, Somerville.

>>Yes. Text label everything. Thank you very much.

>>We pay taxes to get things done right. Let's do it.

>>Here, here.

>>Bonnie: Thank you, Harriette and Ginny. I think that

this discussion is a prime example of needing more people with more diverse disabilities on the Commission. And I hope one or both of you apply when we learn how that can happen.

>>Ginny: Well, my problem is, since I'm on PTAC I don't think I can serve on two commissions, on two committees.

>>Bonnie: That is entirely up to your capacity because there is no requirement -- or there is nothing preventing it, from my understanding.

>>Ginny: Okay.

>>Bonnie: And I believe that there is at least one other person I see looking through the various commission lists that serves on multiple committees. And we could confirm that with the city solicitor as well.

>>Ginny: I wasn't sure about that. And I mean, my housemate's been trying to get on the disability commission for a long time, but she does not use technology and cannot sit down and handwrite anything because she's totally blind. And it seems like she's barred because she just doesn't have the technical skills she needs. And I don't think it should be up to me to do the work for her.

>>Bonnie: That is a conversation that should be had. We are hitting up against 8:00 p.m. But is that -- does she use the phone?

>>Ginny: Yes. I think we should have that conversation. I know Pauline has reached out to Adrienne and her conversation to me was Adrienne is a bureaucrat, which kind of led me to believe Pauline didn't get much help.

>>Bonnie: I am sorry to hear that. And I'd be happy to have a conversation as well. I'm not sure how much help I can be but I'd be happy to listen and see if I can do anything to facilitate her joining us.

>>Ginny: Sure. I'll get back in touch with you. I have your e-mail, but I don't have a phone number.

>>Bonnie: I will e-mail you my phone number after this meeting.

>>Ginny: Thank you. Let's do this, because Pauline can be of benefit. I mean, you know, she's one of these folks that is frustrated by a lack of access and a lack of communication and material in a format she can really read, which means braille.

>>Bonnie: Okay.

>>Ginny: And we've been fighting with this for the 27 years I've lived here.

>>Bonnie: I am sorry to hear that. Though, I will say that I'm not surprised. I have been here for almost 20 years and have fought with a lot of things in the city as well.

Hopefully we can work on fixing it.

>>Ginny: We'll get there. We'll get there.

>>Bonnie: We all agree that city of Somerville website sucks.

>>Ginny: It does. It's awful.

>>Excuse me, Bonnie. This is Harriette. Could you just share with Ginny my contact information because Ginny I'd like to have a conversation with you, too.

>>Bonnie: Why don't I start an e-mail after this with Colin and myself and Ginny, and Colin can move Harriette in and everybody will have contact info.

>>Absolutely. We'll fix this. We'll get there.

>>Bonnie: Thank you so much, everyone. It's been a pleasure. And I am going to motion to adjourn the meeting.

>>Holly: This is Holly. I'll second that motion.

>>Bonnie: Great.

>>Thank you, everyone. Thank you very much.

>>Bonnie: Thank you so much for joining us.

>>Thanks, Bonnie.

(Concluded)