

SOMERVILLE DISABILITIES COMMISSION

TRANSCRIPT, MAY 2007 MEETING

EILEEN FELDMAN (EF): Hi, and Welcome! This is the May 21, 2007 monthly meeting of the Somerville Disabilities Commission. Glad you could join us! We'll introduce ourselves, I'm Eileen Feldman, I'm the President of the Disabilities Commission. And this is...

WV: I'm **WILLIAM VIENNEAU**, Board Member.

AR: I'm **AL RUBIO**, Board Member.

JM: I'm **JOE MEDEIROS**, a longtime Somerville resident, and long time Member of the Commission.

KB: **KELLY ANN BINARI**, Associate Member. *[UPDATE: KellyAnn Binari and Tom Gilbert have been nominated to be Voting Members and we await the Mayor's Office and Board of Alderman's approval of these appointments.]*

CC: I'm **CARLENE CAMPBELL**, the City's new ADA Coordinator

JC: **JOHN CIAMPA**, long time Member.

TK: I'm **TODD KAPLAN**, I'm a Somerville resident and attorney with the Somerville Cambridge Legal Services.

BR: I'm **BARRY RAFKIND**, Human Rights Commissioner.

EF: And we're so glad to be gathered here, today. Missing from our group is **TOM GILBERT**, Tom wasn't able to come to the meeting today, folks, but I'll keep in touch with him so that he's apprised of what the meeting will have and all the information, and we'll also be seeing him on Wednesday. If anyone has any messages for him, please let me know after the meeting.

And we're so delighted to have you join us, Carlene Campbell, City's new ADA Coordinator, replacing Richard Tranfaglia. We're really happy to have you here and we're really looking forward to a positive collaboration with you and a very productive relationship. And I was wondering if it would be OK, with you, since we'd all like to know more about you, if we can ask you a couple of questions?

CC: Sure, why not!

EF: OK, well thanks very much! So I guess, first, let me throw it out to the members here, are there any questions you'd like to ask Carlene, who is taking over for Richard's position?

CC: Well, would you like me to give a little background about myself? Where I came from and stuff like that. [Everyone joins in saying "yes!"] And I apologize, I have a very bad cold! I began my first career in Social Services, where I worked Springfield, MA and after I left that position, I ran a couple of group homes for youth. When I came back to Boston, I worked for the YMCA for a period of time, both in Malden and Boston. And then my last job in the social services realm, I was the Executive Director for a dual diagnosis program for adults who were both mentally ill and dealing with drug and alcohol addiction. And in that program, there was also a Supported Housing component, a program that I also oversaw.

And I left that position and I actually went to work for Representative Charlie Shannon. And I see Mr. Rubio there, who always used to come in and visit Mr. Shannon, and Stan Koty and myself, and I was hired as the Human Services Coordinator. I was in that position for approximately a year and a half, and then I became his PR person.

Fast forward three years ago, where I was offered a position in the City, in the *[Somerville]* Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, where I started out dealing with the Community Development Block Grant funding, which deals with social service issues, and economic development through Federal funds. And from that position, I became the Community Outreach Director which is how I got to know William (WV), by being put on the Continuum of Care, which is the collaboration we have in the City...

EF: The Homeless Coalition...

CC: Yes, thank you. And from that position, which is just, in the last 3 and 1/2 weeks, give or take, I have now just been offered the position of Assistant Director of Personnel. And, as one of my roles as the Assistant Director, I was offered the ADA Coordinator position. And that's how I came to be here!

Everyone: Well, congratulations! Welcome aboard!

CC: Yes, thank you! And that's probably the quickest synopsis of where I've been in the last 10, 12 years!

EF: So that's a lot of change that's happened in the last 3 1/2 weeks!

CC: Yeah And very exciting changes too, very exciting.

EF: So, that's the... Assistant Director of Personnel?

CC: Yeah

EF: That's a full time job. And the ADA Coordinator, for a City of 80,000- that's a full time job! So, how are you gonna do both of them!

CC: Well, I wear many hats when I walk into City Hall, and I'm one of those people that can juggle many different projects at the same time, so this is definitely something that will be added into my daily activities. So, this is one of my projects which I'm responsible for. And I look forward to working with the Commission and the Mayor's Office, and being a good liaison between you folks and the City as we go forward.

EF: So what are your hopes and aspirations as the City's ADA Coordinator?

CC: Well, You're gonna have to bear with me, this is my first meeting tonight so I'm really here to listen, to kind of take in, I have gone to the State Training, the 2-day State Training...so that's my first step,

EF: And that was the Community Access Monitor training, that's held by the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities... *[see <http://www.mass.gov/mod/camprogram.html>]*

CC: And that was at the very end of April, which gave me my "101 on ADA" and when you're called out to a scene- how to deal with the complaints and issues that arise, so that was a very interesting educational conference. And I hear that you folks are going to be going to that soon?

EF: Yes, We hope to be going to the Arlington one, that's at least 4 of us that would like to go...William is one of those!

CC: Excellent. It was a very interesting seminar, it was really interesting on my part. so I'm really here to listen to YOU folks tonight- other than going to the MBTA meetings, and I'm sure that I'll get pulled into other meetings as things come up, I'm really here to listen to you folks tonight, and get a feel of where you are, and then, start our relationship from there.

EF: OK. So over the past year and a half, we've had the pleasure of speaking with the folks in the Public Health Department, and the Police and Fire Department, and also the folks at the IT Department talking about Website Accessibility issues. We really understand that, for the Police and Fire Department, the Public Safety Departments, one thing that we're hoping can happen is training for those Public Safety Department staff, so that we can make sure that when folks have emergencies, that there's TTY access. And also psychosocial training, so folks really understand that there's really a myriad of disabilities in the disability culture, and there are various ways that those present themselves. And, so that there's a basic and growing understanding among our wonderful Public Safety staff about how to deal with folks with disabilities.

Now, in the United States Census, the 2000 Census, it said there were 19.4% of folks in Somerville that are disabled. So that's close to 16,000 folks. And so what they're talking about is folks that have manual, mobility, neurological, sensory deficits, and psychological deficits- and these change folks' lives in a certain way. It would be great to have Sensitivity training all throughout the City staff, but, particularly, we're hoping that the Public Safety Department staff to get some

type of training in there.

CC: If I may, I know this is your meeting and you have an agenda and that this is a short period of time... I'm wondering if there's a subcommittee of this group that can meet with me, and kind of give me an update on where you are, as I'm sure you've been working on many different projects over the last year and a half. I'd love to meet with you and have a longer conversation where it's not redundancy, but I want to get caught up to speed, so I have a better picture of where next steps need to happen, where we're going...

How we can work as a collective team to move forward. If that's something that could happen, I'd really appreciate it.

EF: That would be very cool! So if there are any members of the Commission- and also friends of the Commission, that would like to come to that meeting, let's draw that together...

EF: I'd like to just give you summary of some of the objectives and needs that we've advised, counseled, requested, and described to your predecessor, so that you can get some kind of an idea of some of the ground that we've tried to cover over the past year.

So, Public Safety issues, Website Accessibility issues... Of course, as you know, from being at the City-wide meetings, Curb and Pedestrian access is always a big subject on the agenda... Even when we don't have it on the agenda, it inevitably comes up! And I know that folks that are listening and watching this program, also have those concerns...

We recently have been putting out a Citywide survey. And I can tell you that we've actually gotten a larger response than I'd expected. Pedestrian access was one of the largest numbered complaints and requests that we did receive through that survey.

As well, a number of people did talk about, when they just call the City, requesting Assistive Technology...so the Communications, basically, the whole, large field of Communication,s just trying to widen the City's outreach to the hearing-impaired community, through making sure there's enough TTY and making sure also, again, with the website accessibility,--

I imagine that you've put notice of your position on the website as well as the City Buildings?

CC: I'm going to go on the assumption that the Communications Department did that--that's what that Department does, they handle that- so I have not gone on the website to see if that's been updated or changed as yet...

EF: I would strongly suggest that you take care of that yourself, because last year, that just didn't happen the whole year! It might just really require some advocacy on your part, I'm not sure!

CC: (laughing) Alright, when I first go in, I'll put that on the top of my list! And please bear with me, because I'm still learning a whole 'nother job, and...

EF: I know! And yet, for the benefit of our viewers, I'm sure we're gonna repeat this a number of times- at each of our meetings. As well, Joe, [speaking to JOE MEDEIROS] you were telling me that Somerville has the second largest population of folks that are visually impaired in the greater Boston area?

JM:: The blind, you mean? Yes, it has the largest group of blind people, next to Watertown.

EF: next to Watertown...

CC: I did not know this!

TK: Is it Watertown, because that's where the Perkins School is?

JM: Yes, perhaps because of the Perkins School. But, Somerville seems to have a lot living here. They vary, you know, they move in and out, just like everyone else.

EF:Yeah. So because of that, I did request the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development to look into a Braille printer in the Somerville location. I mean, it would be really wonderful for us to be able to put out information in Braille, as well as, of course, your Office and the whole City staff.

Let me turn it over to other folks who have also been really great in advocating for various issues for the disabled population. Who'd like to talk? Yes, Sir William!

WILLIAM VIENNEAU: Yes, there's one thing that Craig discussed, but we had never did it, was to have a police officer come onto our Committee?

EF: Yes! Actually, we spoke to Acting Chief Bradley about that. He suggested that Lt. Upton would also be a member of the Commission.

CC: Would you like me to follow up on that?

EF: Yes, that would be fabulous! Thank you, Carlene. Lt. Upton appears to be very skillful in many areas, and we'd look forward to having him with us. Todd?

TK: Yes, One thing, you mentioned about Pedestrian Access being a big issue on the survey. And we are looking at that in reference to the Bus Stop Access Project. Again, I've harped on this a lot, but I think it's a big issue, is snow removal in the City. It's something that really impacts a lot of people. Huge numbers of people. Because snow removal is so poorly done in the City. Somehow, it would be really good to think about that: How it can be improved- whether it's enforcement, or the City taking on bigger pieces, or getting an agreement with businesses, that they really do a good job... Maybe someday I'll bring in---I have some "Show and Tell" pictures that I took this past winter, just, it's incredible, that, one business will plow up to a certain point, then there'll be a HUGE mound of snow at the edge of some property- that's at the Twin Plaza that I took that picture, that's at the Burger King on Somerville Avenue, the same thing, a huge amount of snow, where they had plowed their parking lot, and it actually blocked the pedestrian access. As if no one had to walk across, or use sidewalks! So it's a HUGE, huge issue... and in our climate, it's months- several months- where people have a very hard time and it's very dangerous. A lot of people are very fearful about going out.

KELLYANN BINARI Yes!- I can actually go three months without going out of the house once--at all- because I can't, safely! Go out. The only place I can go is at D? [transcriber did not get that word sorry!] because there's a van that goes there- I can't go to the store, I can't go to the relatives...it's cold out there and you don't really want to be out there--But it would be nice to go out and have some fresh air!

EF: Yes! Now, Kelly Ann, when you go to the Citywide meetings, do you ever have any problems getting in there?

KA: Uh, some buildings, yes, like at the Capuano school, actually, does not have handicapped accessibility- the door isn't accessible- I have to grab the door, and hopefully, not hit myself. Coming in here tonight, that's what I had to do, and hope that I didn't hit my knee-- because I was stubborn and I said, "I'll open this door by myself!" There's a few places, like the Somerville Library sometimes, the button doesn't work. City Hall, itself, the button's all the way over here, you go to hit it, the door's already opening up- while I'm trying to back up and not-- I hope there's no one behind me, and I hope I'm not hitting anybody! So that one's quite a problem. There's quite a few places in the City that--they're just not designed for handicapped...and I'm in a motorized wheelchair, so that makes it a little easier... Someone in a manual wheelchair is NOT getting in there- not without assistance.

EF: One thing that we really hope to accomplish [soon] is to help the City at least meet it's structural accessibility- if that's not feasible, to at least make sure that all the programs and services are offered in an accessible way. When I think of this wonderful City, of the diversity of talent that's located in this City... I know that a lot of talent is also sitting in wheelchairs! And a lot of talent is also using Visual, Hearing Aids. So, when I see, for instance, that the City Hall Annex, which holds the Public Health Department, and the City Arts Council, in there, and other really important- the Special Housing Program, for example... for example, Kelly Ann would not actually be able to get into that building independently- to get into that building at all, she'd actually have to call up ahead of time and say, "Hey, you know, I'm coming," and then somebody has to open the door for her! We know the City staff is more than willing to assist people but, let's say somebody wants to actually independently access the building... it seems like a really important building to get up and running, 17 years down the line from when the Americans with DisAbilities Act was first signed. Just to make sure that it's absolutely independently accessible. So there are a number of buildings that people have told me about in the survey. I myself have not gone to see all the buildings. We're really looking forward to helping the City think about how to make those buildings accessible--- Not only aesthetically pleasing because- because it doesn't have to be ugly- but we'd like to help the City think about **Universal Access**-- beautiful renovations, that would be really good...

J C: Two things. One thing is that I've been checking on these curb cuts. Since they started them. Some of them aren't even done right... they're too high-

angled, the angle...

KB: Some, when I go up, they are... and if it weren't for the third wheel, I'd be laying on my back!!! because they're too high.

JC: The other one is.. I keep telling the Aldermen, down at the Assembly Mall, there's a bus stop moved now, down by where that place where they play games and all that...

TK: Good Times?

JC: yeah- that's the place. Well, the bus stop is there, now. No sign, no nothing... sometimes the bus just doesn't stop, unless they see people sitting on carriages...

No bench? No nothing. I keep telling the Alderman, it's like talking to the wall! They know what I'm talking about, too!

EF: So, as you can see, we have a big list, of things that we've talked about from the past year and so we're really happy you're on board. We can see that you're eager, to do a good job...

CC: And I really apologize, I'm sitting her taking a lot of notes, so if you see me looking away... I'm trying to take as detailed notes as I possibly can. And I'm sure that there will be several more discussions... outside of this meeting, offline, so we can really get a good idea of where we are. So, next steps, goals and objectives, timelines, the whole 9 yards.

EF: Yes, Sir Barry!

BR: For the benefit of folks at home, how can people contact you? What's your phone number, what's your email address that you use?

CC: OK. My telephone number, first of all, is (617) 625-6600, extension 3303. My

Email is: Ccampbell@ci.somerville.ma.us

That's the best way for anyone to get a hold of me.

BR: Thank you.

TK: I don't want to make your list too long ... I don't expect an answer tonight, but I've thought that- Somerville does a very good job of putting on cable the Board of Alderman meetings, the Inaugural Addresses, the Mayor's Addresses, all the things that are done. But, as far as I know, they're not close-captioned. At least start with Board of Alderman meetings and other public meetings that are on City Cable, so that they're at least closed-captioned [*Transcriber's note: Closed-Captioned for Hearing-Impaired- check out <http://www.robson.org/capfaq/> for an excellent overview*] and I don't know- other people should tell me if they think would be helpful-

EF: Yes, that would really bring Somerville up to date! You know, that would be SO helpful. You know, as a group, you know, we're not budgeted by the City, the City doesn't have an Office for us, or a telephone number for people to contact us... and we really want to reach out to the hearing-impaired community. Todd's point is such a fine point, because we don't really have a way to reach out [at this time] but that would be one beginning way. we really don't have a way. So, this meeting, will be put on TV and we'll have it captioned. It would be great if ALL the public meetings were captioned.

TK: How's that done here, is that done here by a volunteer?

EF (laughs) Well, I'm going to find out how to do it!!!

TK: That's great, that will be great to know about.

EF: I think there's a software, or a transcription program, so that one can do that spontaneously, in the moment or, there's a software, as I understand, so that I'll be able to put titles underneath this program...

[*UPDATE: There is no software yet for the MAC, and/or to go with the Final Cut video software program, so this May program transcript was done an old-fashioned way, transcribing word for word. Please call the City's ADA coordinator for alternate formats (such as large print, audio file) at (617) 625-6600, extension 3303.*]

KB: And that would help with the website.

EF: Yes, help with the website! So, with all of that list, we also want to mention that, we'd really love to work with the City to create enriching programs. Because you know, we're talking about sort of boring bricks-and-mortar-stuff and just kind of like, the stuff that's *a priori*- you know- it's already, it should have been done- and there are other things we could be doing that could *enrich* Somerville, so that the diversity of Somerville, such as accessible technology, and educational and vocational skills programs- these are some of the ideas that really fire us up and make us happy.

You know, I'm only speaking for myself here, but I know that the idea of curb cuts is not the most exciting thing on my mind, but it has to be done in order to get on to the next phase, which is to be enriching the community... and making the community really Universally Accessible- that stuff's really exciting!

KA You know, I was thinking about that this week as I was reading the Journal, they always offer knitting classes, crochet, or tile design classes... and these are things I like to do... I'd really love to go and talk with other knitters and crocheters-- but I can't. I can't get in the Recreation Building. There's other things that are offered--- but I can't get into the Recreation Building.

EF:... and the City Parks... ?

KA: ...and the parks.. Oh, the Parks! I can't take my daughter to a Park unless there's another adult, because they're so closed in, I can't get to them.

EF: There are actually 14 Parks that are listed on the website as being accessible- but they're not, really...

CC: If I may? the Mayor and this Administration has taken a great task as parks are being renovated, to look at ADA accessibility and make sure we have state-of-the-art equipment and everything. In the upcoming year, there will be eight parks scheduled to go into construction. And just bear with me, and like, another thing that was brought up by you folks, at the CDBG meetings- [**ADA= Americans with Disabilities Act, which was signed into National Law in 1990 see: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>**]

EF That's "Community Development Block Grant"

CC: Sorry folks, acronyms, acronyms, acronyms!! One of the issues that came up were! Playground equipment, for children with handicapped issues, making sure that they're accessible for children with handicapped issues. And that is something we're taking into account as we're moving forward with the reconstruction of parks, that is being added into the design and the planning of it in advance. So...

KB: That beat me to the punch, because that was going to be my next point. I was going to say, I understand how there is, as a mother not to be able to go with my child alone- then I stop and think- I have a grandson with a disability. How's *he* going to go play? There's other children that are worse off than my grandson. Where do they play? It should be for everybody.

CC: HmHm, Yes, And we are looking at that as a Citywide Initiative in the Parks Department. Arn Franzen is Director of the Parks-- actually the gentleman that works hand in hand with the architects. And you know, Perry Park will have accessibility with the tables and play equipment for children with handicaps and that's the first part in the process that's being done now. And so that has been brought to our attention through our Community Development Block Grant meetings and we're incorporating that into future plans. So that's something that we heard, and that's something that the City is looking into, as we move forward. Unfortunately, you know, I can't fix every problem that was done or not fixed in the past and all I can do is work with you folks in moving forward. And doing the best as I can in being a liaison between you folks and the City, as we're moving forward as a collective group. You know, looking at the problems as they arise, and work together to try to find some way to look at different problems and issues as they arise. But that is one that the City has begun to look at.

EF: So, we do see you as the Mayor's voice, in terms of ADA Compliance within the City.

CC: Well, I'm not sure if I'm the Mayor's voice. I mean, the Mayor speaks for himself. What I'm doing in my role here is, and I may not have all the answers, and I'm going to be very honest, and I might have to say, "I'll get back to you on that. I may not have all the answers here, you know, I have questions, I will be very forthright and honest and say, "I don't know that answer, let me get back to you." And I hope that's acceptable to you folks. Because I'm only one person and there are several different entities and components in so many different projects or I may not have the final authority on things. It might be, some issue might come up and DPW might have to be pulled into it. Some issue might come up and it might be the Mayor's Office and Communications might have to be- I'm just one individual. However, I'm willing to help maneuver, and get the appropriate people at the proper table to deal with specific issues that arise.

EF: OK. So, we want to make sure that we end the meeting on time, so, Todd, would you like to talk about the MBTA Access subcommittee?

TK: Yes! So, there was a settlement with the MBTA around disability Access, and that included many, many components, with trains, buses, elevators, escalators, platforms, you name it, that's a part of the settlement. In fact, there's a 40 page spreadsheet, with every, every person at the T who has a task assigned to them as part of the settlement is named and we're constantly updating that. One of the pieces that we're working on, here in Somerville, is what we hope will be, not only a pilot project, but a example of how to make a successful project around making, ensuring that bus stops and the areas around bus stops are available for the buses to pull in, and that people can board safely, and that the clutter of bus stops is reduced, and that snow is cleared at the bus stops. We talked about snow removal before, and it's a big City-wide issue. But it's a very big issue at bus stops, because, as Kelly Ann and a lot of you, I'm sure, know, it doesn't do any good to have a bus driver that's going to pull into a bus stop, a bus that has the working equipment-- if there's a car parked there- or if there's a huge pile on the bus stop and it just becomes totally inaccessible. So I'm calling this the "last 6 inches"... 2 feet- that's the last part to connect, to link the whole thing up, so that this wonderful settlement actually works here in Somerville.

And, so we have had the first meeting of a working group, and we have another meeting coming up this Wednesday, the 23rd of May [2007]. The group includes: representatives from the Mayor's Office, of the ADA Coordinator, the DPW, the Traffic & Parking, someone was going to come from the Police Department- we hope they'll come this Wednesday. From the T side: there are 2 people from the Operations side, looking particularly at bus stops; a Lieutenant who works on the Public Safety side, a couple of Members of the Commission, and myself, who is not really a member of the Commission, but I've been working on this settlement. And we have been making some progress.

One of things that we have decided to do was to have a subcommittee, which has yet to meet, but we're going to set up a meeting this Wednesday [note: First subcommittee meeting is June 6, 2007.] A subcommittee that will work on publicizing the need to ensure that bus stops are accessible. And so, we're not looking just at what I would call "The stick approach." The stick approach would be fines, towing, telling people they're bad for parking at bus stops.

We're hoping that we can also encourage people as a sign of good citizenship, and caring for their other fellow Somerville residents, that they understand, that parking in the bus stop- even if it's just for a minute- could actually mean that someone can't get on the bus. And so that, that's not "parking" any longer- that's not even a "Stop Zone" any longer- that's not even a "I'm just gonna get a cup of coffee" zone! Any longer. So, that's what we hope to do with an outreach and publicity campaign and we're going to be meeting about that soon.

We also got from the MBTA, a list of every single bus stop in the City! And we thought about that- one of the issues is, well, are all of these bus stops really situated properly? Are they long enough? for a bus to actually pull in? Are they well marked? And I'd love it, if there's a volunteer out there, or a college student, or someone who wants a summer project, for someone to just volunteer-- we actually have a survey, that's been put out by the Easter Seals, that actually you can identify all of the good parts of the Bus Stops, and all of the shortcomings. And it would be great, even perhaps just looking at a designated area, at some bus stops that have been noted as problematic, just basically to do a survey of those bus stops, so that we can get that information to the [responsible parties] and say, "Well, here are some specific problems." So, if anyone is interested in that, my email address is: tkaplan@gbls.org and my phone number is: (617) 603-2735. If anyone out there is interested in following up on that, that would be wonderful!

The other thing I wanted to mention is that, we are hoping that the T will come forward and put some money on the table, in terms of better marking of the bus stops. We'll see if that really happens. The settlement is very, shall I say, open-ended, as to how these problems are going to be resolved. It doesn't say the T is going to pay for it, it doesn't say the cities and towns are going to pay for it. But that is something that we're hoping that the MBTA is going to come up with some money. Even on a pilot basis, to see, well, if you mark the bus stops better- actually paint on the curbs, and paint on the pavement- does it help ensure that people do not park there?

The other thing we're looking at increased enforcement. So it's not just a carrot, or that we're relying on people's benevolence- to actually NOT park there, but we're encouraging the City and on the T to have better enforcement of the Parking regulations that currently exist, including whether the fines should be increased.

In terms of snow removal- that is still a huge issue, and we haven't come up with any good answers. As you may be aware, property owners are required to remove snow on the sidewalk adjacent to their property. And many of the bus stops are on business property. Rather than picking on a homeowner, or a small business, we should look at some of the bigger businesses, Like I mentioned earlier, Burger King, Twin City Plaza, or Assembly Square, big businesses that already have snow removal in place, and get them to commit to understand and make sure that the bus stops are accessible. And, you might even say, not only the bus stops- but getting TO the bus stops from the mall. So that people who use the busses- so that it actually works.

BR: Is handicapped parking part of that issues?

TK: Not *per se*. This is a project that looks at ensuring whether the transit system works as best as it can. And we're actually looking at a very discrete piece, which is how to ensure that the bus stops are accessible- that bus stops work- that the bus can actually pull in. Now, as part of the settlement, there's lots of other pieces. Like training the bus drivers that they have to pull in. Monitoring them. So, there's going to be report cards on every single bus route. That you will be able to access, on how well these bus drivers are doing. AND, the T must show positive progress every year that they're doing better. And after 2 years, they must have an insignificant deviance from the standard- and the standard is pulling up to every bus stop. So they're allowed two years to make progress, and after that, they're given no slack. This settlement really holds their feet to the fire. And, honestly, the MBTA would not have agreed to the settlement if they ALSO weren't interested in accessibility and ensuring that they really maximize accessibility for everybody.

I just want to make one other mention about the settlement, which is that there is a monitor, who is working independently for the Judge, and if you have accessibility questions you can email him at: mbtamonitor@gmail.com

And he is a retired judge, Judge Patrick King from the Superior Court, who is in that position.

(to CC) I just want to ask one other question, which came up in our meeting, which is: The Traffic and Parking Department reported to us that they don't have a lot of complaints about cars in busstops. And I just want to say, that, in driving around town, I ALWAYS see cars in bus stops! And I just think that the explanation for that is, that that has become the "norm"- it's become normal for cars to park in bus stops. And people don't complain, because they think that this is normal. What do people think? Kelly Ann?

KB: What I think is, people don't know who to complain to! You call the MBTA, or do you call Traffic and Parking, because this is what they deal with, or do you call the Police? People are very confused about who you call to complain about all this.

TK: We did talk about this. Carlene, did you get a chance to follow up with 3-1-1 to ask them about this?

CC: I did, and unfortunately, and I wasn't expecting to talk about all this. It's OK, we have a follow-up meeting on Wednesday [May 23rd]. What Traffic & Parking did was, James Kotzuba, who is the Executive Director, went and found out how many tickets were written last year for violation for people who parked in bus stops. I didn't bring that information with me, I will bring it to the next meeting. Jimmy Kotzuba says, you can call 3-1-1 if you see a car parked illegally *anywhere* in the City. Then, 3-1-1 will contact Traffic & Parking; that T & P supervisor will then send the PCO (Parking Control Officer) and that person will go and investigate where that car is and write a ticket if necessary. Unfortunately, it's not 100% perfect, because if that person is a block and a half away, by the time the PCO comes, that person may have already left. But that is one way that people in the community could contact 3-1-1 and ask them to do that. And that's something that has been happening. So the 3-1-1 is the main line for constituent services in the community, and that number is your first line of defense if you have an issue within the City.

TK: Right. If I recall correctly, even if you're calling from a cell phone- you call (617) 625-3311 if you're on a cell phone, and that'll get you straight into 3-1-1. One of the goals here, is to understand the scope of the problem. And if we get more calls into 3-1-1, we will have a better idea of how pervasive the problem is, and whether increased enforcement helps. Because, as people are aware, 3-1-1 can actually sort out and give us computer printout and analysis, of how many of these complaints come in, and what happens to each one. So people should not give up! They should make a lot of noise, here, because it will give us some really good information of how pervasive this problem is in some particular areas. Like for instance, in front of Anthony's at Highland and Central, I see cars in that bus stop every single time I pass it! It is considered "free parking!"

KB: So, did you call up the 3-1-1 and tell them?!

TK: [Laughing] Yeah, well... I want all of us to start together!

AR: I've been noticing the same thing! I'm wondering (turning to Kelly Ann).. can you affix a stencil on the bottom of your wheelchair..and we just drive it to the bus stop and put a print up of NO PARKING and print the penalty, or something like that?! At least it would get on the 9:00 news! (everyone laughs)

WV: Yeah, I notice that too, Especially at Sherman's Trucks do the delivery at stores, and then cars stop to get coffee at Shermans and leave and then you have the MBTA Police who go to the barbershop to get a haircut...

KB: and I see it happen, and I call!

TK: I want to hear about the MBTA Police who park there to get a haircut! That's beyond... (all laughing)

BR: Do the MBTA bus drivers report these violations, when they see it happens?

TK That's a really great idea! One of the pieces of the settlement is that we are working on a Driver's Rule-Book. I'm going to suggest that that be incorporated as one of the rules because they have a radio there, and they could be reporting a lot of the stuff that goes on. And that could also generate a lot of information there, about how pervasive that problem is and hopefully ensure more cooperation- God knows, noone wants to get a ticket, but I hope that the problem stops. I have to say that Judge King, the monitor, went to San Francisco, and he asked them about this problem, and they said, "Well, we don't have that problem!" And he said, "Why?" and they said, "Well, we have \$250 tickets, and we give 'em out like they're candy!" So, noone parks in the bus stops, because they're guaranteed a \$250 fine!

JC: So, Raise it up [penalties for bus stop parking violations]. That's what we can do.

TK One of the pieces that we're looking at is, to what extent, within the authority that currently exists, can the City raise the fine to?, what is the current authority, and maybe raise it to that level, which I think is \$50 dollars. [UPDATE: The City Solicitor said that Somerville can raise the fines as high as deemed appropriate, as a result of a recent Home Rule petition.]

JC: I'm willing to bet that if that happens, we won't see people parking there no more.

EF: Yeah! Well, we have to wrap it up, so I want to give everyone an opportunity to say one last thing before we close?

JC: (bringing out a newspaper article): Yes. As you all know, Joe Keene has been a Board member for a long time and Mike Capuano named legislation after him. This is the bill named in his honor: "Under the Federal Employees Compensation Act, severely disabled Federal employees injured on the job, are eligible for an attendant allowance, reimbursement for personal care in their home. Personal Care Attendants provide assistance for such needs as getting out of bed, shaving, bathing, meal preparations, and other daily tasks." This is something that Joe Keene - there's a few Board members that know Joe Keene real good and he did a helluva lot, especially in Davis Square. So, I thought that was very nice of the Mayor.

TK: Former Mayor now, he's now a Congressman! [Congressman Mike Capuano.].

EF: That's fabulous. Thank you so much for the important announcement, John!

BR: I was wondering, how many openings do you currently have on the Commission?

EF: Thanks for the question, Barry! We currently have no openings on the Commission now, but we're delighted to have you join with, work with us. If you'd like to get in touch with us, **we don't currently have a City-sponsored telephone number or an office**, but we do have a P.O. Box. Our address is:

Somerville DisAbilities Commission

P.O. Box 434

Somerville, MA 02143

Please drop us a line, anytime!

Barry, how many openings are there on the Human Rights Commission?

BR: There are three or four, I'm not sure. We also welcome everyone to our meetings. **The Human Rights Commission meets monthly on the third Thursday of every month at the Tufts Administration Building on Holland Avenue.** And we also encourage more cross-communication between our two Commissions.

EF: Absolutely, yes. We invite folks join us for our meetings, which take place on the third Monday of every month. Exceptions are the months in which that day is a holiday, like January, February, and April. On those months, our meeting takes place on the FOURTH Monday of the month.. [Editor's note: Although June's 3rd Monday happens to be Flag Day, and also a holiday- the Commission WILL hold its monthly meeting on that day this year, which is JUNE 19th. We apologize for not being consistent!]

Thanks to SCAT for having us, and thanks to our wonderful crew, of which Zina Dragan is the Producer, and we also have Elyssa, and others- those names will be on the screen at the end.. **SCAT, the Somerville Community Access TV is at 90 Union Square in Union Square.**

And Carlene, will you please remind folks how to get in touch with you [City ADA Coordinator]?

CC: Sure. **The phone number is (617) 625-6600, extension 3303, and the email is: Ccampbell@ci.somerville.ma.us** Thank you everyone for having me and I really look forward to working with you.

EF: It's a pleasure to be with you, Carlene, and we're looking forward to working with you. Todd, would you like to give your number one more time?

TK: Sure, It's **(617) 603- 2735, that's my direct line. My name, again, is Todd Kaplan and I'm a staff attorney at the Somerville-Cambridge Legal Services.**

EF: Thanks, and have a great month, and we'll be seen on SCAT TV. See you next month!

-end-