

Introduction of Accessibility Zones at Wauwatosa's 2024 July 4 Parade

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WCPD Parade Work Group:

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Overview

Wauwatosa Commission for Persons with Disabilities (WCPD) advocates for people of all ages and all types of disabilities who live, work, play, and visit the city of Wauwatosa. We work with Wauwatosa elected, appointed and hired officials, other boards and commissions, and Wauwatosa School District to support Wauwatosa's Mission, Vision and Organizational Values of Inclusion, Accessibility, Adaptability and Equity.

WCPD's latest goal was to ensure people with mobility issues and those who are not able to tolerate flashing lights and loud noises could attend and enjoy our city's 4th of July Parade. This is a nationwide trend to educate people about different disabilities that can cut off people from many types of events. There are easy, low-cost solutions to address these needs, as identified by the work group listed above. They were authorized to reach out to the Civic Celebration Commission with this request and work together to create and implement a solution that would work for the foreseeable future.

WCPD's work group attended multiple Civic Celebration meetings, researched questions that arose, adapted our request to meet Civic Celebration goals, and, with extensive support and help from Eva Ennamorato (Communications Manager) made it all happen. The result was over 90% positive feedback on Wauwatosa social media sites and numerous compliments from parade attendees of all ages.

There were a few negative comments, but they appeared to result from lack of understanding of goals and possible gap in communications. These have been noted and addressed in Best Practices Going Forward.

Process

1. WCPD work group researched how other municipalities of similar size to Wauwatosa handled creation of areas to accommodate people with various disabilities.
2. It was determined that two separate areas are required; one to allow accessible parking and reserved seating for people with mobility issues and another for people who are sensitive to flashing and bright lights and loud sounds.
3. WCPD work group met with Civic Celebration Commission (CCC) to finalize location of each area.
4. Both commissions agreed extensive communication was needed to educate both commissions and volunteers, city staff, parade goers, and the general public.
5. City Communication Director ensured that all Wauwatosa news outlets included information about the accessibility zones, as well as contacting local news media.
6. Department of Public Works provided frames for sandwich signs identifying the zones. Both the frames and printed signs can be used for future events.
7. Other volunteers from WCPD distributed signs explaining the accessibility areas to business along the entire parade route a few days prior to the parade. Response from businesses was uniformly positive.
8. WCPD Work Group distributed flyers to all parade units in the staging area after it was learned that emails had not been sent in a timely manner. Personal delivery allowed volunteers to answer questions and keep confusion to a minimum.
9. WCPD Work Group also set up signs and blocked off accessible areas very early the morning of the parade. It should be noted that without Joe Makhoul this work could not have been completed before start of the parade. His energy and enthusiasm continued to carrying the WCPD's Flag for People with Disabilities through the entire parade.

Best Practices Going Forward

- Mobility area is dependent on owner of properties close to the parade route. Both commissions to work together to negotiate this.
- Information about the two areas to be printed on the large parade poster, where all other information about the July 4th festivities is printed.
- Clearly identify who needs additional information about the accessibility zones and the best type of communication. Assign responsibility for creating and distributing this information to specific people in the appropriate commission.
- Clearly identify who on which commission is responsible for setup of signage and blocking off identified areas. It is sincerely hoped that permission will be granted to complete this setup the night before the 4th to ensure that however early someone comes to put out chairs and blankets, the areas are clearly identified for special needs.
- All volunteers working at the parade are to be considered equal, regardless of which commission they belong to. This includes use of golf carts for transportation between accessibility and staging areas as needed.
- Other practices may be identified as planning begins for the 2025 parade.

Summary and Thanks

WCPD is grateful for the cooperation and support of the Civic Commission and Eva Ennamorato for communicating long-lasting standards for the parade and helping to find solutions to various issues that arose in discussions and during implementation. We are also grateful to all parade units, some of which did not learn of the Sensory Zone Practices until the morning of the parade. They adapted wonderfully, ensuring all went smoothly as they neared and passed the Sensory Free Zone.