

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 18th, 2023

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson; John Hawes; Rachel Kay; Carol Menton; Naomi Ridge; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun. Absent- Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor and Megan O'Halloran.

Guests- Peter Centola, Watertown Recreation Dept; and Dan Brothers, Manager of John A Ryan Skating Rink. Josh Safdie, Principal, KM Access; Jim Jordan, Partner Ai3 Architects; Andrew Cunneen, Project Director Ai3 Architects; Christy Murphy, Project Executive, Compass; and Chase Terrio, Senior Project Manager, Compass.

GUEST SPEAKERS-

- 1) Peter Centola introduced Dan Brothers, the manager of the skating rink in Watertown since '06. Dan spoke about 2 issues: 1) the ramp off of the parking lot is pulling away from the building and has sunk. They will be using capital improvements, and DPW consultants will replace it. And 2) the front entrance was recently levelled off, but the ground is sinking. The other ramp from the patio is too short and steep and has a high lip, so is inaccessible. John mentioned that the bottom of the ramp from the parking lot should also have a section that leads to the road.
- 2) Peter Centola- He said that before the Recreation Dept, he worked with colleges and the NCA about Title 9 and accessibility issues. He said that Cannalonga Park and the skating rink have had problems with water freezing on the grounds. Entry ways have had some updates. He said that DCR will talk to us.

He spoke about the Capital Plan and accessibility changes needed for most of Watertown's parks. He just sent out the 5 year plan for the parks, and we will discuss more at our next meeting. He said that the new city manager, George Proakis, Steve Magoon and the DPW were working together. He gave a brief update of several of the parks. Moxley will be the site of the temporary high school for the next several years, but they will be working on the courts. Fillipello sprinkler park will get a re-do. Lowell Park surface and play structure will get a re-do. Sullivan Park surface will get a re-do, and the lighting will be improved. One half of Casey has been done, but the other half needs work on lighting and connectors. Saltonstall will have the playground re-done and the field lighting. Arsenal work will be done on parking and playground accessibility. Victory Field- Phase 1 was the stadium and turf field, Phase 2 will be the field, track, courts and parking. Phase 3 will be renovating and updating the field house, which was built in 1959. The small elevator is not working to the 2nd level. Maybe replace with a ramp and a lift. He spoke also about a "Miracle Field", a surface that can handle wheelchairs for the Challenger program of baseball and softball. Acton has such a field that they've been looking at. It is not yet known where the field will be set up.

Kim mentioned that we want the Rec Dept to look at accessible recreation equipment for playgrounds. Peter said that he makes recommendations, and that each project has a public meeting.

- 3) The Group working on High School Plans- Andrew Cunneen said that the project is going out for bid in March. They are asking MAAB for 4 typical variances. 1) No handrails on both sides of the aisles in the auditorium. There will be ramps. It has a steeper slope. 2) In the auditorium, they are asking to put handrail in the middle of the aisles, not at the ends of the rows. 3) Accessible routes from balcony to the stage will involve a small elevator immediately adjacent outside the auditorium. 4) The gym will have telescoping bleachers, and they are proposing short handrails in the aisles with spaces in-between them, that are collapsible when the bleachers fold. The gym will have spaces for wheelchairs. He pointed out that the handrail exception was already included in ADA and MAAB. They are presenting the variance request soon to the access board.

Rachel confirmed that the students would have to leave the auditorium to get to the elevator. Naomi confirmed that the elevator serves both levels of the auditorium only, and no other floors. Andrew said that a total of 8 accessible seats are required in the auditorium and 6 will be on the first floor and 2 in the balcony.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Crosswalk Signal at N.Beacon and Louise Sts.- accessibility is OK, the light is working, but the timing is off.
- 2) Next Steps Cannalunga Park- John and Kim worked on a letter about accessibility and will give it to Gayle to pass along to DCR. Someone from DCR is invited to come to our meeting in March (or possibly to a short meeting in Feb, depending on which works best for them). John said that the parking lot belongs to DCR and has no accessible spaces. Kim wants to give them feedback about making the park entrance look nicer.
- 3) DPW and trash toters- No progress, address next meeting.
- 4) Arsenal Yards Automatic Door Research- Kim and John are working with Steve and Giddeon. There is a regulation/ordinance/guideline for new developments. We want to work in a requirement for automatic door openers.
- 5) Consideration of \$500 donation to Watertown Community Fridge- Gayle has been unable to meet with the retired city auditor to make sure this would be OK. We will address next meeting. Kim said they might be hiring a new auditor soon. John said it was a 501C4 organization and was probably OK.
- 6) Playground Accessibility at Hosmer- Rachel said that the last building meeting chose a location for the swings. They will cost \$5000.
- 7) Recommendation for a City Ordinance for Captioning for TVs in Public Spaces- Kim said that Boston has adopted such an ordinance. She sent our recommendation to the ordinance subcommittee of the Council and they are moving forward with it. Carol M said that the stated reached out to her workplace for language help.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes from the Dec meeting. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the city's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office or viewed on the Watertown website document center.

TREASURER'S REPORT- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the Treasurer's Report for Dec. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

- 1) Plans Review- John sent general accessibility recommendations to Gideon, who was interested in doing this. They will work to have developers be proactive. Kim and John will finalize these recommendations and send them to Gayle who will send them to Planning. Kim asked John to send them to her again.
John spoke about the Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan. We should look through the documents so we can comment on them at the next meeting.
The Mt Auburn St Improvement Plan addresses crosswalk issues. Kim said there was time for input. Naomi said that it looked OK.
- 2) Special Ed- Rachel said there was a SEPAC presentation on 504 Plans coming up.
- 3) Safety and Access- Kim asked what the Commission thought of granite curbing. Naomi said that granite was much better, and that asphalt was a hazard. Kim said that granite was better for the sidewalks. She asked Naomi and John to come up with a statement from the Commission.
We will address detectable warnings at Lexington and Main next meeting, as the weather is not good for getting out now.

NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Rachel spoke of the New Charter of 2021, specifically the Human Rights Commission that is being formed. It is being presented on Feb 7th to the committee on Rules and Ordinances. But it is in the Charter. She encouraged us to go to the meeting and speak out in support. We can support it as a Commission. Kim said we should write a letter of support. We will discuss further next meeting.
- 2) Naomi mentioned that dog licenses are \$10, except that service dogs are free. She went through the website for renewing dog licenses, and found that there was no option to say the dog was a service dog. We talked about contacting them, but someone said that they probably don't want everyone clicking "my dog is a service dog". Kim will reach out and work with Naomi on this.
- 3) Kim said she will get the DCR letter out by Friday. If the DCR says that Feb is better, we will have a short meeting on the 3rd Wed..
- 4) Kim mentioned that the Unity Breakfast this past Monday was prerecorded on cable and was captioned by them.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, March 15th, 2023, unless DCR wants to meet with us in Feb. In that case, we will have a short meeting on Wed, Feb 15th.

