

Watertown Commission on Disability

December 20, 2023

Present: Lisa Feltner, John Hawes, Rachel Kay, Carol Menton, Naomi Ridge, Carol Wilson-Braun, Megan O'Halloran, Patrick George

Missing: Kim Charlson

Guests: Janet Buck, Board of Watertown Boys & Girl Club, chair of the planning board.

Closed-Caption on TV: Had the first reading at City Council. Second reading will be January 9th, after which it should pass.

Committee to Carol Wilson-Braun: Thank you for doing minutes for 12 years!

Watertown Boys & Girls Club Building Update

Janet Buck: Doesn't have graphics, but can email after.

Watertown Boys & Girls Club is a non-profit. They own the building they are in, but the city owns the property. It was built in the early 70s. They currently serve kids 7-18.

WBGC has rented lower level of the building to a day care. The day care will move out, and WBGC will renovate and make a licensed after-school program, K-Grade 5. Ratio of staff:kids changes at lower grade levels.

Both levels are accessible, but they are not accessible to each other. Want downstairs kids to get upstairs to use the pool and the gym. They want to put in a chair lift in the stairwell.

Bottom level is on two levels, but they will renovate to have a ramp to connect them.

Carol W-B: will it accommodate small children? Yes, it is enclosed and acts like an elevator.

Cindy: Is the pool accessible? Yes. There is a ramp from seating area to pool deck. Then there is a lift into the water.

Two days away from putting bids out, then get 2-3 contractor bids. Much of this will be paid for by ARPA money.

Megan is also on WBGC board.

Deaf Customer-Service Training for City Staff

Patrick: working with new HR office.

Report on Watertown Sq walkabout/charettes

Cindy: abbreviated walk with 8-10 people. Included Zeke [last name?] and Jeff Speck and Lisa and Brian Carlson. Carroll Center is also trying to set up a walk with Zeke, blindfolded.

Lisa: End of Feb/Early March for plans. Zeke and Jeff want to walk again and willing to meet with the commission.

John: keep this on the agenda.

Proposed snow removal ordinance

Lisa: got a final draft back from the attorney. Figuring out exemptions was complicated. Manager wants some more fine-tuning. But may be voting on that on January 9th (or meeting after that).

Lisa will send Patrick a pdf of the ordinance.

Cindy: Watertown for All Ages will be commenting back to the Rules and Ordinances changes.

Lisa: it should not be coming back to committee. But send feedback to full Council.

Committee on Parks and Recreation: Miracle Field and Canolongo.(sp?)

Patrick: outcome of meeting is to look for partnership between Watertown and Waltham.

Lisa: we don't have the space for it in Watertown, so manager is reaching out to Waltham. Maybe it could be at the Fernal School.

Lisa: Canolongo Park. Making recommendations for pathway and accessible parking spots. Manager Proakis is in contact with DCR. Need to update bocce courts (Sons of Italy is helping to maintain.)

Trash sticker:

Patrick sent us a sample. We used universal symbol and "please return to location." This will be 4 inch by 4 inch. Now we need to get buy-in from DPW.

How will folks acquire these?

John: we should check in with Kim for her thoughts.

Detectable warnings at North Beacon and Beechwood.

No changes so far.

Status of Watertown Mall redesign

Patrick: waiting on the point of contact to get back to us.

John: they will have a bigger footprint and added housing.

Arsenal Yards Automatic Doors Accessibility Report

John: we have the report from Deborah Ryan. They are going to insist the interior doors [think I missed something here] of the Roche Brothers Café. Naomi and John were more interested in the doors that go to the garage. It's good they did the report, but they didn't do those locations or the doors at Majestic Theaters.

Naomi: They're meeting the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law. It doesn't help wheelchair users even if the door is less than 15 pounds. It was disappointing.

John: Next step: we would like to have them come to a meeting. Could they come in January?

Patrick, John and Kim can discuss how to move forward.

ADA Self-Assessment Plan Funding Request

We applied to this grant and we are waiting for notification. Notification is delayed.

We will work with purchasing to develop RFP so we will be ready if we get the funding.

Waverly/Belmont Intersection

Naomi: Curb cuts are fine and there are no detectable/audible warnings.

Carry over to next meeting.

Acceptance of the minutes for November Meeting

Motion to approve: Naomi, Second: Cindy: Accepted as submitted 8-0.

Treasurer's report

Also update on grant to food pantries: with this month's approval, Patrick will get the check made out.

Only transactions have been fines.

Motion to approve: Naomi, second: Megan. Passes 8-0.

Plans Review: Nothing new.

Special education update: Nothing new.

Safety and access: Defer.

Reasonable accommodation policy for Watertown Events.

Cindy: can Watertown be more proactive that reasonable accommodation can be requested for events. What is the process?

Patrick: we probably have to coordinate with the city attorney on language. We could have boilerplate language that can be used on all events. "Requests must be made in X hours for..."

Patrick will coordinate with the city departments, once we have a list of resources. First, he will coordinate with city manager on language.

Cindy: we might also want materials in large print or other accommodations. What about scent-free events? Could that be requested?

Lisa: when should people notify the city if they want an accommodation?

Carol M: two weeks for ASL and CART. But other accommodations will take less time. Can book CART/ASL in advance and cancel if they don't need it.

Patrick: we only have 48 hours open-meeting notice, so maybe we will attempt to make accommodations if less than 2 weeks.

Carol M: Library just automatically requests funding for ASL throughout the year.

Cracks in Pavement on Pathway and Detectable warnings on Main Street: there is no immediate action.

Pathways won't be done until school is out of session.

New Business:

Tuesday January 16 training for all members of committees in the city about open-meeting law. Everyone has to attend in person if you can. 6:30 at the library.

John: no more than 2 members of a commission should communicate outside an open-meeting. Although CoD has fewer controversial issues.

Tuesday January 2 Inauguration with reception to follow. Commanders Mansion.

Cindy: Program for Watertown Snow Shovelers: applies to senior citizens AND people with disabilities.

Lisa: Manager will be doing more oversight of communications from the city.

Patrick: caught the error for second notice.

Next meeting: Will it be in person or virtual? Covid is perking up again so we need to continue to be vigilant.