

Watertown Commission on Disability

June 17, 2024

Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Kim Charlson, John Hawes, Lisa Feltner, Carol Wilson-Braun, Cindy Wentz, Patrick George, Carol Menton, Lydia McCoy (Director of Senior Services), Stefanie Farrell (CART)

Absent: Megan O'Halloran, Naomi Ridge

Notes for Meeting:

We are now allowing chat. Patrick may interrupt to read it as necessary. Remember chat is public record.

Senior Services in Watertown

Guest: Lydia McCoy

Senior Center has regular partnership programming. Example: Coffee with the Chiefs at the Police Station with Police and Fire Chiefs. A lot of people come to ask questions. Also Rep Owens holds a discussion at the Senior Center once/month.

Social Activities: Games (canasta, bingo, rumikub) are very popular. And exercise classes.

Shuttles go to grocery stores, museums, other errands and activities. Any senior in Watertown can request a ride from the shuttle.

Outreach program onsite at the Housing Authority (55 Waverly and 100 Warren) doing social-economical workshops and help seniors apply for social services programs. Also programs on mental health, education on transportation programs...with barbecue!

Monthly newsletter goes out online, can be seen on website, and hard copies can be sent out or found in many locations across the city (library, Watertown Savings Bank, Housing Authority, etc).

Kim: We are advocating for snow removal, which also applies to the Senior Center population. We would like to help develop that policy. How can we help?

Lydia: program will be different this year with new ordinance and since Peter Centola has retired. I'm trying to connect with the school department early. I'm also looking for grants for snow removal so we can have paid shovelers, but working out the logistics. There will be some workshops before the winter about waivers and support for shoveling.

Patrick will share info from Newton, Cambridge and Somerville.

Carol M: Executive Office of Elder Affairs is renaming themselves Executive Office of Aging and Independence. Do we have plans to rename?

Lydia: No, it's still part of the Massachusetts Council of Aging, so we will keep that. Now we are called the Department of Senior Services not Senior Center to show that we're doing work beyond our four walls.

Cindy: What are the number of people served per month or year? Data on age?

Lydia: Center is open to adults age 60 years and older. We are also open to people with disabilities. I can get you some numbers when we get off the zoom.

Cindy: Do you ever get requests for people for alternate materials for disability access?

Lydia: not specific, but we will work with Patrick to make sure there are appropriate accommodations.

Patrick: Can you talk more about Go Go Grandparent?

Lydia: Launched a pilot program in March through grant for the Go Go Grandparent Concierge service for seniors and people with disability. It is like Uber/Lyft, but you don't need a smart phone or app. Can use a specific toll-free number for Watertown residents. They also provide hot meal delivery, grocery delivery, prescription delivery. This service has exceeded my expectations for accessibility. It can also alert caregiver to the ride's location.

Cindy: Is there an income limit or limit on number of rides?

Lydia: We are offering two free round-trip rides through the end of this month. Then our grant will run out and we are using funding from Marshall Fund and City Funding. So more details to come!

Lisa: I know Senior is defined as 60 or older. Is that really right? You don't check ages, right?

Lydia: Senior housing is 55+ so 60 is definitely reasonable, and we have some in their 60s who participate. And we also have 70s, 80s, and 90s. And they all want different things. We have regular gamers coming every day of the week.

Lisa: Tell us about the gardening.

Lydia: We got some garden beds and now we have an active garden club who participate regularly. It is led by Judy Fallows. We have two beds in the front and one in the playground area. There's also one maintained by Watertown Gardening Foundation.

Carol M: Someone from Billerica is interested in having someone do regular hearing checks and educate. Do you have anything like that in the works?

Lydia: We are partnering with the Board of Health. We have monthly blood pressure screenings. We also have flu/covid vaccinations. We are working on bringing in physical therapy companies to do assessments for fall risk and the like. We have nothing in the work for hearing testing, but it is worth looking into. Thank you for mentioning.

Carol: I'll send you contact information from my agency. You would want a reputable program.

Lydia: That would be great to have at the Health and Wellness Fair.

Kim: Likewise, could we have a low-vision screening? You could reach out to Perkins.

Lydia: Great ideas!

Lydia: Disability Pride Month is July. As soon as we get that out, I'll send it to Patrick.

Chair's Report

1. Deafness and Hard of Hearing Customer Service for City Staff

Patrick: Still in the works. There is a primer available on YouTube to all city officials. But we are also still working on paid product from ADA center. No feedback on primer yet, but it is early.

2. Mt Auburn/Summer/Irving Intersection

Still a lot of work going on. Anything new or different?

Lisa: We are adding some members to the Traffic Commission to talk about these things, so keep your eyes out if you want to apply!

Patrick: That was closed out as resolved on See-Click-Fix. We should look and check it out.

Lisa: This intersection is not part of the Mt Auburn Project. You can't reach the signal in a wheelchair. The line to exit the stop line the Dunkin plaza is not bright enough.

Cindy: There may not be a curb cut.

Patrick will follow up on that tomorrow.

3. Watertown Square Design

Rachel: There was a lot of comments on a variety of topics.

Lisa: There were a lot of questions, but it was mostly a listening session. Next time there will be more time for Council/Planning Board to ask questions of the staff. (Thursday June 27). Manager will make an FAQ for the 27th. Also combining with MBTA Zoning.

Kim: I successfully created a tactile map. Zeke was to take some to the hearing. Hopefully Jeff Speck got one. I'll get one to Cindy and Patrick.

Lisa: I'd love to see one and Mark Sideris would too.

UPDATE: Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday July 16 to focus on community input.

4. Halfway Café Follow Up

Patrick: Accessible parking spaces are now available on both sides. Material is gravelly, which is not ADA compliant. We need Cambridge to agree for us to pave over it.

5. Trash Receptacle Stickers

Patrick: DPW is working on hiring a new recycling coordinator.

6. Detectable warnings at Beechwood and North Beacon
No new updates.

7. Watertown Mall Contact

Patrick will reach out: they haven't gotten back to us. That will determine our July/August break. Gideon is available in August. (John will be in Alaska.)

UPDATE: Meeting on Thursday July 11 in person and on zoom.

8. ADA Self-Assessment

RFP went out and came back on June 13. So Patrick had 48 hours to complete the grant.

9. Waverly/Belmont Streets is in Belmont.

Kim will send a letter to Belmont's CoD and their government person. Will work on with Naomi.

Acceptance of the Minutes

Cindy will keep an action items list to go along with the minutes.

Moved to accept: John. Second. Rachel. Passes 7-0.

Treasurer's Report

Email did not have June deposits, so Patrick will send that out. Income is fines, fees, and interest. We spent money on CART and ASL interpreters. We are at about \$57,000.

John moves to accept, Carol W seconds. 7-0 passes.

Plans Review

John: There will be a plans review tomorrow morning as reported in the Watertown News. This will be about the current Watertown Mall (which will not be a mall). We may have been dropped from their distribution list. I will follow up. It is difficult to review drawings on the size of a small screen. I will go into the zoning office this week to review drawings and send comments to Gideon and Sevina (sp?). Are they having planned reviews? It may only be recent habit.

Path behind Target: Only accessible way to get on it is from where the path meets Arsenal Street (to the west of Best Buy). Then nothing until Arlington Street. In between may be private property. Let's keep this in mind. Would this be Watertown Mall/Alexandria?

Carol W: Will RMV stay? John: unclear. Kinda like the post office on Main Street.

Lisa: It would be better to understand pedestrian movement earlier in the process (unlike Arsenal Yards).

John: I'll make a list of some of these details.

Special Education

Rachel: No updates

Safety and Access

Signal corrected at Mt Auburn and Summer.

Patrick: reasonable accommodation plan can be developed through ADA Assessment grant.

Cindy: Is there a process to responding to reasonable accommodation requests? Patrick: These all come to me and we are flexible with identifying resources.

New Business

Lisa: Bus Shelter at Galen Street is really tiny, a third the size of any other bus shelter. The Commission may want to reach out. Some confusion from Gideon/Will Brownsberger. What is the public bus stop versus shuttle?

Lisa: Hosmer playground: No port-o-potties. Aren't we supposed to have that? Bathrooms are locked. This will also come up for Casey Park.

Patrick: I will book us a spot at Faire on the Square. Saturday September 21st. It is the 25th Faire.

Kim/Patrick will get back to us with a date for next meeting (July or August).