

Watertown Commission on Disability

September 18, 2024

In attendance: Kim Charlson, John Hawes, Carol Menton, Carol Wilson-Braun, Naomi Ridge, Rachel Kay, Lisa Feltner, Cindy Wentz, Patrick George and Mona Leviton (CART).

Missing: Megan O'Halloran

Carol Wilson-Braun has given her resignation with regret due to deteriorating health. Everyone gives her appreciation and thanks!

Deafness/Hard of hearing training: Patrick is working with different parts of human resources. Wants to implement a certificate of completion.

DPW issues: Greg is leaving so these issues may be in a bit of flux. Kim will send him a note of thanks! Lisa acknowledged his work on sidewalks and signals.

Mt Auburn/Irving/Summer: This is in the 311 system. There are some curb cuts, but detectable warnings is an issue. And it is difficult to get to the button to get the signal.

Stickers for trash and recycling: there is a new recycling coordinator that started two days ago. Patrick will connect with him.

Detectable warnings at North Beacon: nothing new.

Faire on the Square! Naomi can be there but can't help with set up and take down. Carol M will be backup. Patrick has cards and materials. Patrick will be there early to set up. Stephanie Venizelos has assured we will have a tent. Rachel, Lisa and Megan can help as well. Carol will coordinate.

Snow removal ordinance: No updates. Lydia was put in charge of it.

October meeting: Gideon and Paul Johnson will come to talk about automatic doors. What do we want? Every major entrance public should have power doors and be accessible for all new construction. Should be a question of volume...if minimum traffic, maybe not. Alexandria does this for every door.

How can something like this get worded? What does the city think we can do with it?

We want to push on the Majestic Theater.

Is there some incentive or partnership that would help businesses with this (along with ordinance)?

New buildings at Arsenal Yards, the Watertown Mall, the Francis Food Mart (in this case, they are not following the law).

John can work on writing something up. If these are new buildings, why not do them right and set the standard? Legal people will need to weigh in on this, but starting with the planning folks is good.

Has any other community done something like this? Methuen? MAAB would be aware. Kim will check this out.

Waverly and Belmont Street intersections: Naomi wrote a draft letter to Belmont and Kim edited. Patrick will make it look official and send it off. Apparently Belmont does not have an ADA coordinator, but Patrick is digging to find out who is the appropriate person. He will send to planning and DPW.

Francis Food Mart: John spoke with them. There is a level entrance that is full of packages. They said it's hard to move things, open the door. They could add a ramp to the parking lot. We need to send this to the building inspector. Someone with authority will tell them to do it and by when.

480 Pleasant Street: Riverworks Health building. Now use by Mt Auburn Hospital and Beth Israel. but there's a lack of power doors. But there's a bigger problem: all entrances on street, but only vehicular access is around the back. There is no signage about where to go with a car. Steep driveway.

Patrick can check who the owner is. The parking lot is "Permit Only" and everyone going to a medical office is advised to park across the street, so there is no accessible parking. There's a DCR park which has a lot.

We should also mention this to the inspector. Let's hear what they know.

Rules around automatic doors are more stringent for medical buildings.

Ratification of vote to support November 2 Library Disability Employment Awareness Month. Cindy is on the planning committee with Nicole Gardner/World in Watertown and the library. 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm

There will be a panel of 3-4 people in Watertown with disabilities or a family member with disabilities. Resource tables for disability organizations, mostly in Watertown. Library will have book display for the month of October. Co-sponsor will give us an official seat at the table. Looking for a parent or person with autism. Rachel will connect with Cindy. Cindy, Carol Menton, and a woman with cerebral palsy who has written a book. It will be on cable and there should be a recording.

This is a natural event for us. John moved to be a co-sponsor, Naomi 2nd. Passes 8-0.

Carol M: we just had official disability month in July. In the future, it would be great for them to collaborate with us in advance. "Nothing about us without us."

We encourage them to share materials/draft and to help promote in Watertown News. If there's a meeting about marketing and outreach, invite Kim.

Ally would like \$500 to cover the event with ASL interpreters. Did we also want CART? What would the cost be? Bumping it up to \$900 and say "not to exceed." It will probably come in less. Cindy moves to approve, Rachel seconds. Passes 7-0 (CWB had left.)

Proclamation: drafted and reviewed for City Council about Disability Awareness month. Lisa suggested an edit about percent of people under age 65 with a disability. Patrick/Lisa will confirm the statistic and send to Nicole Gardner. This is the first proclamation on disability awareness that the Council has done.

We approve the proclamation: Cindy moves to approve, Naomi seconds. Passes 8-0.

Meeting Minutes: we will do those next meeting.

Treasurer's report: We have brought in additional money due to fines and fees and spent money on CART. \$59,703.58 is current balance. Fines and fees have gone up. We now have all parking officer positions filled. Moved to accept: John. Cindy seconds. Passes 7-0.

Plans review: there was a design review meeting for an additional building at Arsenal Yards. This is a glass tower near the Home Depot parking lot. They are building another building perpendicular to this tower that will take much of the Home Depot parking lot. It will be 4-5 stories of office/lab space with parking underneath. WCOD recommends power operated doors at main entrance, also clear signage to accessible spaces from the street. We would like final review when schematics are available. John will keep after Gideon on this. John will look for seating with or without arms as per Lisa's suggestion.

Special education update: acknowledge we received letter from Watertown parent who has experienced challenges getting services her child needs. This falls under IDEA not ADA. Patrick spoke to Director of Student Services and our lawyers.

SEPAC Zoom Meeting, Thursday September 26 at 6:30 pm.

<https://secure.smores.com/n/8hbf7x-watertown-sepac-kick-off-meeting?ref=email>

Safety and access: Tyler will work on reasonable accommodation policy. This usually applies through self-evaluation process. We would like to see a statement that can put in flyers for events and activities

or websites etc. It should have an accommodation request contact. We would like to see more response from legal.

Whites Path they have patched. There is one crack that will become a problem by end of winter, but it's okay for now. Naomi will contact 3-1-1 and tell them they missed a spot.

New business: Cindy will email other request we had about finding resources.

Patrick: State police has Blue Envelope program with materials for people with autism to keep in their cars.

Next meeting: October 16, 2024. Waiting on confirmation from Gideon and Paul Johnson.

But WAIT! This is a joint council/planning board meeting. Could we do the 23rd of October? Or push them until November?

We have someone from Boston Center for Independent Living who wants to come at some point.