

Watertown Commission on Disability

April 16, 2025

In attendance: Kim Charlson, John Hawes, Naomi Ridge, Carol Menton, Cindy Wentz, Rachel Kay, Nayo Franck, Lisa Feltner, Megan O'Halloran (arrived at 7:30), Patrick George, Ellen Vershbow (ASL), Stephanie Farrell (CART), Denise Martinez (ASL), Emmanuel Andrade (KMA)

1. Call to Order & Housekeeping – Kim Charlson
Thank you to John for leading last month.
2. Audience Issues (takes priority over regular business)
None.
3. Guest Speaker: Emmanuel Andrade, KMA Architecture + Accessibility
 - Emmanuel returns after two months for an update with update on ADA Self-Evaluation Plan.
 - Title II of ADA does not require all facilities be fully accessible (for example older buildings). But programs when viewed in their entirety are accessible. So it is more about programs and services rather than buildings.
 - Surveys: responses from ADA Coordinator, 17 departments, and 106 residents. Also have done a review of policies and procedures, the website, and facilities. They need to return the police station because it was occupied. They also need to return to Commanders Mansion as it is a construction area.
 - There are still 2.5 months to go to complete the study.
 - Community survey: 106 responses is really commendable. Summary: accessing facilities or information, we are doing well. But people don't know how to request help. Sidewalks and parking were problems of concern. The entire survey will be an appendix of the report.
 - We already have a grievance procedure, a coordinator, and a training program, as well as an accessible website, so that is great.
 - Lisa clarified that the website with information is the CoD website. We would have to make this more obvious, since many people said they could not find it. Emmanuel noted there is no grievance procedure on the web page, so that will be a recommendation.

- Recommendation: ADA coordinator information should be posted in all public buildings.
- Recommendation: we need a regular maintenance program: accessible parking spaces, elevator uses, trash is reach-able, baby changing tables don't interfere with clearance, etc. Example: the library automatic door was not working on two visits.
- Recommendation: we will need to review any construction sites, and it should be baked into contracts to avoid issues.
- Recommendation: DPW Recycling Center, you need to climb 6 feet up to throw things into the bin. We could train the attendant how to assist people.
- Victory Field: press box elevator is not in operation. Upon request, all functions of the press box should be relocated until the Phase 3 renovation. During Phase 3 we should build a fully accessible elevator. Ramps are too steep as well as some sidewalks. Also we need at least one accessible shower stall in the locker room.
- City Hall, Senior Center, and Commanders Mansion only have one accessible entrance and exit. We need to have two. We can coordinate this with the fire chief, so there are alternatives. Senior Center is a priority given the population. Senior Center also needs its ramp rebuilt.
- Phillips School Building is not fully accessible including bathrooms. We should not have School Committee meetings in that meeting.
- Most buildings the issues are parking spaces and making them clear, entrances with appropriate signage for accessible paths, and bathrooms. (Example, City Hall and Annex)
- Library is one of our most accessible buildings! Biggest issue is parking.
- Police station could use an emergency phone near the street since the walk to the building is long and steep. Most of the fire stations are employee only and the public areas only need minor fixes.
- Brick walkways at Commanders Mansion and Senior Center need to be regraded. Commanders Mansion may also need a pathway to any events in tents.
- Ice rink needs accessible showers and a new accessible ramp into the building.
- Lisa asked about Wayside. Emmanuel said it is not within the scope of work. Patrick said he will check with the City about adding this.
- Lisa asked about procedures if automatic doors are not working. Emmanuel suggested putting a sticker of where to call in those cases. Staff should also check these things regularly (daily).

- Lisa asked about height of fire extinguishers. Kim asked about defibulators. Emmanuel said if they are to be used by the public, they shouldn't be higher than 48 inches. Sometimes they are locked for first responders only in which case they do not have the same requirements.
- Cindy asked about the stairway railing at the library and was wondering if it needs to extend by the last step. Emmanuel says it is compliant, although perhaps not the best design.
- KMA will continue reviewing policies and procedures as well as meeting with certain staff. There will be a public information meeting the week of May 26 or June 2.
- Lisa asked about the podium at the council chamber that is sometimes too high for people. The detachable microphone makes it accessible and compliant.
- Kim asked how the public meeting will be scheduled. Should we schedule our May meeting for that date and time? Patrick won't be able to do our next meeting (May 21), but if we shifted to the 28th and coordinate with KMA and Tyler Cote, that would work.

4. Chair's Report - Kim

A. Update on Mt. Auburn-Summer Intersections Curb Cuts, Detectable Warnings – Patrick

Tom Brady at DPW got this work done. Patrick sent photos this afternoon.

B. Ai3 Parker School Transition Plan Discussion – Patrick

A different part of KMA (a sub-contractor Ai3) presented plans. The majority of variance requests were time-related. There has been cross-over with Emmanuel's team at KMA and they will merge their lists.

C. DPW Trash/Recycle Bin Sticker Design – Patrick

Still a work in progress.

D. Watertown Wellness Team Spring Walking Series

Patrick is coordinating with the Wellness Team. Then we would need to identify an accessible path and less accessible path.

E. Detectable Warnings at North Beacon & Beechwood – Kim

No update.

F. Update on Waverly-Belmont Street Intersection from Wayne Chouinard – Patrick & Kim

Work in progress. Are there other strategies? Think about it for next month.

G. Update on Francis Food Mart – Patrick & John

John went the other day. There is a sign to the accessible entrance, which is blocked. We need to read them the riot act! Patrick may get a building inspector to go with him. We may need to go to the MAAB since the building inspector told us it was our responsibility.

H. Update on Language Translation/ASL/CART Test– Carol & Nayo

Nayo stopped by about two weeks ago and spoke to Patrick. It seems that it has not been set and needs to be tested. Patrick said we are working with Tyler Cote to acquire two iPads to have the language line software. This is for spoken language as well as the ASL service. Nayo has experience with language line online, but in-person is different. Carol will check with a colleague about updates.

I. Reasonable Accommodation Policy: Next Steps – Patrick, Cindy

We need to have accommodation policy baked into agendas and other notices. Timelines can be difficult when requesting an interpreter (for example). Kim confirmed this would also apply to events.

5. Acceptance of Minutes for the March Meeting - Discussion/Vote – Rachel & Patrick

John motioned to accept. Naomi seconded. Minutes accepted 9-0.

6. Treasurer's Report – Patrick

\$86,113 balance. We have some fines and some expenses (CART, ASL, finals from Unity Breakfast). We have one bill to pay to KMA, since the grant funding comes from a different account.

Cindy moved to accept, Rachel seconded. Report accepted 9-0.

7. Break – we skipped this.

8. Committee Reports – Ongoing Business

A. Plans Review – John

No updates.

B. Special Education Update – Rachel

No updates.

C. Safety and Access – Kim

1. Cracks in Pavement on Pathway from Whites Avenue to Waverly Avenue – Kim & Naomi

Some cracks filled in most last fall, but Naomi and Patrick contacted them about it. There are a few smaller cracks, but they are okay for now.

2. Detectable Warnings at Lexington & Main Streets Being Referred to Mass Highway –Kim

No updates.

9. New Business

Lisa brought up unpassable sidewalks with trees and roots on Arsenal Street (see email). Patrick will follow up with DPW. Kim will add it to a future agenda. John mentioned another tree on Fifield Street where there is a walk around the tree. This may be a solution. Patrick found it on google maps and shared with us. The tree warden also has this information.

Patrick noted that Tyler Cote and the city is created a Civics Academy. Patrick will be presenting on ADA (and Veterans Services). There is an invitation for all members to join a graduation on June 17. Patrick will send it tomorrow. Let him know if you need accommodations or have problems with the online RSVP.

Patrick noted some of the issues from the self-evaluation will be addressed before the final report. Should we think about applying for money to implement suggestions? Yes! Not too early!

10. Adjourn at 8:59 pm.

Next meeting – May 21 at 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM – Via Zoom: Date will likely change! Watch your emails.