

## Watertown Commission on Disability

June 18, 2025

**Attendance:** Kim Charlson, John Hawes, Cindy Wentz, Carol Menton, Lisa Feltner, Rachel Kay, Naomi, Ridge, Nayo Franck, Tyler Cote, Stefanie Farrell (CART), Denise Martinez (ASL), Ellen Vershbow (ASL)

**Absent:** Megan O'Halloran

### 1. Call to Order & Housekeeping – Kim Charlson

*Best practices for Zoom meetings with people using ASL.* Nayo said it is going fine so far. What would be really nice is if people say their name before they speak. This could work for everyone. Carol added that we should be mindful of the interpreter; make sure the interpreter is done before starting.

**2. Audience Issues (takes priority over regular business):** None

### 3. Chair's Report - Kim

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

John took pictures that the problem is that the signal on the Dunkin side of the street is too far from the crosswalk.

#### B. A13 Parker School Transition Plan Update – Tyler

Tyler talked with City Hall Staff. All variances were approved on some level. Everything put forward to the MAAB we knew about. Tyler will keep in touch with the contractors etc and will pass them on.

#### C. DPW Trash/Recycle Bin Sticker Design – Kim

Kim attended the DPW open house. Met someone who is excited to move forward. Lydia McCoy is to create a policy for who gets a sticker. Kim also invited Tom Brady to come to our meeting in the fall.

Cindy suggested the process for stickers might be similar to the snow shoveling exceptions. This will involve the new Human Services director who will start in July.

Lisa asked to share the design again. We will do that in August.

#### D. Detectable Warnings at North Beacon & Beechwood – Kim

Kim talked with Mass Highway since this intersection is under their jurisdiction. Mass Highway said it was under City of Watertown. Tyler has talked with Tom Brady and will check out the area on Monday morning. Kim encouraged Tyler to make sure all the warnings are talking at all corners.

Lisa brought up the signal at North Beacon and Irving, but the sound is only coming from one location. Lisa encouraged Tyler to discuss volumes with Tom. Apparently DPW has a map of who has jurisdiction of different streets in Watertown and Lisa encouraged them to share with the Commission.

How should we get on an inspection schedule? Kim encourages calling 3-1-1 (on web or calling). We should confirm this with Tom Brady. Tyler encourages us to use 3-1-1, even if it's not a Watertown jurisdiction. Carol asked if 3-1-1 has an ADA checkbox. Tyler said currently no, but this is being considered.

*E. Update on Waverly-Belmont Street Intersection from Wayne Chouinard – Tyler & Kim*

No updates.

*F. Update on Francis Food Mart – Tyler & John*

John: it is a "bait and switch" situation. There is an accessible entrance around the corner, but the door is locked. The owner said they don't want people going in and out this way. Naomi has stopped going there since she cannot go there. Even when the doors did work, they were still difficult based on the configuration. John will go again over the summer.

Tyler will figure out who the right person in the City to talk to about this. We need a city employee to give us some clout. Cindy asked if the Architectural Access Board has a role. Kim noted AAB is an option, but takes a long time, so let's try the city first. Tyler will also check with the Economic Development Planner. Carol asked if there is a tax incentive for creating accessibility? Kim said that is a great question for the Economic Development person.

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

Carol spoke to someone about this, but will follow up in August. Tyler got updates and this should be in effect and it is moving along. Tyler is in touch with Jonathan O'Dell. There may be a opportunity to use this in City Hall soon. Tyler will update the Commission when it is available. Don't say when you're coming by and we will test it.

*H. Reasonable Accommodation Policy: Next Steps – Tyler, Cindy*

There is language we can pull from the KMA report. Lisa noted there is a lot of legal language and we may want to simplify it. We should read and plan to discuss for August meeting. At yesterday's Board and Commission event at the Commanders Mansion tent, Naomi observed there was no ASL or CART, and there were three steps up to the stage, so we need to think about this when hosting events. Kim noted we need ramps and railings.

<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/125/General-Disclaimer-Accessibility>

*I. Main Street & Whites Ave. MBTA Bus Stop Improvement – Lisa*

This doesn't exactly line up with Green Street, so there needs to be bump outs and it is being planned. This will coincide with the completion of Saltonstall Park.

*J. Transportation & Mobility Focus Group 5/14/25 at Perkins – Kim & Others*

Kim and Naomi attended. Discussed shuttles, bus stops, walking, Watertown Square. Zeke was very enthusiastic and had a lot of notes. Naomi told them about Warren Street near the Cunniff School does not have any crosswalks and the traffic goes fast. There were other streets brought up. They noted it is easy to go East/West in Watertown, but not so easy to go North/South as far as transportation options.

#### *K. Trees on Arsenal Street & Sidewalk Issue – Lisa*

A lot of signals are put in the sidewalk since there is no planting strips, so it is not wide enough for anyone with mobility devices to get by. The stretch is Arsenal from 185 Arsenal Street to Louise St. Kim suggests Tyler checks this with Tom Brady on Monday.

#### **4. Acceptance of Minutes for the April Meeting – Discussion/Vote – Rachel & Kim**

Rachel will have the May meeting minutes soon! For April minutes, John moves to accept, Naomi seconds. Minutes approved 8-0.

#### **5. Treasurer's Report**

Tyler does not have MUNIS access in the city, so got access to our report via the City Auditor. The available balance is \$105,785.94. The year-to-date spending is \$11,450. Encumbrances is \$589.99. We will vote officially in August.

#### **6. Events at the Library**

Cindy and Kim met with Ally Frey at Watertown Free Public Library for Disability Awareness (to be held in October). There is an event in collaboration with the author of the book True Biz, a book about deaf culture and coming-of-age. It will be in early October. Nayo said they were still in the early stages of planning. They are hoping for September as it is deaf awareness month. It would be great if we can partner as the council as well.

The library has a Monday movie night where we can show Crip Camp in October, followed by a session about advocating in our community.

#### **7. Committee Reports - Ongoing Business**

*A. Plans Review – John None*

*B. Special Education Update – Rachel*

Nothing now, but Student Services Report is still to come.

*C. Safety and Access – Kim*

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

Naomi

No updates.

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

Kim

### **8. New Business**

Kim Charlson was featured on the Little Local Conversations podcast. Tyler has also been featured.

Cindy: Last year there was a city street map of all crosswalks and streetlights online. It is now available in an accessible form online!

<https://www.watertown-ma.gov/1291/Walking>

Lisa noted Mt Auburn Cemetery is considering allowing bicycles and dogs. If anyone wants to weigh in, they should!

### **9. Adjourn**

Next meeting – August 20, 2025, at 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM – Via Zoom

*No July 2025 Meeting*