

Watertown Commission on Disability
March 18, 2026

In attendance: Kim Charlson, George Donahue, Naomi Ridge, Rachel Kay, Carol Menton, Cindy Wentz, Megan O'Halloran, Jay Terminiello, Stefanie (CART)

Absent: John Hawes

1. **Call to Order & Housekeeping - Kim Charlson, Chair**
2. **Audience Issues (takes priority over regular business)**
None
3. **Guest Speaker:** None
4. **Chair's Report -- Kim**

A. Update on Waverly-Belmont Street Intersection from Wayne Chouinard - Kim

Naomi reported that the Belmont side now has detectable warning strips, although no audible signal (and neither on Watertown side).

B. ADA Signage as Recommended by the KMA Report - Jay

Jay report there will be a meeting in two weeks with KMA.

C. Skip the Stuff Ordinance Amendment - Lisa and Kim

We submitted language to the Rules and Ordinances Committee. Lisa reported that at the last full council meeting, the President referred the ordinance back to the Committee to review the new language. The committee met and chose not to include our language. The other committee members did not entertain the language nor wait to hear from the Commission. The staff (Erin Rathe) would like to present to us in April, and share publicly available information. Then it will go back to the Committee. Then the Council will vote. The next Council meeting is the 14th of April (we meet the 15th). Kim spoke with the Chair of the Rules and Ordinances (Nicole Gardner) who discouraged Kim from attending the meeting and felt our language was unnecessary. Kim noted this should have more consumer focus, for people with and without disabilities. The chair felt this could be covered in the educational process. Jay will connect with Erin for getting us materials next month. Rachel commended Lisa for her advocacy.

D. Update on Arsenal Street Trees & Sidewalk Issue - Lisa

This is now an official request from the full City Council to DPW. DPW will provide a report on this section of Arsenal Street.

E. Arsenal Park Amphitheater Path Surface (on hold for spring) - Jay

We are waiting for weather.

F. Accessible Signage at City Hall - Jay

Jay will have more to report after the next KMA meeting.

G. Walker Pond Accessibility Recommendations - Jay

Kim reported that what they have discussed include accessibility. Lisa said there will possibly be community gardens, and we want to ensure they are fully accessible if this goes forward.

H. Follow-up Path Issue Behind Halfway Café - Jay

We are hoping for a response from Tom Brady. Kim read about an oversight report related to issues like water pipe issues between municipalities. Kim will look for this information and share when she finds it.

I. DPW Trash/Recycling Disability Sticker - Jay

We are hoping for a response from Matt Bacon who is the liaison between DPW and Republic, but he is still on leave.

J. Automatic Doors for Watertown's New High School - Jay

Jay confirmed they will have automatic fully-ADA-compliant doors at the new high school.

K. Connalunga Park & River Path - Jay

We are waiting to hear from back Tom Brady. Jay will email Tom Brady about all related items, now that we should be beyond snow.

L. Discussion on Official ADA Accommodation Requests Received: Process for Tracking, Reporting Out to WCOD - All

Cindy raised this last meeting. The most common issue is sidewalk obstruction by parking in front of a business. This is then reported to traffic at the police department. Issues with automatic door buttons go to DPW. There is no automatic system for tracking so Jay is setting up an excel tracking document. Lisa asked when we could include parking issues in 3-1-1. She also wanted to make usage clearer. Kim proposed a sub-committee meet to discuss these issues and make recommendations. Lisa confirmed that we could have a Safety and Access Sub-Committee as long as it is posted publicly. After this meeting, we will decide who would like to participate and figure out a date and time. Kim, Megan, Naomi, and Lisa would like to participate, and Jay will be there as well. Cindy asked if it is better to address ADA complaints to Jay or via 3-1-1. Maybe we can schedule Laura from 3-1-1 to come back in May or June.

M. Discussion on Ideas for Outreach about WCOD Activities & Funding Opportunities -- All

Naomi noted last meeting we have significant amount of money in our account. Can we do more outreach and education for the WCOD? Naomi suggested we could support the community gardens with raised wheelchair accessible walks at Walker Ponds. Kim suggested we reach out to Community Gardens. Lisa can reach out to Community Gardens.

Jay noted that he spoke to Nancy from Watertown Community Fridge. She thanked us for our contribution and requested someone look at the Fridge to give suggestions for accessibility. George will try to go by, and Naomi will go when she is by the library.

Naomi suggests we write a 1-2 paragraph note on what we do to send out to community organizations whom might want us as partners. We have a 1-page flyer that we use at Faire on the Square. This could be easily modified. Jay suggested putting it in What's Up Watertown. Naomi suggested we make posters to put up in the Senior Center and the Library with some language about our ability to fund accessibility needs. Cindy suggests we might want limits on what we

can do. Kim noted we need to be clear that we do not fund individuals, just organizations/events.

Kim noted that the library asked for an ASL interpreter for a Pride event, but we did not fund it because it was in the city's communication budget.

George suggested we invite Charlie Breitrose from Watertown News come to a meeting to share more about what we do. George also used to have a cable show on disability, that we would love to see resurrected.

Megan suggested we reach out to the Watertown Business Coalition. Lisa suggested that they could promote stores and restaurants that are fully accessible, giving specifics on what makes places fully accessible. Naomi noted that places in the UK with steps will come out with a portable ramp to get you in, but we do not have that here. George noted that UPS Store on the corner does not have an accessibility, but they rushed right out to help.

Lisa said it would be great to resurrect the restaurant accessibility guide from Gail's old files. George will look in his files. George says we sent out a survey of about five questions to every restaurant, and went to ask managers for this information.

Kim got an email from the chair of the Residents Advisory Committee asking her to do a two-minute video about our Commission. This will be recorded in the next couple of weeks.

Kim suggested we will make a list and do some prioritization at our next meeting.

5. Acceptance of Minutes for the December & February Meeting - Discussion/Vote - Rachel

Rachel motioned to accept, Naomi seconded. Motion passes 8-0

6. Treasurer's Report - Jay

Jay generated a report from December to present. We have spent about \$5000, which is mostly donations. We have \$118,770 in our account.

7. Committee Reports - Ongoing Business

A. Plans Review - No Report

None

B. Special Education Update - Rachel

There is a special education district-wide trainer being added in the new budget. Kim suggested we review and summarize the report, then plan for the Director of Special Education to com.

C. Safety and Access - Kim

More to come after our sub-committee meets.

Highway - Kim

9. New Business:

Watertown Visitors Guide just came out. Cindy evaluated online and it was mostly understandable, but she could not see the maps. There is a long list of restaurants without links.

Kim suggested we meet with the creator to discuss a version without graphics. Jay will investigate who this is. Lisa thought it might be from the new Cultural District. It is funded by the Massachusetts Office of Tourism. Carol noted that everything public facing for the state must be accessibility by next month.

Lisa noted our IT team has been more focused on structure rather than content. Kim noted that much of the electronic materials from the city are not accessible for blind/low-vision people, including the Senior Center Newsletter. Others are much better. Jay noted that everyone in the city is using different platforms. This is coming up weekly, but there is no update. Senior Center is insistent that this is the platform they use. Kim will send it to colleagues and get their feedback that it is not accessible at all.

Proposal to recommend and collaborate with Perkins to make braille and audio versions

10. Adjourn

Next meeting - April 15, 2026 at 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM - Via Zoom