

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, Sept. 15th, 2021

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson, Chair; Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor; John Hawes; Carol Menton; Megan O'Halloran; Naomi Ridge; Elan Rohde; and Carol Wilson-Braun. Absent- Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator.

Guests- Paul Moan- Code Red Consulting; Ellen Bey and Devan Scott- residents.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Paul Moan, an engineer and code consultant with Code Red Consulting was hired by the Arsenal on the Charles to assess the need for a proposed variance for MAAB for the Butcher Block Project at 311 Arsenal St. The space has 3 floors, of which the 2nd floor is partial. To reach the 2nd floor space, there are stairs, but a regular elevator would not fit. A LULA, or Limited Use Limited Application lift was recommended, but is not code compliant. Paul was reaching out to WCOD and also to BCIL (Boston Center for Indep. Living) for feedback. John recommended approval, but suggested that any special rooms should be on the first floor of the building. He called it an "Equivalent Accommodation". It was moved and seconded that WCOD will write a letter of support to the MAAB for the Butcher Block project. A roll call VOTE was taken and was unanimous in support.
- 2) Faire on the Square- Kim said that Gayle's assistant has prepared a box with materials. Jar openers have been ordered. Carol M mentioned visor cards for cars of deaf drivers. Kim will drop off materials from Perkins, which won't have a table this year. Carol M will email a sign-up schedule.
- 3) Sidewalk improvements- Kim did not receive anything from Gayle. Will continue next meeting.
- 4) How Dog Park- Kim said no updates have been received from DPW. A concrete path and bench are still needed for wheelchair users inside the park.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes from the August meeting. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk's Office.

TREASURER'S REPORT- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the Treasurer's Report for August. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

Kim said that Gayle had requested authorization for up to \$600 for supplies for Faire on the Square, but thought it would be better to authorize more than we needed. It was moved, seconded and VOTED

unanimously by roll call to request authorization for up to \$750 to stock supplies for Faire on the Square.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

1)Plans- John said there was nothing new.

2)Special Ed- Naomi reported that the new Cunniff School was being landscaped and that students would be returning in one month. There were more accommodations for special ed students.

She had spoken with parents of special ed children, asking how they felt it was going, and got very positive feedback. They felt the accommodations were better than in other districts. A monthly Q+A by Kathy Desmarais, Director of Student Services, was well received. It was felt that students with high needs need to be back in the building, and Kathy increased the numbers allowed. One negative was that students on IEPs weren't getting the inclusion they needed in separate classrooms due to Covid.

Naomi was in touch with the Special Ed Advisory council, which was trying to regroup.

Lisa said the town council had a tour of the Cunniff and suggested the COD might get one as well. Naomi will ask the superintendent.

3) Safety and Access- Kim said no updates from the Highway Dept. Naomi hadn't been to the Orchard and Lexington intersection recently, and will report next month. Lisa mentioned that the outside door automatic control at town hall doesn't work for entering. Kim will speak to the Clerk.

NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Naomi mentioned Judy Fallows, who presented to us at our May meeting about accessible gardens and wondered about follow-up. She said that the Community Preservation Act has grants.
- 2) Naomi said there has been some public pushback about the Board of Health's indoor mask mandate. It was asked if the WCOD should formally endorse the mandate. A motion was made and seconded to have the WCOD provide a statement written by Kim in support of the mask mandate reflecting the position of the disability community. A roll call VOTE was taken with 7 yeses and one abstention (Elan Rohde).
- 3) Kim mentioned the upcoming town Charter review and said there would be a vote on the charter revisions on Nov 2nd. She indicated that the Town Clerk's office will be sending out a mailing explaining all of the changes to residents in October. Kim asked if the WCOD authorize the cost for distributing the explanatory information on the charter revisions for Watertown residents using large print or braille. It was moved and seconded that WCOD would help with the expense of making Charter review materials accessible to residents of Watertown in preparation for the vote on Nov 2nd. A roll call VOTE was taken with 7 yes and one abstention (Kim Charlson, because Perkins would likely be preparing the accessible format materials). Megan said that the materials should mention WCOD.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, Oct. 20th, 2021.