

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 18th, 2021

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

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

Guest- Patrick George, Veteran Service Officer for Watertown

GUEST SPEAKER- Patrick George has been the Veteran Service Officer for Watertown for 3 years, and his roll is to assist with Chapter 115 Benefits for Veterans. Benefits include service animals, help with housing, vehicle allowances, injury compensation, help for disabled veterans. Kim asked how many veterans were in Watertown, and he answered a couple of hundred. There are 3 active veterans' organizations in Watertown: VFW, Marine Corps Post and AmVets (Housing Authority). Groups are tending to combine at this point, and meeting in accessible buildings. Lisa wondered about the closed VFW on Arsenal St, and Patrick said they meet at a location on Mt. Auburn St. Veterans tend to become active in their late 40s. Carol M commented that 50% of vets leave service with a hearing loss. Her organization helps vets connect with audiology, and she offered to give him a link on hearing loss. Patrick said that a common disability is tinnitus. The VA makes hearing aids available with little "red tape". There is a free CapTel system, a captioned phone. Carol M asked if there may be veterans interested in serving on WCOD, as there is an opening. Kim said that veterans are prioritized at Perkins, which Patrick hadn't known.

CHAIR'S REPORT- 1) Kim mentioned a letter received last month from Frank Galligan (WCOD chair in the 90s) about parking on Highland Ave. There are vehicles on sidewalks. Gayle has reached out to Sgt Sampson of the traffic division. Frank talked to Sgt Sampson, who will keep an eye on the situation.

2) Watertown Faire on the Square- Will take place Sat, Sept 25th. Gayle registered us for a table. Send Gayle updated materials, and she will look through brochures to see if they need updating. Carol M said she would find and update the fact sheet and send to Gayle. Lisa said that Gayle could include a summary of the Bike-Pedestrian plan. Lisa will contact Steve Magoon and the Bike-Ped committee. Gayle will talk to the Planning Dept. Gayle will order rubber jar openers with WCOD info on them. Carol M and Carol W-B agreed that would be a great free item.

3) Lissa Gifford has resigned from the Commission. We now have one opening.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to accept the minutes from the May meeting. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk's Office. It was announced that we will be allowed to continue meeting via Zoom until April.

TREASURER'S REPORT- Lisa asked if the town still had 1.5 parking enforcement officers and was told yes. John said he was on the Marshall Fund board, and there were many requests for help this year. He asked what money we would be spending, that we haven't funded anything recently. Gayle said that was due to pandemic shut downs. Many organizations have struggled. The New Rep Theatre will be closed for renovations. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to accept the Treasurer's Report for May. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

Plans Review- John said no new plans. Still nothing happening with How dog park. Kim asked Gayle to reach out to DPW.

Special Ed- no report

Safety and Access- Kim said she hasn't reached out yet to MA Highway Dept about the detectable warnings. She will contact Naomi for an update about the crumbling sidewalks around Lexington St.

NEW BUSINESS-

Lisa said this was actually old business, about the list of sidewalks between Planning and DPW. Riverside, Capitol, More and Highland Streets are still a problem. She felt that sidewalk repairs were not on the radar as much, likewise parking on sidewalks. Kim will send a letter to DPW.

Lisa said that in the fall, the DPW is moving everything to GIS from SeeClickFix.

Lisa also said that she went on a tour of the new Cunniff School and thought that they did a good job with accessibility.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, Sept 15th, 2021.