

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, Oct. 20th, 2021

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:02 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; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun.

Guest- Janet Murphy, Watertown town clerk.

GUEST SPEAKER- Janet Murphy said she has been town clerk for 4 months, and came to see what advice WCOD could give her about the upcoming municipal elections and to take questions. Kim asked if all the precincts were back to their usual places. No, still in temporary locations. Naomi said there was confusion about the Cunniff School vs the Middle School, and that the location should be made clear ahead of the election. Janet said they would be doing outreach, including locations. Kim asked about the drop box at Town Hall, and Janet said it was operational and at the same accessible location. Kim brought up accessible electronic ballots, which the Commonwealth provided for 2020, and Boston and Worcester used. She encouraged Janet to talk to those cities to find out more. Maybe they can be included in the town budget for next year. Janet said that Worcester paid \$4000 for them. Various COD members said that they had done for voting, whether using an "automark" machine, a mail-in ballot, for which one must apply for a waiver each year, or in person. Carol M reminded everyone that 1 in 5 people has a hearing loss and that poll volunteers can be very helpful. Lisa commented that there have been hiccups in terms of access. Kim said that WCOD volunteered to help produce large print and Braille versions (via Perkins) of the charter document that was being sent out ahead of the election. She quoted the number needed as around 180: 28 Braille, 81 email and the rest in large print. She invited Janet to continue asking us questions about accessibility.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Carol M said the Faire on the Square went well. We had a good location (Gayle will pass along to planners) and good information. Megan's goddaughter Lucy was a big help, and maybe next year could bring some of her cohorts. We should improve and update the Fact Sheet and make it visually pleasing. The jar openers were popular. Naomi said a lot of people stopped by.
- 2) Sidewalk improvements- Gayle and Kim spoke about Riverside, Capitol and Highland. A patch was done for Galen and will be permanent by next season. The DPW wants requests done by work orders. Lisa said, however, that there is frustration with work orders. John asked how things could be prioritized. We go through Gayle. Lisa said this would be brought up at the next council meeting when discussing roadwork.
- 3) Gayle talked to Matt Shuman (DPW) about How Dog Park. They will endeavor to complete it this construction season, or else prioritize it for next season.

- 4) John reported that the rise at the intersection of Dexter and Nichols that had been reported as problematic by resident Marcia Smith was now imperceptible. Kim asked Gayle to give the DPW praise from the commission.
- 5) Kim reported that the AAB agreed with our letter of support for the variance at 311 Arsenal.
- 6) Annual donation to Watertown food pantries. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call that we approve of \$1500 to the 2 food pantries for a total of \$3000.
- 7) Lisa mentioned home rule accessible format. The charter had to go to every household, and she was concerned about the slowness of the mail. Several members said they received it today.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes from the September 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 September. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

- 1) Plans- John said there was nothing new.
- 2) Special Ed- Naomi said she had gone to the Cunniff School open house and said that it had a nice state of the art space for special ed. Designed for accessibility with ramps and elevators. Lisa mentioned open flex space, furniture on wheels and accessible gardens. Kim mentioned a "cafetorium".
- 3) Safety and Access- Naomi reported that half of the sidewalk has been replaced on Belmont St. but it is not very passable yet. No change at Lexington and Orchard yet. One of the stoplights is in the middle of a sidewalk. John said he took screenshots of the intersection, and could forward them to the commission, and it could help Gayle's communication with the DPW.

NEW BUSINESS-

Naomi reported that a new community fridge has been set up in the parking lot of the Francis Market on Belmont St and that people have been generous. John said that the Watertown Community Foundation funded the set up, and is the only small town Community Foundation that is doing this. It is mostly being done by Community Foundations of Boston, Cambridge and Worcester.

Lisa said she is still hoping for a White Cane Day. Kim reported that Perkins had a very successful fundraiser 3K walk, with 1200 participants (50% under 40), 100 volunteers and a tuba player!

John reported a new crosswalk at Paul St over N Beacon St. Lisa said that Will Brownsberger is working with DCR about crosswalks for Charles River Rd.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, Nov. 17th, 2021.

