

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, Nov. 17th, 2021

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:00 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- Larry Field, from the Watertown Dept of Community Planning.

Guest Speaker- Larry Field is a housing specialist working for the town, and came to give an update about St. Joseph's Hall, a 25 apartment independent living facility for seniors. It was a school which was part of a religious complex between Warren, Highland and Lexington Streets, and is now managed by MetroWest. It is part of a 2022 action plan, which needs to be revised because of the need for a new elevator. It is a 100 year old building with an old, now broken elevator. MetroWest is putting together funding for this (\$500,000), half of which will pay temporary relocation costs for residents. Replacement of the elevator should take 2 weeks, but the inspection could take an additional 4 weeks. The convent building on the site is empty, and there will an open house on 12/2 from 7-8:30 at the library for a proposed 23 apartments, some of which will be accessible.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Knoll's Delta work- Naomi said that work is being done now on blacktop and curbing. They have answered concerns that she and John brought up. They are moving one of the signals to open up a sidewalk and widening the sidewalk around another signal.
- 2) Riverside sidewalks have been patched. Carol W-B confirmed this.
- 3) How Dog Park- It is anticipated that it will be finished in the spring.
- 4) Detectable warnings behind the library- Naomi reported that the worst ones have been pulled up or banged down with nails. They still need to be installed properly. Kim asked John, Elan or Naomi for photos.
- 5) Detectable warnings in Watertown Square- Naomi said it was the same story. They are especially bad on the delta end of the crosswalk near the CVS. Iron detectable warnings are starting to replace rubber. Again, Kim requested photos.
- 6) New flashing pedestrian warning crosswalk lights at Paul St and N. Beacon- Kim reported that cars are not heeding the lights. Lisa mentioned that pedestrian lights on California St are not working. Carol W-B confirmed.
- 7) Food Pantry donations- Gayle reported the money has been donated and a note received from Watertown COA.
- 8) Community Fridge- Naomi reported that it is working out well. Kim said she has donated items.
- 9) Nov 2 election issues- Kim gave congratulations to Lisa for her successful campaign and to Megan for running. Janet Murphy, the new City Clerk did well. She talked to Boston and Worcester, and

Watertown was the 3rd to use accessible online ballots (followed by Cambridge and Springfield), though the arrangement was late. Kim reported that it was a smooth process with simple and easy ballots. People will have to apply ahead of time to the clerk. They will be used for municipal elections and likely state elections. Naomi reported difficulty using ball-point pens, preferring felt tip. Lisa noted lack of signage at the Phillips school which caused confusion about accessibility.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT- Gayle thanked Kim for her help in getting the accessible charter put out. Kim said it was sent to 50-60 residents and there was positive feedback. The Braille edition was 126 pages. The invoice was received from Perkins. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the Treasurer's Report for October. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

Plans- John said a variance was given from MAAB for 2 Kingsbury St/Athena Health. He wasn't able to respond within the 2 week window. A 2nd floor is not accessible except by stairs. An elevator is needed. John will talk to Gayle, Kim and the building inspector and write a letter. Kim thought the 2 week comment window is too short when mail is involved. Second, the new development at 66 Galen St. will have a café with a sidewalk entrance that will have a slope of 8%. That is the allowed slope of interior ramps. Carol W-B suggested a 2 bar railing on one side of the sidewalk. John will follow up with MAAB.

Special Ed- no report

Safety and Access- Kim said no report other than what had been discussed already.

NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Lisa reported that the Roads Projects will be coming out. Mt. Auburn redesign plans are being updated. The public comment period is ending Friday.
- 2) Kim and Lisa reported on the snow removal ordinance. A good initial discussion took place at the council meeting last night, involving the Bike-Pedestrian committee and Laura Weiner. There are still mixed opinions by residents. Accountability was discussed. John said police should not be involved. Lisa spoke of positive progress and of re-defining liability. Kim reported a commitment to do something.
- 3) Naomi brought up the lack of an accessible entrance to Watertown Savings Bank. No entrances have automatic doors. There is a door man, but not at the Main St door. Kim asked Naomi to write a letter.

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, Dec. 15th, 2021.

