

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 20th, 2022

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; Elan Rohde; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun.

Absent- Megan O'Halloran and Naomi Ridge;

Guest- Rachel Kay, resident. Planned speaker Sarah Nechamen from Disable Persons Protection Commission was not present.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Watertown Square Delta area- Will place on agenda next month, as Naomi was not present. Kim asked Elan to contact Naomi and to take updated photos.
- 2) How Dog Park- John went to the park and saw a new bench with concrete slab. He asked Gayle to communicate to the Forte family. Kim suggested a "friends" group could keep an eye on the park, and asked Gayle to thank the DPW (especially Matt, Greg and Peter C).
- 3) Detectable warnings behind the library- Naomi will address next month.

Concerning detectable warnings, Kim said there was a letter from DPW about work starting on Lexington St from Main to Warren. Kim asked Gayle to ask DPW if detectable warnings could be installed at Main and Lexington. Main St is a state road.

- 4) June 4th Diversity Event- Carrie Conkey of the WPL added \$100 to her request so Braille schedules could be printed. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to authorize up to \$700 for the WPL to cover ASL and other accessibility materials including Braille for the June 4th Diversity Day.
- 5) Accessible Housing at 103 Nichols Ave- Kim wanted to send a letter of support from WCOD for Michael Lara and the subsidized housing project at 103 Nichols Ave. Lisa said there is still a lot of information that needs to be completed and a lot of work to do on the proposal. Kim will continue to communicate with Michael Lara. We will address this again next meeting.
- 6) New member recruitment- Kim reviewed that Megan and Carol M were both re-appointed. The screening committee is interviewing applicants for WCOD during the next week or so. Carol M and Gayle will report on recommendations next meeting.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

- 1) Plans Review-
 - a) John said that he got a response from the administration of Arsenal Yards. They did a survey 4 different times of the day about HP parking and found low utilization. John thought the times should include evenings, but that the place is not fully opened yet. We should see how it goes in the summer. Kim asked Gayle to email a thankyou to Arsenal Yards for doing the review, and that we will re-visit the issue in the summer.
 - b) John said that the entire block containing the Main St. post office will be torn down to Cross St and Pleasant St. A new building will be 5 stories tall and have a garage with accessible parking. When John looked at the plans, he thought the spaces might be too far from the elevator. Commission members commented that a 5 story building is higher than anything nearby.
 - c) The next project was the old Russo's property. It will become bio-tech life sciences and small retail. There will be a parking garage connected at the ground floor, with accessible spaces near the elevator. He recommended that the accessible spaces for retail be closer to the main building.
 - d) Mt Auburn Cemetery variance- There was a request for a time delay to install accessible toilets. The downstairs of the chapel and the office building don't have access to the above floors. Access is from outside.
 - e) 51 Watertown St. A nursery school is being planned for where Gordon's Liquors was. The variance request of lowering the sinks was approved.
- 2) Special Ed and Safety and Access- Nothing new.

NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Lisa said there was an electronic bulletin board in Watertown Sq near merchant's way, and said she had to go into the street to see one side of it. She recommended it be turned so that both sides can be seen from the sidewalk. Kim asked her to request that it be more pedestrian friendly.
- 2) Lisa announced that the city's fully accessible website was now certified. Kim asked Gayle if we could get more details from Chris.
- 3) John asked if there was any information about WCOD members in the city bylaws- how many with disabilities, etc. Kim said we could discuss this during the next meeting. Gayle said there were 1980 ordinances that she could send to us. Kim said the state statute said that commissions can use parking fees, and that the make-up of the commissions are local. It is posted on the WCOD webpage.
- 4) Visitor Rachel Kay offered an update on the Special Ed Parents Advisory Committee. She said that it was in the process of re-grouping. There would be an open meeting on zoom next week, and she'd share the link.
- 5) Lisa asked about the status of a railing along a grassy knoll in Arsenal Park. There's some kind of drop off. John said he would look at it.

- 6) Lisa also spoke of the next phase of the Galen St project, at Water St. There would be a meeting on Monday Apr 25th at 6:30 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, May 18th, 2022.