

Watertown Commission on Disability Public meeting Minutes from April 16, 2008

**Watertown Commission on Disability
April 16, 2008**

In Attendance: George Donahue, Chair, Alex Liazos, Kim Charlson, Marilyn Devaney, Ann Doughty, Gayle Shattuck, Carol Menton, Fred Isaacs

Meeting called to order at 7:10pm

Guests: Angie Kounelis, Town Councilor

Information presentations with question and answer periods following were provided by the following guest speakers:

James Sarno, Somerville Area Director of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and Watertown Resident

MRC Area Office located in Assembly Sq. MRC and Deaf Services for the Middlesex area Returning vets WWI original mission Consumer Handbook not in Braille not on-line. Kim recommended that MRC get the brochure online because there are people with other disabilities who can't read print, not just people who are blind. Jobs are disappearing, fewer people are doing more. Prepare, training for today's work market. 6 month waiting list for services after eligibility is determined because of federal funding. Tuition waiver for state college and university, adaptive technology and rarely there is assistance for out of state colleges like Gaulliedette University. Workshops for job preparation at no cost. Anyone on SSI or SSDI is presumed to be eligible for services. Caseload sizes of 1:150.

Dr. Stephen Shore, President emeritus of the Asperger's Association of New England

Discussion on Aspergers and the Autism spectrum: what are the aspects that people on the autism spectrum might present, such as restricted interests (passions), the challenges people face, and how these same aspects can be used to an individual's advantage, i.e. his theory is that people on the Autism spectrum are successful vocationally when the attributes that they exhibit are matched with jobs requiring those skills. Dr. Shore showed us copies of the books that he's written on the subject.

8:00 pm Break

8:15pm return to meeting

Kim and George discussed the issue of defacement of a playground on the Charles River which is not town property. He had emailed the State DCR to make them aware and have them take action.

Members of the Historical Society of Watertown gave a presentation on the Edmund Fowle House project which was supported a few years ago by the WCOD.

Mary Spire, Carol, President, Joyce Kelly, Chair of the Restoration Committee, Joyce Munger, Audry Jones Childs, and Bob Childs Local Liaison to the contracts and the State. Bob gave an update on the work done on the Fowls House. The first floor is fully accessible. They have a different floor plan than the one that was presented to the WCOD a few years ago. The video is not done yet, they are requesting WCOD guidance on the video. On May 17th there will be a public opening and reception at noon. Carol suggested that she might know someone who could help them with the captioning of the video. They have a video of the demolition and discovery part of the project. Their Website has a clip of the video. Kim suggested that there are people who can craft dialogue that helps people with visual impairments to hear descriptions - to be done at the story board planning phase of the project. There was a discussion of the training for the tour guides. The WCOD asked them to think about a small replica of the second floor for those who can't go to the second floor and suggested that they go to the traffic commission to get a handicapped parking spot.

March Minutes: motioned, seconded, voted, moved to approve.

Treasurer's Report was motioned, seconded, voted, and approved.

Safety and Access Update: Kim asked for an update from DPW on when the parts will come in for the locator tones. Discussion about the bike racks that were installed in Coolidge Square by Dunkin Donuts on Mt Auburn Street. Alex will bike around there to check out if the placement of the wracks are appropriate and will not block access to the sidewalks.

Delta Bus Stop tabled until next month.

Announcements from the Chair:

Reminder of the May Emergency Preparedness Meeting that the WCOD is sponsoring will be held May 28 from 12:00 pm to 3:00pm. at the Library.

Faire on the Square is scheduled for September 27th. George needs to know who can cover the table. If there are too many conflicts this year with covering the table, we will not participate.

Jerry Mee came into the meeting unexpectedly from another meeting. He addressed the issue of the Safety and Access Update agenda item previously

discussed. He said that the equipment is not available. Jerry has been to Ocean State Signal in Rhode Island to move the issue along a bit. They did install the chirpers so no one was held high and dry.

Kim asked if he was going to have to buy a new system. Jerry said yes, because of the traffic accident. Kim asked if there are other brands. Jerry said this is the only brand that is approved by Mass. Highway. Kim asked who certifies vendors with the Mass. Highway. Jerry said that the Chief Traffic Engineer of Mass Highway certifies. Kim would like to talk with someone at Mass Highway to suggest different vendors and equipment. Marilyn asked Jerry if he had the money in the budget for this. Jerry said he hoped to get the money through the insurance policy and that they will get them installed as quickly as possible.

Fred: SPED PAC elections are May 14th so if anyone knows anyone who would be interested please make them aware.

9:10 pm motion to adjourn was made, seconded, voted and approved