

Watertown Commission on Disability January 21, 2009

Attendees: George Donahue, Chair; Kim Charlson; Anne Doughty; Marilyn Devaney; Fred Isaacs; Carol Menton; Bob Hall

Guest: Raymond Isaacs

Meeting called to order at 7:07 pm

Roll Call

Chair Report:

The Chair has been forwarding e-mail which he has received for the commission on to the members.

An item of particular interest is coming up on Tuesday, February 3rd, on the state of civil rights in the Commonwealth. That will be held at the Reggie Lewis track and athletic center gymnasium on Tremont Street in Boston. The chair did send an e mail about this to everyone. He can resend it again. It gives a web address for more information.

There was discussion of whether or not the Commission should nominate the Watertown Public Library for a 2009 accessible design award.

There was discussion of the new town Curb Committee which will be planning work on the streets. The police and fire departments, the board of health, and the town planner are all represented. We should have a Commission member there. The next meeting is January 29 at 3:00 PM in the Lower Hearing Room at Town Hall.

Kim Charlson reported that there was a celebration at the State House for the 200th anniversary of the birth of Louis Braille. About 1000 people attended. There was a Governor's proclamation. At the end of the formal ceremonies Kim presented awards to three winners of the Braille and Talking Books Library's essay contest. She also said a few words about her trip to France, where she visited the birthplace of Louis Braille and admired one of the first Braille books.

Raymond Isaacs, our guest, reported on his trip to the Presidential Inauguration as our ambassador.

Raymond said that he saw the actual Presidential Inauguration itself from Nationals Stadium due to the size of the crowd. There were about 2,000 high school kids in his group from all over the world. Most were from the US, but he met kids from Kazakhstan and from Germany. His group had Al Gore, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (who he thought had a good sense of humor), Doris Kearns Goodwin, and the blind man who climbed Mt. Everest. He went to a black tie ball at the BIG Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, the Udvar-Hazy Center in Chantilly, Virginia. He also went to the opening concert at the Lincoln Memorial.

The Commission members thanked Raymond for his service as our ambassador.

The site plan for 140 Pleasant St. was discussed. It was formerly “Dirty Dan’s” garage and an adjacent home. The site review meeting was postponed until the Monday after our meeting. We were shown a general layout with 48 apartments. There may be an elevator. There are 2 parking spaces per apartment; 3 of the 96 spaces are handicapped spaces. We did not have enough detail to do much of an accessibility review.

There’s a lot of housing coming in on Pleasant Street. We should ask what their plans are for accessibility across the board.

Kim Charlson gave a presentation on the Riverfront Project. It will be a park along the Charles River from Watertown Square down to the Yacht Club. It will include a sensory trail marked in Braille and it seems like a nice way to revitalize the river front. There will be crosswalks and a traffic light at Irving St. to make the park accessible. The association behind the project would like other organizations to write letters of support to the DCR to get the project’s priority raised.

It was Moved, Seconded,. and Passed Unanimously to have Kim Charlson draft a letter of support to the DCR for the project on behalf of the Commission and give it to Gayle Shattuck so that it can be put on commission stationery. George Donahue will sign it as chair and it will be sent to the DCR Commissioner.

There was discussion of the door directly into the Lower Hearing Room and of its non-working electric opener. It will be looked into. At least the opener works for the door into the hallway next to it, though that is a longer and less wheelchair-friendly route.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the minutes of the December 17 2008 meeting.

There was discussion of the contents of the treasurer’s report. It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the report itself.

It was noted that the revenue from parking tickets for people without handicaps parking in spaces reserved for the handicapped falls off drastically in the winter, though it seems to us that this is not because drivers are any better behaved.

There was discussion of Waltham’s system where a police detail is employed to enforce handicapped parking regulations. There was agreement that we should first find out what is wrong and then try to solve the problem.

There was discussion of a February meeting. The law requires that we have ten meetings per year. We’ve taken August off because people are on vacation; we’ve taken February off because people are also on vacation and the weather is bad and getting to meetings is difficult. We’ve already published our 2009 schedule so we should follow it. We can talk about changing our schedule for 2010 in October. It was Moved, Seconded, and Failed Unanimously to have a February meeting. We agreed to reconsider this for 2010 at our October 2009 nmeeting.

Closed Captioning. Carol Menton is waiting for information from the experts.

Safety and Access. Nothing to report. Snow removal is an issue. Fire hydrants need to be dug out. Why doesn't Watertown have stiff wires with metal flags like some other towns?

SPEDPAC Schedule.

Feb 11 is Michelle Fallon, our former chair, speaking on How to Advocate for Your Child.

March 4 is How to Work With Your Child's IEP Team.

Meetings are at the Lowell Elementary School Library from 7 PM to 9 PM. Child care is available.

Anne Doughty discussed the Rehab Council's work on accessible art. What would it be and what would it entail? They have formed a task force to work on this because artists want to make a contribution to the towns that they live in. It should be public art. Anne Doughty will invite them to our March meeting. There was discussion of inviting Jonathan Hecht to our March meeting.

The following members volunteered to set up the following meetings:

Kim Charlson - April 15

Anne Doughty - May 20

Fred Isaacs - June 17

Marilyn Petito Devaney - July

It was moved, seconded, and passed by acclamation to make Fred Isaacs secretary of the Watertown Commission on Disability.

It was moved. seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn at 8:50 PM.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Fred P. Isaacs.