

**Watertown Commission on Disability
March 18, 2009**

Attendees: George Donahue, Chair; Kim Charlson; Marilyn Devaney; Anne Doughty; Bob Hall; Fred Isaacs; Alex Liazos; Carol Menton; Gayle Shattuck
Guests: Representative Jonathan Hecht; Stanley Portrude; and Richard

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm

Roll Call

Chair Report:

The Chair gave a detailed statistical report on our website. We had a lot more visits in 2008 than in 2007; 2,089 vs. 406. Page views have gone up from 1,142 to 6,786. We had 406 visits from 17 countries in 2007; we had 2,438 visits from 49 countries in 2008.

Member Co-chair schedule:

Kim Charlson - April 15

Anne Doughty - May 20

Fred Isaacs - June 17

Marilyn Petito Devaney - July 15

Alex Liazos volunteered to do the September meeting.

The Natick Disability Commission is holding an Emergency Preparedness meeting on April 16 from Noon to 2:00 PM at Cedar Gardens which is at 40 Cedar Avenue in Natick. The purpose of their meeting is to discuss ways to ensure that people with disabilities have the assistance that they need during emergencies.

The Dining Guide needs to be updated. We are looking for volunteers or a paid volunteer with a disability to help with this project. Alex Liazos volunteered to help with the guide.

We also published a guide to disability-friendly businesses a while back. We should update that as well.

We need a collaboration between the WCOD and zoning to locate and map HP parking spaces; we need to find and have fixed any obstructions that make them difficult to use or difficult to put down a ramp when they are used. We need to make sure that the spots are marked and painted and get that redone if necessary. We also need to check private spaces. Sgt. Deignan is our police liaison.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the minutes of the January 15 2009 meeting as submitted.

Fred Isaacs gave the Watertown SPEDPAC schedule. April 7 2009 at 7:00 PM will be the PAC's Fifth Annual Awards ceremony accompanied by a showing of "Including

Samuel”, a powerful documentary about inclusion. This will be held at the Mosesian Theater at the Arsenal Center for the Arts. It is a joint presentation by the SPEDPAC and the School Committee.

May 13 2009 at 7:00 PM the PAC will hold a presentation on Bullying by Dr. Steve Imber. This will be held at the Lowell School Library.

There was discussion of whether or not “Including Samuel” was captioned. It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to appropriate up to \$500.00 to provide sign language interpreters for the evening if “Including Samuel” was captioned. [The SPEDPAC managed to get the documentary’s author/producer/photojournalist Dan Habib to provide us with an open-captioned copy. The interpreters were most welcome.]

Carol Menton reported on captioning.

There was a discussion of closed captioning for the town council meetings. There is a lack of clarity as to whether the town, the cable provider, or anyone is responsible for providing close captioning for town government meetings. It may be that no one really is responsible if the cable system is small enough.

The town council itself is trying to improve the sound system, camera views, and general broadcast quality of town council meetings. Councilor Devaney is holding a meeting of the School and Education subcommittee of the council to discuss this on March 31.

There was some discussion of whether CART service and live captioning at the meeting would be possible. It did not seem to be doable in the current council chamber configuration.

There are complications. The historical commission has a voice in any changes to the council chambers. The town cable commission would have been helpful but they disbanded recently without notice.

We decided to put a deadline of September 2009 on trying to get town council meetings captioned.

Kim Charlson reported on Safety and Access

Things have been very quiet. They seem to be going smoothly.

Kim Charlson reported on Voting Access.

There was a hearing on March 6 at the State House called by Secretary of State Galvin. He had issued a ruling that the Help America Vote act required that all accessible voting equipment must be used any time that a town holds an official election and the town is responsible for setting it up and making sure that it works. There was some opposition to this ruling from the town clerks.

Jim Flynn, Watertown’s Town Clerk, said that it costs \$1,000 per machine to program it for an election. Watertown has 8 machines and has appropriated \$8000. Brookline’s clerk said that their costs are \$5,000 per machine. However Councilor Devaney pointed out that they have far more offices and far more

candidates due to their form of government.

There were many from the disabled community at the hearing and no town clerks. The ruling was upheld.

Kim Charlson presented her proposal for a grant from the WCOD to add the Watertown Tab to the Newslane project.

The cost to add a paper is \$10,000 for the first year and \$5,000 for each year thereafter. The Newslane project allows accredited users of the Perkins School talking book library to use a voice-synthesized version of the paper over the telephone at no cost to them. Implementation consists of technical people at the Tab's parent company talking to technical people at newslane in Baltimore and setting up a data feed. The Newslane version can get some updates after the print paper is distributed. The Watertown Tab will be the first newspaper from GateHouse Media to be on the Newslane service. The Cape Cod Times and The Worcester Telegram and Gazette are already on Newslane. We decided to vote on funding this next month to give members time to think it over. It will be on next month's agenda. Please discuss any questions with Kim Charlson.

Conversation with Representative Jonathan Hecht.

Representative Jonathan Hecht introduced himself and thanked us for inviting him. He is on the Health Care Financing, Elder Affairs, and State Administration and Regulatory Oversight committees. His life is getting rather busy since the governor has filed bills on ethics and lobbying, the state budget is about to come up for discussion, and the legislature, as well as everyone else, is trying to understand what the federal stimulus package holds in store for us. The town's list of projects is being reviewed. Some state-level projects impact Watertown - redoing Nonantum Road and the Riverfront Park. The Nonantum Road project has been approved by the DCR; there will be a meeting in May to discuss plans further. The WCOD should have someone there to monitor accessibility considerations. He thanked Carol Menton for raising the issue of fresh air for DMH clients. Kim Charlson said that she had talked to a disability lawyer in the Attorney General's office who had reassured her that disability access issues will not be swept aside in the rush for Federal stimulus funds. Councilor Devaney said that the specific issue of Nonantum Road access for walkers and the disabled to the riverbank was brought up. There is a link for the Nonantum Road project on the DCR website. The bus stop. The town is trying to get the MBTA to modify its bus schedule. The town is offering to adjust the timing of the traffic lights if that will help. Everyone is waiting for a reply from the MBTA. Sen. Tolman, Rep. Katoujian, and Rep. Hecht are working towards a meeting with the MBTA in early April. Representative Hecht proposed meeting with us quarterly or semiannually.

Treasurer's Report

There has been some catch up in our funding; there were large inputs on 12/31/08, 1/30/09, and 2/27/09. The credits include interest, which is why they don't come out to be even amounts.

There was discussion about whether Watertown's handicapped parking fine was in

line with that of other communities. We're average (\$150.00).

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the treasurer's report.

Old Business.

Membership. State law says that we should have no less than 5 and no more than 9 members. November is the month in which members get appointed or reappointed. There was some discussion of whether the "wait until November" policy was really meant to be that way or really should be that way.

New Business.

Our Congressmen Rep. Capuano and Rep. Markey are also involved in the Nonantum Road project.

Councilor Devaney is trying to get a neighborhood meeting together to discuss the 140 Pleasant St. project before the zoning meeting. It's a four story building and it's out of scale for the neighborhood.

Next month Kim Charlson is co-chair.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn at 8:52 PM.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Fred P. Isaacs.