

**Watertown Commission on Disability
June 17, 2010**

Attendees: George Donahue, Chair; Kim Charlson; Anne Doughty, Judy Herzberg, Fred Isaacs; Alex Liazos; Carol Menton, Gayle Shattuck, Carol Wilson-Braun

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair George Donahue. We met in the Town Council chambers to test the new captioning system.

Roll Call.

Guests were Elisabeth Schaefer, Director of Student Services for the Watertown Public Schools; Jeff Dugan from the Massachusetts Office on Disability; and State Representative Jonathan Hecht.

Minutes

We decided to discuss the minutes of the April meeting after the break.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the minutes of the May 19, 2010 meeting with the additions that Myrto Flessas is vice-chair of the Watertown Special Education Parent Advisory Council and Laine Tulipano is a co-chair of the Watertown Special Education Parent Advisory Council. [I would like to thank Carol Wilson-Braun for doing an excellent job on the May minutes when I was unable to attend the May meeting.]

Copies of our minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk's office.

Treasurers Report - Gayle Shattuck

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the Treasurer's report. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

Special Ed Report—Fred Isaacs

Our May meeting was the Melmark autistic spectrum consultants speaking on playground behavior.

Our June meeting was our annual planning dinner. We have our schedule planned for next year.

Safety and Access - Kim Charlson

The button to activate the signal at Talcott and Arsenal Streets does not work. (Talcott St. is a divided road).

Both Kim and Alex asked for a list of locations of traffic signal locator tones.

Candidate Forum - Kim Charlson

The candidates for Governor participated in a forum at the Perkins School on May 18. We provided CART and ASL interpreters. It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to appropriate up to \$1000.00 to pay for these interpreters.

Captioning

Stefanie Farrell told us about the dynamics of captioning. She has learned not to try to make corrections; it just makes things worse. We need to coordinate with the Town Council. If she had headphones plugged into the audio system in the room, it might help. She will bring her screen and set up a projector onto it for the audience to see her captioning.

Disability Awareness Education - Elisabeth Schaefer, Director of Student Services, Watertown Public Schools

Elisabeth briefly summarized the presentation that she and two of our SPEDPAC officers, co-chair Laine Tulipano and vice chair Myrto Flessas, had made at our last meeting. Written copies of their proposal for funding the startup of a Disability Awareness Education program in the Watertown Schools were presented. A few minor questions were raised about the precise mix of topics in the proposed courses. Ms. Schaefer will provide us with answers. We deferred a vote on this proposal until we have had a chance to read and absorb it.

Dominic was present; he is a student in the Newton Public Schools which use this program. He had participated in this program both as a student and as a person with disabilities and thought quite highly of it.

Massachusetts Office on Disability - Jeff Dugan

Jeff told us about the role of his office. They are the ADA coordinator for the executive branch of state government. They have a client service program. They have advocates who can help with MCAD hearings through probable cause. They are also an information source.

They also have a community access monitor program. They provide trainers for a two day course which trains local Commission on Disability members to look at a building and understand its accessibility levels.

Watertown's Commission on Disability is section 42G,

There are 160 commissions on disability in Massachusetts. Just over half of the towns have them.

His office tries to keep commissions on disability apprised of legislation of interest.

House bill 1965 tries to change the funding for commissions on disability be used to for making public structures ADA compliant. It is sponsored by Rep. Ayres from Quincy and supported by the Quincy Commission on Disability.

House bill 2206 would reduce physical access requirements for several group homes and exempt them from some other access requirements.

Senate bill 1880 would allow the use of an official Massachusetts ID to purchase liquor, instead of requiring the use of a separate specific Massachusetts liquor ID card or a driver's license.

His office is coordinating a celebration on Boston Common on July 26 from 12 to 3 to celebrate the Twentieth Anniversary of the ADA.

Representative Jonathan Hecht

The federal and state budgets are items of concern. The State Senate and House

versions are currently being resolved but doing so is tough. State FY11 begins July 1. FMAP in the federal budget is an extension of enhanced federal Medicaid funding; it was upped to 62% instead of 50% in the stimulus package. It is currently set to expire at the end of calendar 2010. There is disagreement about whether the federal government will extend it for the full fiscal year (until July 2011). If it is not extended, it will have a major impact on Massachusetts: \$700,000,000 that is in the state FY 11 budget won't be available. In that case the governor would have to apply a 3.6% cut to everything except local aid. MassHealth is entitlement-driven. Most parts of the budget have been cut, but MassHealth costs increase. (More people are unemployed and need it.) All other state spending must get cut to make up the additional money needed for MassHealth. All of the Massachusetts congressional delegation is in favor of the FMAP extension except for Senator Scott Brown. Much of the budget has been level-funded: the Perkins Talking Book Library and the Commission for the Blind. This is down from 2 years ago. The Commission for the Deaf is down about \$1,000,000. Mass Rehab is the hardest hit, particularly their employment assistance and homemaker assistance programs. There are no new revenue measures. The governor had proposed some mild sin taxes, but they were not accepted.

The bus stop move. The signal adjustments did not show time savings but there was construction along the bus route. The T wants to see more outreach to people coming in from Waltham on the 70 bus. The T is hoping that Watertown can get Waltham to agree to the bus stop relocation. We could reach out to the Waltham Commission on Disability. Others should reach out to their Waltham equivalents. Alex wants to have a discussion of this on the agenda for the next meeting.

House bill 1965 has been in the Committee on Third Readings for several months. It may not be coming out. Rep Hecht will check on it for us.

The "Right to Fresh Air" bill came out of the health committee. It has been watered down but it may still be okay. It ensures that people in mental health facilities have outside time and fresh air.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to appropriate \$500 to sponsor the state ADA celebration.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to accept the minutes of the April 21 2010 meeting as amended. Copies of our minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk's office.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn at 9:05 PM

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Fred P. Isaacs.