

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 21st, 2022

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor; John Hawes; Rachel Kay; Carol Menton; Megan O'Halloran; Naomi Ridge; Elan Rohde; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun.

GUESTS- Caitlin Brown-WPL; Tom Watkins- DPW; and members of the High School construction project: Andrew Cunneen, Project Director, Ai3 Architects; Jim Jordan, Partner, Ai3 Architects; John Luca, Associate, Traverse Landscape Architects; Christy Murphy, Project Executive, Compass; Josh Safdie, Principal, KM Access (accessibility consulting); Chase Terrio, Senior Project Manager, Compass.

GUEST SPEAKERS-

- 1) Caitlin Brown is the new director of the library. They had requested funding from the COD for CART at the Pride Festival in June, but were unable to get anyone, so they want to re-direct the \$600. Carol M had suggested an ASL course. A 4-week course will be given in January by a staff member. There is also being planned an activity program for disabled people. Kim stated that it was very creative and a great idea. All agreed. No additional vote needed.
- 2) Tom Watkins- He is DPW Director of Administration and Finance. He said that Gayle Shattuck had visited the DPW and mentioned that the main door was not ADA compliant. The DPW is seeking a grant for an automatic door from the MA Office on Disability. The estimate was \$3450, which everyone thought was very good. Tom asked if he could put WCOD down on the application as giving them input and supporting the request. The deadline is 9/30, and a 2 month turnaround is anticipated. They will have it installed in early spring. Naomi asked if the doorway itself was ADA compliant, and Tom thought so. Kim asked John to write a letter of support, and send it to Gayle, who would give it to Tom. John made an informal motion, and all agreed.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

Kim first asked if Carol M and Gayle could work on a protocol for Watertown Cable regarding CART so there wouldn't be any more delays. The start of our meeting was delayed this evening because of the use of CART services being incompatible with the default automatic captioning.

- 1) Detectable warnings behind the Library and at the Delta- Gayle thought there were now metal detectable warnings behind the library. Lisa will check. Concerning the Delta/Watertown Square area, Elan said there were two troublesome curb cuts. Galen St and Charlesbank Rd has a 2" drop and is a hazard on a busy street. Labelled "subpar" is Riverside and Arsenal. She will send letter with photos to DPW.

Naomi asked how we could make the DPW more aware of large gaps between the curb cuts and unpaved roads under construction. Some places are like that for quite a while before the roads are paved. Kim asked Naomi to write DPW (and thus contractors) about road construction issues, and send it to Gayle.

GUEST SPEAKERS (Cont'd)

#3- The group came from another meeting, and presented diagrams and floor plans for the new high school building and grounds, and also the temporary modular high school at Moxley Field. Issues of accessibility and universal access were addressed. There are 3 accessible entrances with sloped walkways, 3 elevators in the building and handicapped restrooms. There will be a single level underground parking garage for staff and visitors. The temporary high school will have wooden ramps for all 5 entrances and one 2 story elevator.

Naomi said that she heard that one elevator was removed in the new HS. The School Building Committee had said that this elevator was "for convenience" as all floors are served by other elevators, but Naomi pointed out that an elevator is never just for convenience or people with disabilities. Kim asked if the stairs in the new HS would have any contrast markings. Josh said that it wasn't a requirement in MA, but that they considered it a best practice. Jim said they would implement the markings. Elan asked about special ed classrooms, and Jim replied they were equally distributed on 2 floors on different wings. Rachel asked if other accessibility items had been cut, and Jim said no. They kept ramps at every entrance, to which Naomi said "thank you!" Lisa asked about accessible culinary kitchen facilities. Jim said that there is an accessible area in the room. He also said there would be raised flower beds outside. Kim asked about accessible showers. Jim said there were one or 2 [assuming in each of the boy's and girl's locker rooms]. Carol M asked about acoustics and echoing. Jim said they have an acoustical consultant with platinum certification, which is the best. It is up to code. Kim asked about lighting, and Jim said they would be using energy efficient LED, occupancy sensors and daylight dimming. John mentioned that these plans didn't go through the town for plans review, but that he was impressed with the plans. Lisa asked about parking for bicycles and non-standard bikes. Jim said there were 3 areas- 2 on Columbia and one on Common St. Also another area in the garage.

CHAIR'S REPORT (Cont'd)

- 2) Update on Community Board near CVS- Lisa said that the company was supposed to come back. Carol W-B said that the board angle was changed and now both sides were accessible.

Lisa brought up the construction on Arsenal St near Greenough Blvd and the continued lack of a sidewalk on the south side. John said that the DPW is aware. Kim asked John to write a follow up to DPW for an update.

- 3) Faire on the Square- Carol M said that she can't make it at all during the Faire, but can come early to help bring the materials out. We spent time discussing supplies and set-up and are ready for Sat.
- 4) Crosswalk at N. Beacon St- Lisa said the audible signal was being worked on.
- 5) Recreation accessible connections behind Russos- to be discussed next month.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes as corrected from the July meeting. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the city's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office or viewed on the Watertown website document center.

TREASURER'S REPORT- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the Treasurer's Report for July. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

- 1) Plans Review- John had to leave the meeting after we discussed Faire on the Square, but said there was nothing crucial, and he would give a report next meeting.
- 2) Special Ed- Naomi said there was a SEPAC (Special Ed Parent Advisory Council) community meeting tonight. Rachel said there would be a presentation on an equity audit from a disability lens by the schools on Oct 18th. [Late Update: SEPAC meeting will be on Mon, Oct 17th by Zoom]
- 3) Safety and Access- Kim asked if someone would assess for her the issues on Lexington St and take photos. [Did someone volunteer?]

NEW BUSINESS-

Carol M announced that the independent living program for deaf and hard of hearing, Deaf, Inc, will move from Brighton to Watertown, near Perkins.

Lisa said there was a new sidewalk on Water St.

Kim, upon request from the Commission, talked about being awarded the Leadership in Accessibility award from the Kennedy Center, a huge honor. We applauded her.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, Oct.19th, 2022.