

**Watertown Commission on Disability
April 20, 2011**

Commission: George Donahue, Chair; Kim Charlson; Councilor Steve Corbett; Ann Doughty; Judy Herzberg; Fred Isaacs; Alex Liazos; Carol Menton; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; Carol Wilson-Braun

Town Council Sub-committee on Public Works: Councilor Susan Falkoff, Chair; Councilor Steve Corbett, Vice Chair.

Guests

Jerry Mee, DPW Superintendent; Mary Haley, DPW; Bob Erickson, Director of Veteran Affairs; Judy Cannon; Nancy Daly; Pat Gold; Brian Charlson; Al Gasper; Roz Rowley; Sheila Fay; Burt Greenberg; Maria Saiz

Meeting called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair George Donahue who noted that this is a joint meeting with the Town Council Public Works Subcommittee.

Roll Call.

Worn tactile sidewalk strips

Judy Cannon told us that the warning strip for the Galen St. crossing to the delta in Watertown Square is missing. The warning strip when you are crossing on the island between Riverside and River Road and going to the middle, so that you are between Arsenal and North Beacon Street, is really worn down and it is hard to detect.

Resident seeking assistance for a relative

Bob Erickson introduced a Watertown resident who was seeking advice for where to seek help for a disabled family member whose caregivers have passed away. Several suggestions were made including The Boston Center for Independent Living and Springwell.

Snow Removal

Chairman George Donahue relinquished the Chair to Councilor Corbett for this discussion.

A lengthy discussion occurred. In a perfect world, the town, which owns the sidewalks, would clear them. But this is not a perfect world and the town cannot afford to do this. The best solution would appear to be to have the abutters clear the sidewalks next to their property. A number of nearby towns require this. Watertown is densely populated and we often walk to get places. We currently have an ordinance which requires businesses to clear their sidewalks. That is Watertown's only snow clearance ordinance. Do we know how well this is enforced? Gerry Mee from the DPW said that the police do sometimes go around to businesses. They will respond to complaints. But enforcement is sporadic. Enforcement is difficult.

Most people do clear their sidewalks and live up to their obligation to their fellow citizens. This is really a partnership between the property owners and the town. Councilor Falkoff pointed out that it is illegal to block a sidewalk with a car. The police will ticket for that if they receive a complaint.

There was much discussion of the Galen Street Bridge from Watertown Square to the MBTA car barn. A number of people had difficulty walking on it. The sidewalks were not well cleared which forced pedestrians into the street with its heavy car traffic. The bridge sidewalks only became passable when rain melted the snow. Clearing the bridge is the DPW's responsibility. Gerry Mee responded that the DPW's sidewalk plow was too weak to clear the bridge since it is very icy; it freezes from underneath as well as from the top down.

The business owners did clear their sidewalks in Coolidge Square, but the triangle there did not seem to be anyone's responsibility and it did not get cleared. We need to encourage citizens to pitch in and to clear such common areas. The snow plows "plow in" corners at intersections. This means that you can walk down a cleared sidewalk but you can't cross the street.

Paths need to be cleared to the pedestrian pushbutton poles. Gerry Mee stated that the DPW first clears streets, and then bus stops, and then handicapped access. Once a driver is available they use the sidewalk tractor to clear the sidewalks at the schools.

There was some discussion of priorities. Perhaps the bridge and some of the handicapped access spots should get higher priority and be done earlier. It is difficult to give snow removal tickets; maybe we need to make some administrative changes so that it is easier to do so. Perhaps we need to have people other than the police issue snow removal tickets. For example, Boston has code enforcement officers. You can send them a cell phone picture and location information and they will respond.

Burt Greenberg stated that The Village Condominiums employ a 24 hour snow removal contractor who removes snow continuously once it falls and that The Village Condominiums should therefore be exempt from snow ordinance enforcement; there might be other places which are special as well. It was the sense of subsequent speakers that there should be no exemptions or exceptions.

Councilor Falkoff pointed out that there was a try at passing a residential snow ordinance 3 years ago which failed. Newton has a residential snow ordinance on a trial basis with no penalties. Cambridge has a strong law and gave over 1000 tickets, but how do you ensure that they get paid? Your car registration renewal gets held up for unpaid parking tickets, but there's no equivalent for unpaid snow removal tickets.

We recognize that the DPW needs more workers if they are to do a better job of snow removal. The town's properties are not being properly cleared. Audience members remarked that when our Police Chief had made announcements or

robocalls reminding people to clear their sidewalks, it had worked. We need to educate people to shovel their sidewalks.

Kim Charlson suggested that we publicly recognize those who do a good job of clearing their sidewalks. A subcommittee of the Watertown Commission on Disability was formed to pursue this matter further and to draft a letter to the Town Council stating our position. Kim Charlson, Judith Herzberg, Alex Liazos, and Carol Wilson-Braun were appointed to this subcommittee. The Watertown Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee would like to participate with us.

Minutes

Fred Isaacs stated that the draft minutes for the March meeting were known to be incomplete because he had been trying to take notes while chairing the meeting. He asked for suggestions and recollections from others who had been there. We decided to table acceptance of the March minutes until our May meeting.

Treasurers Report - Gayle Shattuck

The Auditor removed an erroneous posting of a \$1775.00 credit in July. 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 We held our Annual Awards meeting at the Mosesian Theater on April 14. We recognized Maureen Chaberek, Tina Cobuccio, Janelle Tribble, Patrick Kevane, and Joe Aguiar, the Fernald Pool Aquatic Director. Ken Barringer, the Director of The Academy for Social Development, gave an excellent talk on "Ways that Parents Can Support The Social/Emotional Development of their Children/Teens". We thank the Commission for providing us with CART support, and we thank Stephanie for doing an outstanding job.

Closed Captioning - Carol Menton

The closed captioning is going well; the Town Council loves it.

Art Exhibit - Anne Doughty

We need to figure out what to do for publicity and how to do it. We can give out flyers at Faire on The Square and we can send a press release to The Boston Globe calendar section.

Our deadline for artists should be August 15.

Internship.

Judy and Gayle will meet with our candidate.

It was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously to adjourn at 9:15 PM.

These minutes are respectfully submitted by Fred P. Isaacs.