

**Watertown Commission on Disability
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, July 20, 2011
7:00PM - 9:15PM**

The meeting was called to order by Chair George Donahue. Present were: George Donahue, Carol Menton, Alex Liazos, Ann Doughty, Kim Charlson, Gayle Shattuck and Fred Isaacs

**Roll Call
Housekeeping
Audience issues- None**

George talked about an incident with a woman who was almost hit at the Arlington and Mt. Auburn intersection. George advised her to contact the police department.

First guests included: Elisabeth Schaefer and Tesi Kohlenberg presented their evaluation of the "Understanding Our Differences" training. These trainings that took place: January-Blindness, March-Learning Disabilities, April-Autism Spectrum, Intellectual Disabilities had to be rescheduled to next school year because of the snow days. Funding for the trainings was available by the WCOD and perks from Perkins.

Tesi gave an overview of the training and provided a handout, "Evaluation of Understanding Our Differences". Elisabeth talked about some of the organizational issues, and instructional materials. The goal of engaging the kids was met.

Our second guest speaker was Regina Snowden, Executive Director of "Partners for Youth with Disabilities". She was accompanied by four co-workers. It has been operating for the past 26 years. Regina discussed some of the programs offered at Partners for Youth: Mentor Matches, Making Healthy Connections, Access to Theater and Healthy Body and Mind.

Mentor Matches meet on Friday nights. She explained that using mentors helps build self-esteem in youth with disabilities. They learn self-empowerment techniques and learn how to advocate for themselves. Some youths come back to mentor. She explained that it is a very unique program and presently the only one of its kind. Making Healthy Connections and Healthy Body and Mind meet at the YMCA in Brighton. It is an opportunity to socialize. Regina passed out a handout describing the Making Healthy Connections Program.

Chris Carpenter, Director of Finances at Partners for Youths, talked about the costs. He explained that costs can vary from year to year. The cost at this time is approximately \$1000.00 per participant. There are about 30 youths in the program and range from 14- 22 years old. They try to outreach to other funders to

supplement costs. They use an outreach system to recruit youths as well as recruiting through the programs at the YMCA.

Donna Folan, another guest from Partners for Youth gave a brief presentation on the "Access to Theatre Program". It is a creative and artistic project that allows youths with disabilities the opportunity to come together and share talents. She explained that the project also teaches the youth life skills, self-empowerment and helps bring out the best in each student. There are 30-35 students. It is an award winning project. Presentation/exhibits/projects are often displayed at the BCA (Boston Center for Arts-Cyclorama) in Boston's South End. A handout was passed out for the programs upcoming event on July 22, 2011 at Cyclorama.

A break was taken at 8:00 PM. The meeting resumed at 8:15PM

Walter Bachelder introduced himself. He starts as the WCOD intern this month.

The next guest speaker was Ellen Chambers of SPEDWATCH an advocacy agency - (a special education watchdog group). Ellen gave a presentation about the special education laws over 30 years. She gave statistics for Watertown Special Education of which there are 13 categories. SPEDWATCH formed 5 years ago. It educates parents on education services that are legally required in public schools. She explained that the agency takes action and advocates that the laws are in place and that they are being followed. She stated that, over the past 21 years, Massachusetts has been cited 13 times for not meeting the needs of students with disabilities in the schools.

Information is available at [www. Spedwatch.org](http://www.Spedwatch.org). The agency is in the process of creating a manual. The manual will provided the needed information and the laws so that parents have knowledge of them. It will be published in a manner that is very easily read. There are currently 1100 members.

Chairs report -none

June minutes were tabled for this meeting.

Treasurer's Report-Report was reviewed and accepted. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

Art Exhibit- Anne Doughty- Artist with Disabilities Task Force will be submitting art work. Perkins will also submit. There will be other advocacy efforts as well. The Red Leaf Café will cater the reception and Making Healthy Connections will provide the music. A motion was made to approve up to \$2000.00 to cover the expenses for the 2 exhibits.

Carol wants an August nomination committee and closed captioning.

Fred announced a presentation on how to deal with Mass Health to be held in December 2011.

Old Business- None

New Business-“Faire on the Square” braille T shirts displaying WCOD and website and WCOD bags (300) for the event. George had a sample shirt that he passed around for all to look over. Silk screening will be free. The bags will be for people as they collect information during the fair. A motion was made for \$1000.00 for expenses, seconded and passed.

Anne needs volunteers to help jury the submissions- George and Fred volunteered.

George stated that our goal was to have a youth program and seeing that Making Healthy Connections already provides the service for Watertown youth, Alex made a motion to support the program with \$10,000.00 for Watertown youth with disabilities, including students from Perkins School for the Blind. Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM