

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 19th, 2022

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:09 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson; 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- Captain Ray Dupuis of the WPD; Marnie Klein, a middle school teacher and advisor, Buckingham, Brown and Nichols School; Michael Lara, Executive Director of the Watertown Housing Authority; and Edward Marcus, resident.

GUEST SPEAKERS-

- 1) Michael Lara filled in for Olivia Fields, and spoke about the planned group home at 103 Nichols Ave. The Housing Authority withdrew the application for funding by the CPC (Community Preservation Committee), and a municipal trust was formed. They are applying for local funds, and are looking for a designer service, not construction at this time. It will be 100% affordable housing with 5 bedrooms. The first floor will be fully accessible with 2 bedrooms and space for a staff person. The 2nd floor (walk-up) will have 3 bedrooms. Communal space on both floors. They are working with the DDS (developmental services) and DMH (mental health), and the CPC. Special zoning is no longer needed because the set-back was worked around. The district is for 2-family houses, but they have an accommodation for a group home. The property had been a gas station, but remediation was done in the 90s. No further EPA intervention needed. The 3rd step after acquiring the property and getting money to operate and maintain (from DDS and DMH), will be Design and Construction, with funding from Beaverbrook and Housing Authority. Post-Covid, there is a greater need for congregate homes in Watertown.
Michael asked if WCOD would send a letter of recommendation to the WHA, which can also be sent to other funding sources. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by Roll Call to write and send a letter of recommendation to WHA supporting project. Elan will work with Gayle.
- 2) Marnie Klein from BBNS spoke about their accessibility design project, run by the middle school science club. She is looking to partner with community members to help create a custom-built technology to assist with simple daily tasks for disabled people. They are looking for 4 individuals to work with 4 students each to come up with prototypes, for 1 hour a week for 12 weeks. There is a partnership with Assistive Technology at MIT. Marnie's email is mklein@bbns.org. John said he was interested, as his daughter attended BBNS and he worked at MIT. Kim was also interested and brought up the need for a device to strip the mailing labels from reusable digital cartridges for audio books.
- 3) Edward Marcus has lived at the bend on Morse St for 11 years at the junction of 3 streets, and has noted increased cut through traffic in the past couple of years. He spoke of low hanging wires that

would get snagged by trucks. Verizon installed a rigid guy wire to secure the lines at the inner edge of the sidewalk, a 34" width. He showed photos, and his concern was that there was not enough room for wheelchairs, people walking dogs, or groups of people to pass by. He noted that people sometimes walked into the street. He also thought the guy wire was a tripping hazard. John said that he went by the area in question, and that it was not a strict accessibility issue. But a letter could be written encouraging DPW to deal further with the utility. The ADA standards are more for hallways and ramps. The PROW AG (Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines) has more to say. Ed wondered if it was his problem or the town's problem. Lisa said that the DPW was aware of the situation and would be addressing it. She said that Morse St is next on the list for reconstruction (sidewalks, curbing, etc). Ed was wondering what would happen, and Lisa said there would be a public meeting on Nov 2nd. Kim suggested familiarizing himself more with the PROW AG regulations and thought that the road reconstruction project would be good. She agreed with his offer to put together pertinent PROW AG information and send to Gayle.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

Kim had Captain Dupuis go first so he could leave. He spoke about the handicapped parking issue at 1 Mt Auburn St. A woman parked in a handicapped space in the private parking lot and went across Mt Auburn St to work at the meat store across the street for the day. Someone complained to the police that it was a private lot, for customers only and the woman's car was ticketed. She submitted a formal complaint to the police.

The COD discussed the issue and took the following action to support best practice and the law: A Motion was made and seconded, and voted unanimously by roll call, that the WCOD reaffirms the decision made by the Watertown Police Department in response to a grievance filed by an individual regarding their right to park in a Handicapped Parking space in a private lot, with their valid permit. The WCOD concurs that by law, private parking lot owners can determine who is allowed to park in spaces in a private lot. The private lot must comply with the legal requirement for the percentage of handicapped parking spaces overall in the lot based on the total number of spaces in the private lot itself. The WCOD agrees with the Watertown Police Department that alternative parking options are available with metered parking spaces on Baptist Walk to park without having to cross a street, or pay for the meter with a valid handicapped placard.

- a) Detectible warnings behind the library- Naomi said she checked them out and they were good!
- b) DPW Road Construction Access Policy Request- Naomi wrote it up and Gayle sent it to DPW, and they responded. The Warren and Lexington construction took longer than expected and they apologized. They will make sure going forward that access is maintained during construction. Lisa said it has happened on other streets, and that they will be switching contractors. Kim asked Naomi to write a response emphasizing the need to incorporate a procedure that allows wheelchair access during construction, and that we want assurance that these procedures will be followed by contractors going forward.
- c) Faire on the Square- All felt it went well. We had conversations with many people and were able to help some with advice and recommendations. We will address re-stocking next spring.

- d) Main and Galen Curb Cuts- Elan said that some crossings were State, some City and some MBTA. The town has one curb there that she feels is dangerous and one that is problematic. She will continue her discussion next month. Kim said it most likely won't be fixed until next spring.
- e) Recreation Park near Sons of Italy and former Russos property- Lisa will sent a link for the City Hockey Rink. A section of the area is not accessible. Kim asked John to look at the area and make recommendations, then we can identify issues.
- f) Concern with Diagonal Corner Curb Cuts- Rachel said that Darcy Heller brought up these concerns at the Faire on the Square. There are perpendicular crosswalks with only one tactile warning on the corner. They are ADA compliant, but it would be much better to have 2 tactile warnings. The question was why isn't all new construction doing the best practice? Kim said that this happened years ago on Arsenal and the WCOD criticized it. Diagonal directions can misdirect blind people. DPW promised that perpendicular would be the first choice. Kim asked Rachel to write to DPW requesting for clarification, send it to Kim and Gayle, who will forward it to DPW.
- g) Lack of Automatic Door Openers in Arsenal Yards- Rachel said that the only store that had automatic openers was Old Navy, although Roche Bros had sliding doors. Kim asked John to research requirements for new construction.
- h) Lisa and Carol W were reappointed for new terms. Kim's is coming up.
- i) DPW Trash Removal for People with Disabilities- Kim said that trash cans after being emptied into the trucks are just thrown in the street, instead of being replaced in the driveway, and that people with visual deficits cannot find them. Kim asked the DPW about it through Gayle and got no response. Lisa said there are problems with Republic Services. Kim will again write something for Gayle to send to DPW.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes as corrected from the Sept 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 Sept. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS- Kim put off the committee reports until next month due to the lateness of the evening.

NEW BUSINESS-

Kim brought up our annual donations to the 2 Watertown food pantries. We make an annual motion in October so the pantries will get the money by Dec. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to give \$3000 split between the 2 pantries.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, Nov.16th, 2022.

