

WATERTOWN COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Minutes

March 21, 2012

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Fred Isaacs at 7:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL- Counselor Steve Corbett; George Donahue; John Hawes; Judith Herzberg; Fred Isaacs, Vice-Chair; Carol Menton; Jeanne O'Connell, WCOD Intern; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun.

Guests- Mike Mena, Zoning Enforcement Officer, and Steven Rothstein, President of Perkins School for the Blind.

AUDIENCE ISSUES-

1) Steven Rothstein- He is part of a Stewardship group working on the Charles River Waterfront Pathway Restoration Project. A 1.5 mi stretch of the path between

Watertown Sq and the Watertown Yacht Club is not in good shape. The Solomon Fund paid for a study by Sasaki to create a "shovel-ready" project, started in '06. The path will be re-done with docks, an accessibility component, such as a sensory trail with Braille markers and will include a light at the foot of Irving St. for pedestrians to cross. The total for the entire project is \$1.6 million. The state doesn't have the money and a federal stimulus didn't work out. The funding is being divided up, with \$800 thousand for the first half of the trail toward Watertown Square. They are trying to obtain \$100,000 from community and have a \$25,000 pledge from Perkins, \$25,000 from the Solomon Fund and are talking to Watertown Community Fund (WCF) and another foundation, and are exploring a town match of \$100,000 to make \$200,000. Mr. Rothstein is coming to WCOD to ask for a commitment for a contribution of \$15,000. This would help add additional accessibility that isn't currently in the plan, raise awareness and build momentum. The piece from the community would be the "last piece of the puzzle" according to Steve Corbett. We wouldn't put money in unless the project was well underway. \$200,000 has already been spent, mostly by the Solomon Fund. Ongoing upkeep was briefly discussed, and that would be a partnership between the DCR and private groups, such as possibly the WCF and Trees for Watertown. Mr. Rothstein is the official coordinator for funding. The Stewardship group includes Jennifer from the WCF and Steve Corbett, and is meeting with the state.

After further discussion, it was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously that WCOD would contribute \$15,000 contingently to the establishment of the fund for this project.

2) Mike Mena, from the Watertown Zoning Office- Regarding a request for "reasonable accommodation" related to private property. The zoning ordinance doesn't allow parking in front yards without a variance. The town provides

waivers for the disabled. They came up with a questionnaire to help process requests for “reasonable accommodation”, and are asking for feedback from the COD. The feedback was positive regarding the questionnaire. Follow-up needs to be worked on for when the individual is no longer there, including “undue hardship” to remove the change. WCOD makes referrals to MAAB and would make recommendations to the Zoning Office as well. This will eventually be a part of the ordinance.

CHAIR’S REPORT- No report because Kim was not present.

MINUTES- It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to accept the minutes for January as corrected. Copies of our minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk’s office.

TREASURER’S REPORT- 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.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

Website- George announced that “website updates” will be used to announce posted articles.

Closed Caption- Carol is working now. There are plans to go on the road to Lowell and Salem CODs with Stephanie. The people inviting us would pay. We may donate the first use of CART, but we’ll discuss more at another meeting. It was suggested that we connect our cable person with their cable person(s), and that Lowell and Salem CODs watch Watertown cable in action. Perhaps Mona should go too. There is a substitute being trained for council meetings (Mona).

Snow Updated- Steve reviewed that the proposed ordinance was overwhelmingly voted down. There was discussion on taking an educational tactic. There is evidence in being educated vs. unwilling to do it. The commission will promote an awareness campaign in the fall.

Special Ed- There was a presentation in March on support for siblings. April is awards. It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously that WCOD cover the cost for communication access interpreters and CART at the annual awards night. Fred Isaacs abstained. A grant proposal is being worked on for communication in the schools. Five ipods and 5 ipads in each school would be checked out like books. It is blanket grant proposal renewal time again.

OLD BUSINESS-

Year end report. George put together a detailed long report. Gayle submitted a condensed version to the town. It was agreed that a summary was fine to submit,

and suggested that George might post the full version on the website. George will send it to the commission for review.

NEW BUSINESS-

Coolidge Village Condos Variance- Gayle will check to see if our letter was sent to MAAB.

St Stephens School Variance Request- They wanted approval of a limited use/limited access elevator. The whole building has to conform to code because the new addition is 30% of the value.

24-26 Bridge St review- Is basically renovation of the existing building. The commission had no further comments and Gayle will send the summary of John's comments to Gideon.

John and George will form a formal sub-committee for architecture access review.

Watertown Open Studios- We've reserved the library gallery for November.

Victory Field Renovation Fund- Jeanne talked with Peter Centola about a plaque. There was a motion for the wording of the plaque, and the commission liked "ensuring equal access to all", but after some discussion, it was MOVE, seconded and voted unanimously to table the motion in order to discuss the wording further since it will be permanently etched.

It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to adjourn at 8:52 p.m.

These minutes are recorded and respectfully submitted by Carol Wilson-Braun, Secretary