

Watertown Commission on Disability

Minutes

May 16, 2012

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kim Charlson at 7:00 p.m.

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

Guest- Presentation on Community Social Service Coordinator (CSSC), Tony Palomba, Town Councilor; Susan Flint (Marshall Home Fund); Nancy Dutton (Administrator, Helen Robinson Wright Fund); Will Twombly (Marshall Home Fund, et al) and Sgt. George Demos, Community Staff and Development Unit, Watertown Police

Guest- Presentation on Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC), Laine Tulipano, Co-chair, Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC)

Guest- State House Update & Other Issues, Jonathan Hecht, State Representative

Meeting guests exit the proceedings at the conclusion of their presentations.

AUDIENCE ISSUES-

1) Tony Palomba and team members presented the Community Social Service Coordinator (CSSC) position proposal.

Town Councilor Palomba thanked the WCOD for its commitment to furthering the initiative to secure a Community Social Service Coordinator (CSSC) for the town to benefit its residents. He briefly reviewed steps taken over the past year to move the initiative forward. The Councilor credited Watertown State Representative John Hecht for the initial idea of securing a Community Social Service Coordinator and for his impetus on the proposal. Councilor Palomba acknowledged the many supporters who have and continue to assist in the initiative and briefly introduced his team of other presenters on this topic. Mr. Will Twombly followed with an overview of the initiative.

Mr. Twombly (Marshall Home Fund, Helen Robinson Wright Fund and Council on Aging) reviewed the proposal's main points. (1) Despite a range of present social services, the services change and shift and leave a gap in continuity. (2) Barriers exist to accessing services, providers and to managing complicated eligibility requirements. He summarized why the town needs a Social Service Coordinator, including the following six points:

(1) Studies conducted by “the Watertown Community Foundation . . . meetings of fund raisers and service providers . . . demonstrate that a comprehensive coordination of social services within the town is considered a top priority.”

(2) The Master’s level Social Worker Coordinator would be provided via a contract with an existing social service agency (Wayside or another) and, among other services, would be tasked with creating “a much more systematic and effective mechanism with which to monitor issues of concern affecting town residents” (e.g., unemployment, affordable housing, domestic abuse, addictions). The model proposed to be implemented is one that the Watertown Police Department uses. The Coordinator would assess the situation presented and provide appropriate information and referral suited to the situation and offer short-term intervention when necessary.

(3) “This one-stop, direct path to services would make it much easier for individuals and families to obtain the help they need.” The need is great and still growing.

(4) There would be a cost saving benefit to the town.

(5) Funding would come from a partnership among private, for-profit, non-profit and town sources.

(6) Sgt. George Demos would serve as the liaison among the Police Department, the contracted social service agency and town government, likely the Health Department. Nancy Dutton took the floor next.

Nancy Dutton (Helen Robinson Wright Fund and First Parish of Watertown) spoke of some of her experiences with reference to residents in need of services and support. She shared how needs have now become “much more individualized.” Beginning in 2008, the First Parish of Watertown began to fall short in comparison to the need. For example, the Senior Center could provide funds to those aged 40 to 50 years old but not to other age groups - even if someone was disabled and in need or was a single mother in need. Usually, residents fell short on rent, utilities and encountered general family struggles. Those costs remain, but now, food, prescriptions, fuel and day care needs are added to them. “We do not know how to fully help,” she stated. Folks do not know where to turn or how to get help for numerous, concurrent needs; a single place to send residents is needed - one place with a person of expertise who will use our funds best.

Susan Flint (Marshall Home Fund) spoke next to address funding issues. “We want to help and help in a way that will work best for the town.” We seek a public-private partnership for the CSSC position initiative and a total package of \$65k [sic] each year for two years (includes salary and fringe benefits). We plan to petition the town through proper channels to fund \$40k per year two years and will raise the remaining \$20k per year for two years from other sources. We will

put together statistics for the town to review. After the two years, we plan to petition the town for the full \$60k [sic] per year.

To date, Watertown Savings Bank has given a generous amount to the cause, and a small amount has come from the Helen Robinson Wright Fund. These donations show a breadth of contributors; the team is optimistic about meeting its funding goals this year and plans to meet with individual Town Councilors to both answer questions and also receive advice on how to best support the initiative. The need is great; the timeframe to begin the initiative is summer 2012.

Questions from WCOD members.

Q: Please clarify the \$65k cost.

A: \$65k each year for two years.

Q: So \$130k total for two years. Did the town agree?

A: Not yet. We had one discussion to date with town councilors on funding and have spoken with other nearby towns/cities. We plan to report to the Town Council that those who have pledged funds will do so only if the town supports the initiative. We must present a breadth of funding and then approach the Town Council.

Q: You have provided good details. Are other communities implementing some kind of plan?

A: Some towns/cities are implementing a similar plan either under the Health Department or the Social Services Department. Belmont, Newton and Brookline plans call for a full-time person/coordinator. Marlboro's plan calls for a three-quarter time person. Concord and Carlisle plans are funded by the Community Chest. Arlington has a grant from a church for a part-time person to handle about 80 to 90 cases, and arrangements are done through the Town Manager's office.

Q: Do you see additional positions/hires being needed or just the one? Where is the plan going after the two years?

A: The plan is not for ongoing mental health services but more an initial assessment, interview and referral services. It is initial service and referral to additional services. The plan does not require a department, additional staff or in-depth services.

The presentation concluded. Kim Charlson spoke on behalf of the WCOD saying, "The program is important due to our many residents who have immediate need. Disability impacts many lives; the psychology of a situation can be intensely hard to identify and to service. The Community Social Service Coordinator initiative would be highly beneficial to Watertown. It goes to the heart of the mission of the Watertown Commission on Disability. The Commission should support it."

Kim canvassed the Commission members by a show of hands as to who is in favor of supporting the initiative. The show of hands was unanimous. Kim called for a motion. John Hawes motioned that the WCOD pledge \$10k per year for two years to support the Community Social Service Coordinator initiative.

It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to support the Community Social Service Coordinator initiative.

Mr. Twombly thanked the WCOD, noting that the Commission's response is "highly gratifying." To all, he stated that the project is now pushed forward significantly. Mr. Palomba is to keep Mr. Twombly informed as efforts on the CSSC initiative continue.

2)State Representative John Hecht spoke of the present activities at the State House.

Mr. Hecht stated that the Waterfront Project is close to getting off the ground and expects State funding "soon." The Senate put out its budget on 5/16/2012 and the Governor's budget was out in January 2012. Mr. Hecht emphasized that costs are rising - particularly in health and pensions and noted that even the "good projects, including those for the disabled, "will hold as is . . . no increase in funding."

Still, the Legislature supports disability issues.

- The House increased its contribution to the Perkins Talking Book Library.
- The Senate budget figure to Perkins Talking Book Library was less than the House; an amendment was filed to correct the Senate's figure and will be discussed the week of May 21, 2012.
- Nearly half a million will be for community services, particularly for the blind, deaf and hard of hearing
- Up to \$300k will be for respite services for families in caretaker roles
- An increase of \$8million for will be for Special Education costs to schools (\$213 million in 2011).

Mr. Hecht stated that the federal government cut \$5million in services to the disability community, but the State Legislature returned \$5million and increased it further in an effort to keep the developmentally disabled in the community. The final budget will be ready later this year.

Mr. Hecht reported on his bill to increase the number of handicapped parking (HP) spaces on public streets. The bill is not robust enough despite support from the WCOD and other communities. Likely, the bill will not go through this year. If re-elected, Mr. Hecht will file the bill at the next session and seeks ideas on pushing the bill forward.

Questions from WCOD members:

•Comment: WCOD gets calls about needing more on-street handicap parking spaces. Handicapped parking spaces are usually 5% of all off-street lots, but there are no rules on the number of HP spaces for on-street parking.

Reply: A ratio of 5% of registered cars vs. the number of HP on-street parking spaces sounds reasonable. The challenge with any bill is to generate more and more interest in the bill. We need to educate residents on the topic and need to keep pushing the bill in the Legislature.

Comment: We have access to other Disability Commissions.

Reply: It is a State-wide issue.

3)Laine Tulipano gave an overview of the Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) initiative to provide five iPads and five iPods to each Watertown public school library to lend to students who are on an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The purpose is to provide the student and family a “try before you buy” opportunity.

Watertown public schools are not well-funded for technology for Special Education students, Laine said, especially for the autism and blind populations. The initiative is well-planned, and each piece of equipment will be ear-marked for one or more different technology challenges for students to learn. The “try before you buy” opportunity will help students become familiar with and even have a level of proficiency with the product and its applications before making a purchase. The initiative will cost \$20-\$25,000 [sic] per school; the software applications will cost \$2,100; SEPAC will seek other funding for the application costs. Students will borrow the equipment for a four week period and perhaps check it out again if no one is on the waiting list for the equipment. Training on how to use the products remains in its planning stage but includes possibly videotaping a course to upload on-line at You Tube or other places for access at any time.

Questions from WCOD members:

Q: Did you ask Apple for discounts?

A: Not yet but we plan to use the power of the school system to get discounts.

Q: Will the lending libraries learn to use the pieces as well?

A: The plan is for the students to get the basics and get a feel of the equipment and applications not a mastery of them, like a test drive.

Q: What do you want any funds from the WCOD to do?

A: We look to the WCOD to help fund the purchase of the equipment for the students.

Q: Can you clarify the budget?

A: Each school will receive 5 iPads and 5 iPods at a cost of \$20k [sic] per school.

Q: Will high school students help train the younger students as part of community service credits?

A: That has been suggested, and we'll try to do that.

Q: What will be on the iPads and iPods?

A: Whatever the students need will be uploaded to the pieces; if a student needs more time, the piece can be re-borrowed if there is no one waiting to borrow one of the pieces. We think the IEP students will want to borrow these pieces. We look to begin the program in September 2012 if possible.

Q: Will one school lend to another if that school's supply of equipment is out?

A: We are considering distributing the pieces based on student population at each school and the specific needs of the students.

Comment: Kim took the floor saying the presentation was good and that since the WCOD received the information late in the afternoon before the meeting, the topic will carry over to the June 20th meeting as an agenda item for discussion.

Reply: Laine added that a second topic about Gala Posters [posters advertising honoring community and staff members who make a positive difference in the lives of others] was not presented, so she will E-mailed the file to the WCOD. On this, Elaine requested \$9k for three years to cover operating costs to honor community and staff members as there is no funding from the school system. We are "tightening our belts" but speakers cost money. SEPAC hopes to present a variety of topics monthly.

Kim asked George Donahue and Carol Menton to research what funding the WCOD has presented to SEPAC in the past. Carol replied that the WCOD has funded CPAC from its start about fifteen years ago. CPAC was struggling and we assisted. We need to support them. I am proud of them.

Kim noted that SEPAC, Jerry Mee from Public Works and Springwell will be on the agenda for the June 20, 2012 meeting.

CHAIR'S REPORT- Kim There was no Chair's report.

MINUTES- It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to accept the minutes for April 2012. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk's office.

TREASURER's REPORT- Gayle Shattuck, Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator commented that (1) approximately \$1500 to \$2000 per month is credited to the WCOD account from traffic fines and interest on them. (2) The cost of the plaque for Victory Field is divided into a payment over three months. (3) Gayle will put large sums of grant monies into the "encumbrances" cell of the Treasurer's Report. Requested minor edits requested at the April meeting have been

incorporated. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to accept the Treasurer's report for May 2012.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

1) Art Exhibit- Anne Doughty We will use the invitation to the Art Exhibit from last year and update it as needed. This year, to those who participated last year or left business cards or participate in some activity the application will be included with the invitation. Anne asked WCOD members to suggest names of or ideas to reach additional potential participants. Invitations will go to MassArt, Perkin School for the Blind and schools. The WCOD will spread the word about the Art Exhibit. The invitation will include a line asking for the application to be returned. The exhibit will be at the Library in November 2012. Submission deadline is October 1, 2012.

Questions from WCOD members:

Q: Are we going to reuse the large postcard?

A: Yes.

Comment: Jean can assist.

2) Website- George Donahue will E-mail the statistics to WCOD members.

3) Closed Captioning- Carol Menton reported she has been in E-mail correspondence with Tamara Green of the Watertown Community Access Center. Carol said that the "switch" has been turned on and the next two Town Council meetings will serve as tests of the system to broadcast successfully. Comcast and RCN may be in attendance. Carol thanked the Town Council for helping to push for a remedy of broadcasting difficulties surrounding streaming video feed of Town Council meetings. Carol will send an E-mail to the WCOD members to report how the system performed during the test(s). Chairperson Kim Charlson said she has a call from John Yerasian on the topic and she will call him back after she hears how the broadcast test(s) went.

4)Special Ed- No report.

5)Safety and Access- No Report

6)Superfitness- John Hawes A complaint from the State about accessibility at the Superfitness facility in Watertown prompted John to visit the facility to observe it's accessibility and parking area and also met with the owner. John wrote a response to the complaint that included several comments as well as suggestions on improvements (desk staff electronically open the locked accessibility door when buzzer rings; painting; increase number of HP spaces and others). WCOD

members suggested minor edits; the response will be sent under the Chairperson's name. The response letter was faxed successfully to the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB) in Boston on Friday May 18, 2012. The WCOD awaits a reply.

7)Restaurant Guide- Jean O'Connell Jean reported that once one remaining detail on directions to two restaurants is cleared, the Guide will be completed and will send it to Kim at Perkins before the next WCOD meeting. Also, she reported on the Audible Signal Guide saying about half of the signal surveys are completed. The survey information will be entered on-line. Kim Charlson suggested using an Excel file.

OLD BUSINESS- Riverfront Project update- Kim Charlson noted that a contribution list was sent to the DCR person in charge of funding; also, the Town will send a letter as well.

NEW BUSINESS- None

It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to adjourn at 9:15 p.m.

The next meeting will be on June 20, 2012 at 7 p.m.

These minutes are recorded and respectfully submitted by Jean O'Connell, WCOD Intern.