

WATERTOWN COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Meeting Minutes

Wed., Jan. 16th, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Chair Kim Charlson.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson, Chair; Councilor Steve Corbett; George Donahue; John Hawes, Judith Herzberg; Fred Isaacs; Carol Menton; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun.

GUESTS- Raymond Isaacs, Sgt. George Demos from Watertown Police Dept, Monna Wallace, Director of Programs for Mass. State 9-1-1 Department, and later in evening, Jeannette Belcher-Schepis from New Repertory Theatre, and Judy Fallows and Salman Kahn from Watertown Community Gardens.

AUDIENCE ISSUES/GUEST SPEAKERS-

1) Officer George Demos spoke on several topics. They are currently starting to train with Everbridge, a very new company that coordinates reverse notification calls, which was recommended by the Fire Dept. The schools have their own system of notification, and the police have been using Rapid Notify, which uses phone calls. The Health and Fire Depts have had to use the police system. The new system will send out texts, emails and voice mail alerts for the DPW, Health, Fire and Police Depts, concerning such things as flu clinics, flooding, weather alerts, parking bans, etc. Recipients can request how they want to be notified. The police are planning to send out text and voicemail notifications. They are dealing with a problem of the system requiring names as well as phone numbers that need to be input into the new program. The phone numbers can be mass-imported, but the names (33,000) are a problem.

Handicapped Parking issues. Feedback about parking enforcement. There is no issue with ticketing in private lots or apartment buildings where there is a public right of access. Police will check everywhere, and messages or complaints can be sent to the police about problems via phone or email.

Maps of Handicapped parking spaces- Police don't have any. George D said that Waltham has a pdf file on their website for HP parking places. Gayle stated that the DPW doesn't have a map, but that we are working with Gideon in the Planning Dept on a map.

Pedestrian Issues in Watertown Square. There is a "concurrent light" where the walk signal is on while traffic from Mt. Auburn St is going straight but also turning right. It has to be this way because of the timing of the signals. Numerous nearby intersections are also timed to coordinate with Watertown Square to prevent gridlock.

There was a letter from a Watertown resident asking the officer about bike paths and traffic going into Watertown Square. Officer Demos stated that the police are working with the Bicycle Committee, Watertown Citizens and Sustainable Watertown on bike path plans. The configuration of lanes on Mt Auburn going toward the square cannot be

changed. They are all needed. The letter will be forwarded to Dave Sampson in the Police Dept and Gerry Mee of the DPW. Another question from a town councilor was about police ticketing of cars on sidewalks. The officer said they'd ticket a zone when they get a complaint. Just notify the traffic division.

- 2) Monna Wallace, Director of Programs, Mass. State 9-1-1 Dept and Distribution Program. She oversees the training department, public education and public safety. The department is in Taunton and is funded by a \$.75 fee on everyone's phone bill. There are 256 9-1-1 centers, and there is work going on to consolidate. There are 351 towns in Mass. Western Mass and the Cape have regional centers. When Watertown residents call 911 from their home phones, the calls get immediately directed to Watertown. With cell phones, it is a 2-step process. The call goes to Framingham State Police, the information screen gives the phone carrier and a GPS reading (approximate location). The dispatcher asks some questions and the call is transferred to the nearest center. 70% of the calls are now from cell phones. Ms Wallace said that it was important to call 911 from a cell phone, as opposed to calling the local police dept, because the police cannot locate where the call is coming from. She emphasized that the 911 system cannot accept texts at this time. A new system will be used starting next year called "Next Gen 911" and will accommodate texting and deaf and hard of hearing. Deaf people must use TTY now. Maybe videos in the future? They are members of NEVA- National Emergency Number Association, and are dealing with problems with accessibility. 911 has interpreter services for people speaking other languages. The dispatcher clicks an icon on the monitor, and a triage person comes on who quickly identifies the language then an interpreter is brought in. There are trainers all over the state for dispatchers. It is considered a profession.

The Equipment Distribution Program works with disabled people and their home phones. People earning less than \$50,000 are eligible for free equipment regarding blind, deaf and mobility issues. They will install and train. The Mass Relay service for deaf and hard of hearing is contracted out. Operators will translate TTY for hearing people. Cap Tel is another service that they don't currently have, in which the words spoken on the other end of the line show up as captioned on a monitor.

There was a question about the Silent Call Procedure. It works best from a home phone, but is OK from a cell phone. If, for example, someone breaks into a home, and the resident goes into a closet to hide and can't talk, if they dial 911 and don't talk, the dispatcher will first check for TTY, but then they will say "if you need police, press 1, if fire, press 2 and if ambulance, press 3". Also, if several 1's are pressed right away, the above options will be offered right away. We are the only state that offers this, and developed it in the 70s.

- 3) Jeannette Belcher-Schepis represents the New Repertory Theatre, a non-profit professional theatre group in residence at the Arsenal Center. They have a travelling theatre which does a 90 min. adaptation from literature and takes it on the road to schools and senior centers. They performed To Kill a Mockingbird recently at Perkins which was well received. Perkins was also interested in their

Romeo and Juliet production, but an audio describer is needed, and the New Rep Theatre is out of funding and can't provide one. An audio describer is a person who describes the visual action of the play (or movie) which is then broadcast to headphones worn by blind or visually impaired audience. It costs \$1400 for one performance, including rehearsal and prep time for the interpreter. They are aiming for an April or May performance. Kim stated that the last performance at Perkins had an audience of 75 blind people.

The Commission expressed its intention to fund this, but procedure requires a vote be taken next meeting so it can be adequately publicized, then the minutes have to be approved in the following meeting before the funds can be sent. There should be enough time if we meet in Feb and Mar.

- 4) Judy Fallows and Salman Kahn from the Watertown Community Gardens. Salman Kahn coordinates the food pantry gardeners. Brad Sterns is a contractor, and wasn't present tonight. They discussed progress being made in the garden, owned by the Watertown Housing Authority. A path has been designed wide enough to be accessible, and there is space for a raised wheelchair accessible bed. Six out of 29 beds are for learning gardens, 3 more are earmarked for the pantry. The Community Garden sends out applications for people in the public housing community for the beds. They are trying to do outreach to the regular community as well. A proposal had been made for \$5000, but needed specific information. Fred and George looked at the space. The Nichols Ave garden is optimal because it is close to public transportation, the shed is accessible. They can host community events. They asked how to make this happen. Commissioners generally agreed with stone dust for the paths, the DCR can advise on "rough accessible" paths, and Kim, John, George and Fred offered to give them resources, such as the Mass Audubon Society, Perkins, Home Depot which has a community service program.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was MOVED, seconded and passed unanimously to accept the minutes from December. Copies of the 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 for December. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

CHAIR'S REPORT- Kim still wants feedback for the report, then it can go to Gayle by the end of the week. John recommended including the intersections signal survey work.

BRIEF COMMITTEE REPORTS-

Closed Captioning- Watertown Cable Access has a new director, whom we will invite to a meeting soon.

Website stats- The website policy subcommittee gave some feedback. George will modify and submit again for final recommendations

Restaurant Guide, 4th ed.- It is done and copies were passed out tonight to commission members. George has it on the website. Gayle asked about marketing. Maybe a short article in the Tab? Gayle and Jeanne will send a cover memo and copies of the guide to Town Councilors, Department heads, Superintendant, Director of the Library. The Library will receive copies, and Kim said there will be copies for library borrowers who are registered for Braille- around 40-50.

UCPA Screening- Gayle said an invoice will be paid when we have a product. The press release will go out in two weeks- a month prior to the date of the screening 2/28/13.

Kim mentioned Real Abilities, a disability film festival coming up.

Jeanne's internship is ending. Gayle posted this week an advertisement for another intern. Carol M requested that we talk next meeting about the need for an intern.

George gave out enlarged copies of a map of Watertown.

Next Thursday, 1/24 at 10 a.m., Governor Deval Patrick will speak about his book at Perkins.

The next meeting will tentatively take place on Wed., Feb. 20th.

It was MOVED, seconded and voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:23 p.m.

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