Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 20th, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson, Chair; Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor; Lissa Gifford; John Hawes; Carol Menton; Megan O'Halloran; Elan Rohde; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun.

Audience- Caitlin Browne, Assistant Director, Watertown Public Library; David Leon; Laura Wiener, Senior Transportation Planner, Watertown Parking Management Plan; Naomi Ridge, prospective member of WCOD; Ray Forte and Desiree Forte; Jessica Perez; Heather McManus; Dr.Theresa McGuinnes, Asst Superintendent of Teaching, Learning and Assessment; and Kathleen Desmarais, Elem Spec Ed Coordinator, WPS.

AUDIENCE ISSUES- Desiree Forte is a Watertown resident who brought up the issue of accessibility of the actual area the dogs use at How Dog park. She uses a power w/c and finds the gravel very difficult to maneuver. She said it was grass before, which was better. Her father Ray looked up pea stone and found it wasn't ADA compliant. She said that the new sidewalk access was good. When asked, she gave Carlton Place in the South End as an example of a good, accessible dog park. Gayle will talk to DPW.

GUEST SPEAKERS-

1) Laura Wiener spoke about the parking management plan for Watertown and Coolidge Squares. They are trying to increase turnover of parked vehicles, and are also looking at the amount of handicapped parking in those areas. They had a survey, and on May 7th will unveil their draft recommendations in the library. Megan suggested talking to Belmont about what they have done. Laura would like help and input from the WCOD. Kim brought up a parking survey that the Commission did a number of years ago. Gayle will look it up and send it to Laura. David Leon said he was surprised that the survey responses did not mention handicapped parking, which is important for these 2 areas.
2) Sgt Sampson was unable to come to the meeting tonight because of a bad car crash in Watertown.
3) Theresa McGuinnes and Kathleen Desmarais gave a presentation about Watertown Public Schools' mission, goals and accomplishments, focusing on Special Ed. Please refer to flier attached to minutes for details. Kim asked if they would return in the fall and give a report about disability education efforts. They are also going to look at race, ethnicity and language. Carol M asked what kind of interface they had with parents. They answered there are primary forums, coffee with the superintendant, and a monthly Special Ed Parent Advisory Council- one in the evening and one during the daytime so they can reach all parents. Another question was whether they taught ASL, and the

answer was that they are looking to hire teachers. Elan asked if the ipads were still being used in the library, and they answered that they were. They have special apps for disabled students who are non-verbal. Based on other questions, they said they would do more research about technology in preschool, and review how disability is covered in the curriculum, and they would get back to us. Kim also mentioned the issues concerning handicapped parking around the schools that Naomi Ridge had brought up. The schools need to monitor their own spaces, especially around pick-up time. People live park and block the drive through. Gayle will ask Sgt Sampson about patrolling the lots. One thing that might help is the internal weekly conversation newssheets that principals have for parents.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

1) Caitlyn Browne of the WPL came to follow up on the funding for the ADA improvements at the library. She said that the automatic door was being installed in May, and that the extension for the patio was going to be done soon. They installed the accessible lock on the door already, at their own expense. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to fund $2500 for the library accessibility project.

2) CVS Parking lot Update- Gerry Mee and the highway supervisor looked at the light pole and said it couldn't be moved, nor could they do a bump out. John wondered if there was a streetlight with a smaller base. Gayle will talk to Steve Magoon. Regarding trucks parked on the sidewalk to unload, Gerry Mee sent a letter to CVS to stop the practice.
3) Mosesian Center for the Arts. Their Touch the Art gala will be on 5/23. Our own Kim Charlson will be recognized, among other community members. John suggested that the entire commission be invited. The kick off reception will take place on 6/6.
4) Naomi Ridge is a candidate for a place on the commission. She shared her background and desire to serve on the Commission. She left the room and it was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to recommend Naomi Ridge to the town manager for appointment to the WCOD.
5) AAB Ruling on Story Chapel at MT Auburn Cemetery- John said basically that they went along with our recommendations.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to accept the minutes from the January meeting. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the Town Clerk's Office.

TREASURER'S REPORT- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to accept the Treasurer's Report for Jan. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

1) Plans- John said there would be a meeting next Tues, the first in 1½ years. It will be a review of changes of Building G at the Arsenal Yards from residential to lab space. Lisa spoke of concerns about Arsenal Park and how it gets redesigned.

2) Closed Captioning update- Carol M. spoke of a glitch, and problems with the connection. The cable studio has an IP internet protocol that the Town Hall doesn't have. Caption First and Helen's people tested it on Monday and will try it at the Town Council meeting. New people are being trained. Lisa reiterated that there should be a checklist. Stephanie said there was a different person there every time, which is not enough consistency.

Carol M also said that she looked into what other towns were doing for funding. She said it was unusual for them to have sponsors. Boston has funding in the city's budget for cable. A big issue right now is FCC funding, so we need to wait to see what is happening with that. One commissioner remarked that ironically, the FCC was developed around universal access to the telephone. We will discuss this more next month.

3) Special Ed- Discussed above.
4) Safety and Access- Gayle still needs to investigate the audible signals at Warren and Lexington. And it is still not known if the detectable warnings at Main and Lexington are state or town.

NEW BUSINESS-

1) Lisa mentioned re snow removal, that the paths need to include access to signal buttons on the lights. Also, she mentioned concerns about accessibility of the Athena Health pocket park. It seems to have the same stones that the dog park has. In question are the transitions and the type of gravel used. Megan will take a look. Carol M. saw a sign saying that it was closed for the winter. Lisa responded that abutting residents have seen trucks on the bike path.
2) Kim said she has been trying to get people with disabilities onto Watertown for All Ages. She will lead a focus group. She's gotten one person, Judy Cannon, to join their transportation committee. John said he is on that committee.
3) Lisa announced that the Lime Bikes are returning and will be monitored.

The next meeting will take place on Wed. April 24th at 7 p.m., which is a week later due to school vacation.

It was moved, seconded and VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

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