

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, Aug 19th, 2019

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

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

CHAIR'S REPORT- Kim summarized that we haven't met since January because of the pandemic. Not a lot of activity has taken place with many of the town's commissions.

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

TREASURER'S REPORT- Gayle reported that the new fiscal year started 7/1. The commission was responsible for covering one July meeting for captioning, then the town took over funding. Kim will send a note of appreciation to the town. Naomi noted that there would be fewer parking fines with fewer people parking. Gayle reported that the new town parking officer started in March just when the town put a hold on fines. It just restarted in July.

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 Review- John said that Athena Health wanted to take one flight of stairs out (of 5) of their location that had been Harvard Business School. Their request was accepted.
- 2) Caption Update- nothing new other than the town taking over payments.
- 3) Special Ed- Naomi shared about the hybrid plans for reopening schools. A lot of thought was going into it, and Special Ed was a priority. They won't know how it works until it is tried. Kim said that the Cunniff was torn down in June, and the new building started in July. Carol W-B mentioned that half the Hosmer was razed. John said when the new one is built, the rest will be torn down. Hands free bathrooms and water coolers are being planned at all town buildings. Naomi said that individual bathrooms were good for people who need help. Kim stated that when Perkins closed, and they planned remote learning, teachers realized that they didn't have Braille embossers. Kim offered the services of their library to do a "Braille and Mail" program. Teachers sent assignments to Kim and transcribers, and they are being printed out. They had done 160 handouts by the end of July. John commented that it was nice to be in a position to do something really positive.

- 4) Safety and Access- Kim said there were a few reports of signals not working and passed them onto the DPW, and they were fixed. Lisa mentioned complaints of concrete fencing on Galen street blocking the sidewalk. This was fixed. Regarding parking management, accessibility was an issue. Individual meters will accept credit cards or coins, but people are wanting touchless. Naomi reported that the street crossing on Belmont St in front of the former Francis Food Mart is now accessible with detectable warnings. Kim reported 2 issues to follow up on: First, CVS has a service “Spoken RX”, part of the CVS app, that reads bar codes scanned with a camera. It tells what a prescription is and the dosage. The service is being expanded across the country and will be in all 10,000 stores by the end of next year. Also, construction trucks were blocking 2 HP spaces while working at a bank next to CVS. Photos were sent to Gayle who sent them to the police. Second, there are gates in the alley next to CVS to prevent car access. The design is dangerous for the blind as there is no cross bar at the bottom. Lisa said the town would appreciate input and suggestions. Kim said we could make a recommendation.
- 5) Howe Park- John said there will be a contractor fix in Sept., installing a concrete area for wheelchair access, extended into the dog area, and a bench to sit on. He mentioned that Filippello Park has a nice large area and has made those changes.

NEW BUSINESS-

John made a request that the Commission consider making contributions to groups in town, such as Marshall Home Fund (John is on the board), Watertown Community Foundation (his wife is on the board) and the Resiliency Fund, which helps meet people’s immediate needs. Carol M mentioned helping to make clear masks available to those working with deaf and hard of hearing. Commission members suggested Marshall Home, senior center, schools, COA, town staff, food pantry. Kim encouraged John and Carol to present a proposal for next meeting for where we can make a difference. Lisa said that the town reimburses for COVID costs from the Cares Act. Kim said the MOD had funds for capital expenses. On another matter, Kim said she wanted the town to apply for strategic planning grants to do a new compliance plan, as it had been a while since the last one.

Carol M mentioned the upcoming 30th anniversary of the ADA and WCOD. What to do? Notices, article, banner? Kim said we would discuss next month. Carol suggested having first members of WCOD come back as guests: John Gannon, George Donahue.

Lisa wanted an update from Gayle on the Mt Auburn St project, World Tech consultant, about ADA and parking. Gayle will check with DPW or Planning.

It was moved, seconded and VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be on Wed. Sept. 16th at 7 p.m. on-line via Zoom.

UPDATE 9/9: The Sept meeting was cancelled. The next meeting will be 10/21, 7 pm via Zoom.

