

## **Watertown Commission on Disability**

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

### **Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, March 15th, 2023

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:06 p.m. by John Hawes, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Lisa Feltner, Town Councilor; John Hawes; Rachel Kay; Carol Menton; Megan O'Halloran; Naomi Ridge; Gayle Shattuck, Town Personnel Director and ADA Coordinator; and Carol Wilson-Braun. Absent- Kim Charlson

Guest- Caitlin Browne, Director of WFPL.

GUEST SPEAKER- Caitlin came to request funding for 2 ASL interpreters for the library's Pride Extravaganza on 6/3. They are in contact with New England Hard of Hearing, because last year, they weren't able to secure any interpreters. The function goes from 11-4 so they will need 2 interpreters, which will cost \$1200. They also are asking for \$100 additional to translate fliers into Braille. John said we will take a vote at our meeting next month, but the general sense was affirmative.

### **CHAIR'S REPORT-**

- 1) Crosswalk signal at N. Beacon and Louise- Lisa said it was working as intended. On a related issue, John said that crosswalk signs were needed for the new crosswalks on Charles River Rd. Will Brownsberger was consulted and said that the DCR isn't a big fan of signs. We should follow up. John also said there was no accessible link from Perkins to the path near Beechwood.
- 2) Donation to Community Fridge- Gayle emailed Attorney Reich about using city funds, but hasn't heard back yet. John noted that the Fridge is getting funding from the Community Foundation.
- 3) Restaurants and Closed Captioning on TVs- Lisa said the topic was on the docket for the Rules and Ordinances Committee for a vote.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes from the Feb meeting. Copies of the minutes may be requested from the city's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office or viewed on the Watertown website document center.

TREASURER'S REPORT- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the Treasurer's Report for Feb. 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 there was nothing new.

- 2) Special Ed- Naomi said that SEPAC had a couple of meetings, but no updates. Rachel said there would be a Dyslexia film viewing in April.
- 3) Safety and Access- a) Cracks in pavement- Naomi said that DPW was still in winter mode and hasn't addressed yet. b) Sidewalks and granite curbing- Lisa was wondering about best practices for granite curbing. We will address next month when Kim is back. c) Detectible Warnings- we are waiting for input from the MA Highway Dept. d) Power Operated Doors at Arsenal Yards- We discussed which stores have power doors and which don't. John said the zoning ordinance talks only about how much room is available in a vestibule for opening doors. We may not have formal input, but can certainly make recommendations to Planning. He will send a note to them. He also said the weight of the door at 50 Watertown St needs to be measured.

#### NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) We were made aware of a complaint about w/c accessibility at Red Lentil restaurant. They have a temporary ramp, which was not accessible. Naomi said that many small businesses are inaccessible. Megan suggested we come up with a statement. Carol W-B noted that the ramp was probably way too steep, given the number of steps. John said that the Red Lentil may be leasing from the building owners. It is hard for small stores to make changes. Businesses are not compelled to make changes unless they are doing a certain level of remodeling or construction. Carol M was wondering about an ADA tax credit that may help. She also suggested reaching out to the MA COD and Disability Policy Consortium. Lisa brought up the possibility of ready-made materials for accessibility, and public education. Naomi and John will look into it further. Megan suggested keeping automatic doors "on our radar," that people assume they will be there. John said he was surprised that the state is not more rigorous about automatic doors. They are not required with private owners.
- 2) Carol W-B stated that she has been diagnosed with a slow progressing degenerative motor neuron disorder, but will continue on the Commission (and as secretary) as long as she is able.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, April 19th, 2023.