

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 7:04 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

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

Guests- Caitlin Browne, Director of WFPL; Patrick George, new ADA Coordinator; Tammy McKenna, Director of Commander's Mansion and new coordinator of Faire on the Square; and Bob Shay from Watertown for All Ages.

GUEST SPEAKERS-

- 1) Caitlin Brown formally requested \$1300 from the Commission to help with the 2nd Pride Extravaganza costs- \$1200 for ASL interpreters and \$100 for Braille materials. It was moved, seconded, and VOTED unanimously. Kim asked her to contact her at Perkins one week ahead.
- 2) Bob Shay presented a proposal to the Budget and Oversight Committee from Watertown for All Ages, Watertown Fights Climate Change, and Watertown Environment, Energy and Efficiency Committee for a study to be done on helping make transportation more accessible for elderly and disabled in Watertown but also to decrease car miles. They will look at ride shares and rebuilding local retail centers. He requested a letter of support from WCOD. Lisa asked if a consultant would do the work. Bob said yes, and that they were working with Steve Magoon in Planning, and would be applying for grants from Watertown Community Foundation, Marshall Fund, Tufts Health Fund and DOT. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to craft and submit a letter of support for the study on transportation. Bob will compose a letter and review it with Kim, then turn it in with the proposal in mid-May.
- 3) Tammy McKenna is taking over the coordination of the Faire on the Square from Patrick George. She said the Faire this fall will be on 9/23 from 11-4. She wants to include 3 ASL interpreters for the pavilion, and is requesting \$1200. Someone is making Braille signage. We will vote on it next month. Carol M mentioned that St Jude's Church and Deaf, Inc have large deaf communities and should be notified, and Tammy said she could tag them.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Kim recognized Gayle Shattuck's many years of service on the Commission. She is retiring on 4/28. All members took turns honoring Gayle, who, it was agreed, "knows her stuff", advocates for us, and is so good at passing along pertinent information.

- 2) Patrick George will be the new ADA coordinator. As mentioned before, he was previously the Faire on the Square coordinator, and also the acting COA director as well. He also continues as the Veteran Service Officer.
- 3) DPW- Kim said there were no updates.
- 4) \$500 Donation to Community Fridge- Kim said that other organizations, such as Watertown Community Foundation, contributed, so we should too. Lisa said she thought that would be OK. Gayle will ask the city manager. It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously to donate \$500 to the Community Fridge, pending approval from the City Manager.
- 5) Lisa spoke of the ordinance for closed captioning on TV/screens in public places and businesses. It is on the agenda tomorrow for the council's committee on Rules and Ordinances. Complaints would come to the COD, and we would work with a city officer. Kim said she thought the language was good and that the commission having a role makes sense. She will go to the meeting. Carol M wondered if it applied to assisted living places.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes from the March 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 March. Copies of the Treasurer's report may be requested from the town's ADA Coordinator in the Personnel Office.

Lisa wondered where most of the tickets were being written. Gayle said she would ask Sgt. Sampson.

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

- 1) Plans- John said there was nothing new.
- 2) Special Ed- Rachel said there was a delay in action to adding accessible swings to the Hosmer playground and may not happen. She will update us next month.
- 3) Safety and Access- Kim said that with spring here, there should be some action by DPW on conditions of pavement. She and Naomi will get an update from DPW. Curbing and accessibility- Discuss next meeting. Maybe someone from DPW can attend. She said that granite curbing holds up better. Naomi agreed and said that granite curbing usually means better sidewalks as well, and are easier to navigate for wheelchairs and people with low vision. Detectable warnings- no updates. John mentioned we need to keep on top of crosswalks on Charles River Rd, access to 50 Watertown St, and power doors in businesses.

NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Lisa mentioned the ADA Transition Plan, and said that the manager is open to ideas. Naomi and Kim attended a webinar that looked at plans from 5 communities. Naomi said it emphasized the importance of having a strong ADA coordinator. Many things are enforced by complaint. Transition plans are a living document and updated constantly. Kim said the document is collaborative. We need to work with Community Planning and Development to

move the agenda forward re disabilities. Naomi mentioned the Institute for Human Based Design, and John emphasized a focus on ADA requirements.

- 2) Carol M announced that Deaf, Inc is moving to Watertown. A welcome addition to our community!
- 3) Kim announced that she has been appointed co-chair of the Disability Advisory Committee of the Federal Communication Commission. The committee has working groups such as Communication Access and Audio Description. The first meeting is next week. Commissioners congratulated her.
- 4) There will be a farewell party for Gayle in the city chamber on 4/28 from 11-12.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, May 17th, 2023.