

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 20th, 2023

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:07 p.m. Kim Charlson, Chair, joined a few minutes late due to technical difficulties.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson, Chair; Lisa Feltner, City Councilor; Patrick George, ADA Coordinator; Rachel Kay; Carol Menton; Megan O'Halloran; Naomi Ridge; and Carol Wilson-Braun. Absent- John Hawes.

Audience- Cindy Wentz, resident.

AUDIENCE ISSUES- Cindy Wentz, member of Watertown for All Ages, said that there would be a meeting about the Watertown Snow Ordinance on Mon. Sept 25th, by a committee of the city council, and encouraged members of COD to attend.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Candidates for WCOD- Kim said that the Residents' Advisory Committee will have a meeting next Tues (not open to public), in which they will go over resumes and interview some candidates. Patrick will sit in. Carol M asked what questions will be asked of the candidates. They need to be disability specific. Naomi mentioned that a state mandate requires that a majority of members on the commission have a disability. Kim said the position needing to be filled is a person with a disability. Carol W-B stated that the person being considered should have a broad interest in disability issues. Carol M said an innate understanding. Kim said that we need feedback about the candidates. Naomi quoted "Nothing About Us Without Us." Carol M said there was a guide that Gayle and she used to use. Patrick said that he wrote a description of the commission, but Kim said there was a state statute describing the make-up and purpose of CODs. Patrick said he would look at the mission statement of COD on the website. Carol M said she would send out a list of questions asked previously of candidates.
- 2) Update on City Ordinance re Closed Captioning on TVs in Public Places- Lisa said no updates. It is almost approved and will go into effect immediately upon full approval by the Council.
- 3) Deafness and HOH (hard of hearing) Training for City Staff- Patrick said they are figuring out how to do it. Record and use again? Training timeline. Will have more info next month.
- 4) Coolidge Square and Crosswalks- John's letters and recommendations were attached to the minutes and were discussed. Patrick shared John's info with the DPW and city councilor Gardiner. Kim said there would be more of an update next meeting.
- 5) Faire on the Square- This Saturday! Carol M said that our table needs to be near a power source so there can be a CART demonstration. Patrick said he thought we would be along the side of City Hall. Megan said she would help intermittently because of other commitments, and would bring her tent.

- 6) Signage for Crossings on Charles River Rd- Lisa said that everything looks to be in place, except no orange pedestrian crossing sign at the crosswalk closest to Watertown Sq. The older, obsolete crosswalks are not there anymore. New on the list is getting transition ramps at N. Beacon and Beechwood.
- 7) Railings at Ryan Rink- Patrick said they have been installed, and Lisa said the bleachers are ADA compliant.
- 8) Watertown Malls Redesign- Kim will invite the developers for the Watertown Mall and Arsenal Yards to talk about accessibility in Oct or Nov. It was felt that Watertown should have an automatic door requirement for new development, over and above the ADA guidelines. Naomi said that in Arsenal Yards, everything is ADA compliant, but some smaller businesses could use them. Automatic doors would have to go through Planning and Ordinances. She said that automatic doors are needed for the Majestic Theatre and the elevator lobby near Roche Bros and Ben and Jerry's. Lisa mentioned a couple of places that could use automatic doors. Kim said that automatic doors can cost \$3-4000. She said a conversation was needed with Steve Magoon. Lisa said she would talk to him before the next meeting. Naomi added that there needs to be better signage in the garage for which stores are nearest which parking spaces.
- 9) Accessibility at Food Pantry- Patrick said that someone expressed concerns about access. John visited the site and met with Kathy at the Pantry, and determined that everything had adequate access. No need for special access over the needs of others. Lisa said that the pantry would be moving from St. Patrick's to Parker school building on Watertown St.
- 10) DPW and Trash Pick up- Kim said there was nothing new. Talked about a sticker with Greg St. Louis from DPW.

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS-

- 1) Plans- John was absent.
- 2) Special Ed- Naomi said that the temporary High School opened 3 weeks ago. There was a concern that kids had to walk to the gym at the Boys and Girls Club in the rain. Winter may be a problem. Rachel said that SEPAC was going to have a playdate on Sunday.
- 3) Safety and Access- a) Kim said that the cracks in the sidewalk are still there. Naomi said that high schoolers are using that path. b) Sidewalk and granite curbing- the COD weighed in. Kim and Naomi will work on a statement. Lisa said there would be a vote tomorrow night on funding. c) Kim said that her husband Brian would help her.

.NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Patrick read and discussed the description of WCOD. It is posted on our website.
- 2) Self-Assessment- proposal and funding for the ADA transition plan. The schools are already ADA compliant, having been rebuilt recently. The plan can include programming. The request is for \$90,000.
- 3) Patrick said that the asst city manager had some questions about service dog requirements. The MA office on Disability has done webinar trainings. Kim and Naomi talked about the difference between Service dogs, which have specific training around the person's disability vs an Emotional support animal, which is not covered under the ADA. Kim said we can't ask about the person's disability, but can ask what the animal does for the person. Lisa said that we could share the info with the health dept.
- 4) Lisa announced that the Traffic Commission on the 28th at 5 pm will dedicate 2 handicapped spaces on Nichols. Also, she spoke of the Casey Park design. Question about adding a path and batting cages. Kim said that John or Megan and Naomi could look at the plan or site.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, October 18th, 2023.