

Watertown Commission on Disability

149 Main St. Watertown, MA. 02472

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 18th, 2023

The meeting was held by Zoom online and called to order at 7:07 p.m. by Kim Charlson, Chair.

ROLL CALL- Kim Charlson, Chair; Lisa Feltner, City Councilor; Patrick George, ADA Coordinator; John Hawes; Rachel Kay; Carol Menton; Megan O'Halloran; Naomi Ridge; and Carol Wilson-Braun. Guest- Allison Fry, Watertown Free Public Library, Programming.

GUEST SPEAKER- Allie Fry came to request \$500 in funding for CART services for a high-profile speaker in-person event on March 24. Carol M wondered if there could also be ASL services. Allie said that the library would be open to that. Kim suggested working with Watertown Cable, and to consider a hybrid model with Zoom. We will vote next month.

CHAIR'S REPORT-

- 1) Update on Candidates for COD- Patrick reported a Nov deadline goal.
- 2) Captioning Ordinance- Lisa said that the Oct meeting was devoted to the budget, so, next month.
- 3) Update on Deafness/HOH Training- Patrick said there was a new human resources director, Colleen. They are working on an online/computer model.
- 4) Intersection of Galen and Aldrich- Rachel said that the issue of uneven pavement has been resolved.
- 5) Faire on Square- Carol M said it was a successful day. Our table was located next to the veteran's services, which was good for Patrick, since he was involved with both organizations. Patrick announced that the Senior Center was having a Health and Fitness Fair on Nov 15th at the Commander's Mansion from 1-3pm. He wondered if COD should have a table. Carol M said that we could have a CART demo, is it didn't work out for the Faire. Kim suggested an ASL interpreter.
- 6) Watertown Square Area Planning Meeting- Lisa and Rachel summarized the talking sessions about the Square: urban planning, transportation, emphasis on pedestrians. Lisa said it was a great turn out. Kim brought up the difficulty of navigating the square for the blind. Perkins will be an active partner. Rachel said they were shown a video about a town in England with a similar intersection. Lisa said that we need to discuss universal design and ADA compliance. Kim said that this will be a once in a lifetime opportunity.
- 7) Hearing on the Snow Ordinance- Lisa said that the DPW is focusing on problematic areas, such as Wheeler La, and Beacon Pk. We need more feedback from the DPW. They are addressing exemptions such as over 65, income limits, and disability, both temporary and permanent. There is a zoning officer working with the Senior Center.
- 8) Detectable warnings at N. Beacon and Beechwood- not under the purview of the DPW? Also Main and Lexington. Kim will reach out to the DPW. Patrick said that N. Beacon is locally managed.

- 9) Watertown Mall- Kim said she reached out to developers but hasn't heard back yet. Arsenal Yards is looking into the automatic door issue. She is hoping they will come in November. John said that a new ordinance would be complicated, in terms of zoning and building code. It could be a hardship for smaller stores. We could go after Majestic Theatre. Kim thought it reasonable for towns to have guidelines. Maybe have another couple of commissions like Boston COD weigh in for MAAB. Lisa suggested starting with planning and Steve Magoon. John said all this comes under universal design. Go after developers. Kim asked who makes the decisions.
- 10) DPW and Toters- Kim had a discussion with Greg St. Louis about labelling toters. Patrick shared representations of large yellow labels (2'x2') with black letters "Visually impaired. Return bin to location. Use care." There was discussion about location of the sticker and the wording. Kim suggested using universal symbols of a w/c user and a blind person. Eligibility requirements for a sticker are being discussed.
- 11) ADA Self-Assessment Plan- Patrick said there was no progress yet.
- 12) Casey Park Design- Lisa said the design was on pause to address excessive noise, ADA parking, and to update the playground. A preschool is using the park currently.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- It was moved, seconded and VOTED unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes from the September 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 September. 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 was nothing new.
- 2) Special Ed- Naomi said there were accessibility concerns about the lower level of the Middle School, which is used by high schoolers. There are 2 steps. Rachel reported that the swings at the Hosmer are under construction to make them accessible.
- 3) Safety and Access- a) Kim said that it was too close to winter to address the cracks in the pavement behind the library. Highschoolers use that walkway, among others. Lisa wondered if some benches were still missing. Naomi said that 3 more pieces of artwork will be going in next spring. Kim said that there will be Braille signs, and that one bench has been installed. She wondered what was the long-term strategy to solve the cracks. b) Curbing- Kim will put more thought into the issue and come up with a formal statement. c) Lexington and Main St intersection- Kim said that it will be resolved soon.

NEW BUSINESS-

- 1) Naomi said that the intersection of Waverley St and Belmont St lacks a detectible warning and wondered if it was under the jurisdiction of Watertown or Belmont. It was thought that Belmont St is divided right down the middle.

- 2) Kim said that the city clerk has left and that we have an acting clerk. Watertown has accessible online voting, also mail-in ballots. Watertown is in league with major cities in doing this! The deadline to vote this way is the 30th of Oct.
- 3) Lisa said that the Irving Park renovations have been completed.
- 4) Kim announced that she was travelling to Spain tomorrow, for a meeting of the World Blind Union executive board.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

The next meeting of WCOD will take place via Zoom at 7 p.m. on Wed, November 15th, 2023.