

Watertown Commission on Disability

November 15, 2023

In attendance: Kim Charlson, Rachel Kay, Lisa Feltner, Cindy Wentz, Lisa Feltner, Carol Menton, Naomi Ridge, Megan O'Halloran, John Hawes, Patrick George

Absent: Carol Wilson-Braun

Minutes:

Introductions/pre-meeting:

Megan will ask Janet Buck to come next month (December 20) to discuss Boy's and Girl's Club renovations.

Welcome to new member Cindy Wentz!

Congrats to Rachel Kay for winning School Committee Election!

Chair's Report

Library funding request for ASL interpreter for high-profile author event in the spring. \$1100

This is for One Book, One Watertown, but book and author are a secret.

Motion to fund: John, Second: Naomi.

Vote passes 8-0.

Patrick will let Ally know we funded the proposal.

Status of City Ordinance to require closed captioning on public televisions.

Lisa: went back to KP law to further define public. It should be on agenda Monday November 27. It will need a first and second reading. (Lisa has sent us the final draft.)

Update on Deafness/Hard of Hearing training for City staff:

Patrick: ongoing. Spoke with Jonathan O'Dell referenced some tools to use in transcribing.

Patrick will coordinate with IT. Still trying to coordinate a good time or find an on-demand style training.

Carol: there's an app that can be used to type in called "Live Transcribe." Others called Otter and Ava. These are for android. IOS has live transcribe app as well. It's about attitudes as well as technology.

Staff should know about technology and be able to access it easily so it's not a big deal when needed.

Also could look for app with VRI.

Mt Auburn/Irving/Summer Street: Issues with curb cuts.

Where are the crosswalks? Curb cuts should be with the cross walks. There is a crosswalk with a light but no curb cuts at Irving. Let's ask DPW to work into it.

Bids for Mt Auburn Street should be coming in any day and those intersections will be totally redone (there are drainage issues).

Today's Senior Health and Fitness Fair at Commanders Mansion:

Patrick was representing Veterans and CoD. Everyone loves the jar openers. Some info about who was on the commission, what we do, etc. They want to have more of these in the future.

Watertown Square Low-Vision/Blindness Focus Group:

Cindy and Kim were there.

Zeke and Tiffany led. People didn't really stick to the format and jumped right into personal experiences with Watertown Square. A mobility expert from the Carroll Center was there.

Zeke will go out with a blind person and the mobility expert to experience what it's like crossing streets.

Should we invite these people to our Commission meeting so we can see their plans/share their concerns?

Patrick will send out information on Charettes. It will be interactive.

Snow ordinance removal:

The final report came out from the joint committee at last night's council meeting. It will be scheduled for first reading, then public hearing and vote. And KP Law will review along the way.

Tomorrow at 5 pm is annual DPW meeting about roads and sidewalks and repavings.

No action on detectable warnings at North Beacon and Beechwood.

Watertown Mall redesign project:

It's been approved by planning board. We would like them to come talk to us, but they haven't responded yet. Now that they are planning it may be time.

Arsenal Yard: automatic door openers.

Many locations do not have automatic doors since they don't have to (via ADA), but it would be a good idea. Especially out of the parking garage. Defer to John to break this into manageable steps.

Update on DPW Trash Bing Removal Sticker:

Patrick is going back and forth with DPW. Sticker will be 4 inch by 4 inch.

ADA Self-Assessment Plan funding request:

Patrick submitted to Mass Office of Disability, but has not heard back.

Detectable warnings and curb cuts at Waverly and Belmont:

Is this a Watertown or Belmont issue?

Minutes from last meeting: 7-0 with Cindy abstaining.

Treasurer's report: Report out from Patrick. We just approved \$1100 for library.

We traditionally make donations to the food pantries at this time of year.

Move to make \$3000 donation to the two food pantries. 8-0

Plans: John

The Watertown Mall plan now shows housing above a large first floor retail area.

Schools:

Rachel: SEPAC will have a social event in December. She will send information.

Cracks in the pavement in path behind Waverly: done for the season.

Detectable warnings at Lexington & Main Streets.

New Business:

Lisa: Titles for Charettes for Watertown Sq. Wednesday the 29th at 10 a.m. "How can we make it work for all modes?"

Casey Park improvements were put on pause to collect feedback.

Cindy: Should city have a reasonable accommodation plan for public events and advertise it as such? Example: there were no sighted guides at the Council on Aging Fair.

Let's put this on the agenda for next month. Do we have a policy? Do other towns?

We would need to know where to get the resources: this could be put in a policy.

Think about timelines: may need 2 weeks to book CART or ASL, but a sighted-guide can be quicker. Event planners should think about that.

Do we need a policy for something the city is legally required to provide?

We should loop in Tammy McKenna.

Kim: participated in CODA (Commission on Disability Advocates) call. Watertown and Boston were only ones in meeting with electronic voting process. We are cutting edge!

We also need wayfinding for public buildings.

Cindy: We should get a person with disabilities on the Human Rights Commission.

Rachel: I will forward World in Watertown Event for Tuesday November 21.

Lisa: We should share this with Liz Cremens.

Naomi: Do we want to meet in person in December?

Lisa: Lower hearing room has been remodeled.

John: Let's do it in January.

Kim: Let's decide about January in December.

Adjourn. Next meeting Wednesday December 20.