

Westport Commission on Disabilities
Meeting of Monday, Aug. 27, 2018
at Town Hall Annex

1. Open Meeting: The meeting was called to order at 3:46 p.m. by Chair Brian Gallagher with members Martin Costa, Anders Newcomer, Stanley Cornwall, Raymond Phenix, and Rose Rego present. Also attending were consultant Jeff Bull, and guest Ross Moran from the Westport Land Conservation Trust.
2. Remote Participation: There being no requests for remote participation, this agenda item was passed over.
3. Minutes: The minutes of the July 23, 2018 meeting were reviewed, with a motion to accept them as presented made by Mr. Phenix, and seconded by Mr. Newcomer; the vote was unanimous (6-0).
4. Guest Ross Moran: The executive director of the Westport Land Conservation Trust (WLCT) was present to talk about the redevelopment of the St. Vincent de Paul property, and seek COD input on possible accessibility improvements. He offered to provide a tour of the property for commissioners not familiar with the site: 82 acres purchased in 2018 with a permanent conservation restriction, with about 20 acres of park-like open space at the front of the property. Mr. Moran indicated that hard-packed pathways would make the open space accessible to all, including picnic area and gym facility; the old farmhouse will be re-purposed as a visitor center, classroom and office space.

Mr. Gallagher asked for more details on accommodations for people with disabilities. Mr. Moran said the parking plan is still being finalized, but 15-20 space with two handicapped spots are expected. The gym and visitor center have accessibility ramps, and accessible porta-johns will be in temporary use. Volunteers will be needed to staff the facilities on a part-time basis; no security personnel are planned. The WLCT will welcome input on other potential improvements from the COD and other boards and organizations, he indicated. Mr. Cornwall suggested that space be set aside for a town square, including a bandstand for concerts and public performances; the idea was enthusiastically endorsed by Mr. Costa.

Mr. Bull suggested that agenda item #8 be taken up at this time; and Mr. Gallagher sought an update on the mobility mat walkway off Beach Avenue. Mr. Moran indicated the trust has negotiated a deployment agreement with the town, including plans for re-grading sand at the roadside for proper slope, and reconfiguring the path's entry point. The work will be done in the spring by the Highway Department, so the mats would not be deployed this fall, he noted. According to the agreement, the mats must be removed after Labor Day, when peak storm season begins.

5. Regional COD Report: Mr. Costa reported on the recent regional conference held in Middleborough, noting he mentioned the commission's proposed kayak launching project at one point in the program; he also learned about available ADA municipal improvement grants up to \$250,000, awarded via a very competitive review process. There was also an update on violations of accessibility parking laws, and misuse of handicapped placards, including higher fines and license suspensions. Mr. Costa also noted a COD summit planned in Somerville in November, if any members want to attend.

6. Post Office Update: Mr. Gallagher reported contact with Rep. Keating's office about the accessibility issues at the post office, and was told they were grandfathered against mandated ADA updates. The building owners continue to refuse to make accessibility improvements. Next, letters to the Board of Selectmen and state legislators will be prepared to seek support for needed improvements.

7. Water Accessibility Project: Mr. Gallagher indicated continued plans for a Community Preservation Act grant application to fund the kayak launching project at Hix Bridge Landing; EZ Docks is preparing plans for the system, cost estimates are needed soon, as the deadline for applications to CPC is in December.

8. Mobility Mats: Discussion as noted above.

9. Comments/Observations: Mr. Costa noted that residents with hearing issues can request use of an electronic audio assistance device available in the selectmen's meeting room at Town Hall. He suggested that the commission consider urging the devices be installed in other public meeting rooms; Mr. Gallagher agreed, and urged Mr. Costa investigate equipment needs and costs for a future report to the commission.

10. Next Meeting: The time and date of the next meeting was set for 3:45 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 24.

11. Adjournment: With no further business on the agenda, Mr. Gallagher made a motion to adjourn at 4:45 p.m., seconded by Mr. Newcomer. The vote was unanimous.