

Westport Commission on Disabilities
Meeting of April 30, 2018

Present: Chair Brian Gallagher, Stanley Cornwall, Rose Rego, Anders Newcomer, Martin Costa.

1. Open Meeting: The meeting at the Town Hall Annex was called to order at 3:45 p.m. with the above members present. Guests attending included Landing Commissioners Jeff Bull and Tony Milham, Director of Marine Services Chris Leonard, Town Planner Jim Hartnett, Mass. Dept. of Fish & Game representative Doug Cameron, and resident Woody Underwood.

2. Remote Participation: As no remote participation was requested by members, this agenda item was passed over.

3. Minutes: The minutes of the March 26 meeting were reviewed, with Mr. Cornwall making a motion to approve as presented; the motion was seconded by Ms. Rego, and approved by unanimous vote.

4. Head of Westport Landing: Mr. Cornwall led a discussion of plans for improvements at the town landing, including handicapped parking, new walkways, and accessible picnic tables; the commission is proposing that future improvements to the town landings include some means of providing assistance to people with disabilities getting into canoes and kayaks. The discussion led to possible additional locations for special ramps or floating docks at various town and state-controlled landings in the community, including Westport Harbor, Adamsville Road, and Hix Bridge that could provide safe, reasonably priced assistance to boaters with disabilities.

Mr. Cameron explained the Fish & Game Department's fishing and boating access program, which builds and maintains boat ramps throughout the state at both fresh and salt water locations. He noted the department has recently started developing handicapped accessible designs for such sites using simple and durable "easy dock" technology; the department will pay 100 percent of design and construction costs for such facilities at local ramps, but the funds come with the requirement that selectmen sign a land use agreement stating the ramps must be open to the general public and not restricted to town residents. Other requirements could include a parking area of 8-12 spaces, and a clear path to the water. At the Head Landing, an easy dock be located just north of the slipway, with a special gangway leading to it, he suggested.

Mr. Cornwall said the first step for a future project at the Head Landing would be to approach selectmen and see if they would be willing to sign a land management agreement with Fish & Game, as a "Kayak Ramp" subcommittee has been established with Landing Commission members and other interested parties. Mr. Newcomer suggested that the state ramp at the harbor also be considered, but Mr. Leonard indicated the strong current and rough water might not be suitable for a kayak ramp facility there; the Adamsville Road landing was mentioned as another alternative.

Mr. Underwood, an architect familiar with ADA standards, presented a sketch plan for a handicapped accessible path to the water at the Hix Bridge Landing, proposed by the local rowing club that uses that landing. The club is proposing a special program that would take people with disabilities out in their boats with members; the plan would require a firm parking area, and a removable walkway to the water just south of the concrete slipway, but no dock. Mr. Leonard felt the plan could work, but noted that a resident parking permit is required at that location. Mr. Underwood said he would return with a more detailed plan for the site.

5. Sidewalks: This agenda item was passed over.

6. Search for new members: This agenda item was passed over.

7. State Road Post Office: Mr. Gallagher briefly noted his recent letter to the U.S. Postal Service brought a response indicating that the service is not interested in demanding any accessibility improvements from the building owner.

8. Other Business: This agenda item was passed over.

9. Next Meeting: The next scheduled meeting time and date was set for 3:45 p.m. on Monday, May 28.

10. Adjournment: A motion to adjourn the meeting came at 5 p.m. from Mr. Cornwall; seconded by Mr. Newcomer, the motion passed by unanimous vote.