

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 24, 2022, MEETING OF THE WESTPORT COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Members present: Brian Gallagher, chairman, Anders Newcomer, vice chairman, Martin Costa, Kim LeGendre, Rick Grundy. Consultant to the commission, Jeff Bull was also present.

The meeting was opened at 3:45 p.m.

Remote Participation: Due to Covid 19 everyone who participated did so remotely.

The minutes of the October 25, 2021 meeting were approved.

Ross Moran of the Westport Land Conservation Trust spoke about the handicapped accessible trail that will be created at Westport Woods on Adamsville Road. The route for the trail has been selected. The project was put out for bid and a local contractor was selected. Some tree work has to be done. The contractor is ready to do the excavation work. The trail will be 5 feet wide. The trail area will be dug to a depth of 6 inches. Stone base material will be put down with a binder applied. The path will be ready by April. Consideration is being given to additional items to be added such as signage, audio interpretations, ropes/handrails for the visually impaired. Martin Costa has visited other parks and walks and has offered input. BayCoast Bank has funded the project.

Sarah Necamen of the state's Disabled Persons Protection Commission spoke to us about the services her organization provides. Particularly, if it is suspected abuse of persons with disabilities there are phone numbers to call. A significant percentage of the abuse is caused by caregivers. Her commission deals with complaints concerning disabled persons who are age 18-59. Other state agencies investigate abuse to persons aged birth to 17 and aged 60 and older. The telephone number for her organization is 1-800-426-9009. Birth to 17 is 1 800-792-5200. Sixty and above is 1-800-922-2275. Anyone can call 24 hours a day.

Beach Avenue Update: A Notice of Intent has been filed with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding the GeoGrids. We are awaiting a response. Jim Hartnet was Given a copy of it.

Jeff Bull provided information about a proposed plan to use the granite The Army Corps of Engineers removes from under the bridge on Hixbridge Road and use the granite to build an island in the river, north of the bridge. The island would be perhaps 15 feet by 18 feet and accessed using a walkway from town land located in the area. The Army Corps project, as described in a recent article in the Shorelines newspaper calls for the blocks and other debris created when prior bridges were destroyed or replaced, to be deposited in naturally occurring soars in the river. Disabled residents could use the walkway and island to fish and access watercraft.

North Beach; We have purchased the mobility mats. The Beach Committee has promised to place a wheelchair accessible picnic table at the site. The Highway Department has placed two handicapped parking signs near the beach and will soon fill in some gullies and level the parking area; being mindful of environmental issues concerning beach grass.

Access to the lower level of Town Hall: Requests have been presented to the previous and current town administrator to repair the access area. We will follow up with Mr. Hartnet.

The WCOD website: Rick Grundy reported that Nadine in the town planning office has been helpful and that we now have full access to our portion of the town website so that it can be updated. Updates will include information such as Ms. Nechamen's name, organization and telephone numbers. The minutes of our meetings, past and present will be posted. The names and contact information for prior speakers at our meetings will be posted etc.

Credits from the IRS for businesses that make accessibility changes: Rick mentioned that Section 44 of the IRS code offers tax incentives and credits to small companies that are willing to make changes to their places of business, so they are more accommodating to individuals with disabilities.

Our next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2022. The location is to be determined and will be included in the next agenda when it is posted in late February.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Prepared January 27, 2022