

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 27, 2023 MEETING OF THE WESTPORT COMMISSION
ON DISABILITY

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING; Brian Gallagher, chairman, Anders Newcomer, vice chairman, Ray Phoenix, Martin Costa, Rick Grundy.

THE MEETING OPENED AT 3:45 p.m.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION: Ray Phoenix participated by telephone.

THE MINUTES OF OUR LAST MEETING; They were approved without change.

REQUEST BY PLANNING BOARD FOR INPUT ON HOUSING IN TOWN; Michael Burris attended our meeting to provide information and to request input from WCOD members. There is an effort underway to update the town's housing plan. A survey has been circulated seeking information and ideas as well as community preferences. The plan will include affordable housing and market rate housing. Since there are a number of people in town who have a disability, perhaps ten per cent of the population, we would like to see a corresponding per cent of the new units offer such things as ramps, extra wide doors, lower counters and cabinets as well as grab bars. Martin Costa has a friend who is intimately involved in developing accessible housing and he will provide the contact information to Mr. Burris.

Mr. Burris also spoke of a potential plan to make Main Road more pedestrian friendly. Representatives from the various boards and commissions in town will come together, provide ideas and hopefully develop a plan that might include such things as a sidewalk that will run from Hix Bridge Road to the Village Way shopping area, lower speed limit on that section of the road etc.

TOWN BEACHES AND WORK THAT WILL BE DONE: Installation of GeoGrids and mobility mats. There is some urgency relative to the grids due to the upcoming start of the piping plover season. Martin Costa has had regular conversations with Chris Gonsalves of the Highway Department, Chris Capone of the Conservation Commission and Sean Leach of the Beach Committee about the matter. We hope that the grids will be installed very soon.

Martin has also had conversations with the same people as well as Ross Moran of the Land Conservation Trust concerning the mobility mats. The area where the mats are usually placed sustained some storm damage and requires some maintenance work.

North Beach AKA Baby Beach has also sustained storm related damage. We hope that the area will soon be addressed by the Highway Department so that the mobility mats can be placed. The Beach Committee has promised the placement of a wheelchair accessible picnic table at that beach.

ADA TRANSITION PLAN ZOOM MEETING; The meeting is upcoming and Martin has offered to participate. It is hoped that the Westport ADA Transition team will meet sometime soon.

Martin also participated in the quarterly "Tea" sponsored by the MOD which was offered as a way to learn about disability related issues. The meeting covered general areas of interest but nothing new was learned.

RECENT ARTICLE ABOUT BACKPACKS TO CARRY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS; Companies make backpacks that able bodied individuals can use to carry developmentally disabled individuals who weigh 60-80 pounds on their backs so that those people can travel to sites that might not be wheelchair accessible. Some of the companies are We Carry Kevan, Piggyback Rider and The Freeloader.

NATIONAL PARKS RENT WHEELCHAIRS; Some of the chairs have inflatable tires for use at beaches and other sandy areas.

Westport has such a chair which is located in the lower level of the Town Hall. We will find out the details of how our residents can make arrangements to use the chair.

THOUGHTS/CONCERNS: The WCOD members are trying to find more ways to let people know what we are doing for the disabled residents of Westport.

NEXT MEETING; 4/24/23 AT 3:45 AT THE TOWN HALL ANNEX.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.

