

## MINUTES OF THE MARCH 25, 2024, MEETING OF THE WESTPORT COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Members attending: Brian Gallagher, chairman, Martin Costa, Rick Grundy, Sue Sherman.

Remote participation: Sue Sherman

The minutes of our last meeting, 10/23/2023 were approved.

The WCOD was joined by Dana Stewart, the Westport Recreation Director, who spoke about upgrades to the town playgrounds.

The playground next to the Town Hall Annex will be the first to be upgraded. The changes will begin shortly and will be ADA compliant. It will be accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities. There will be a rubberized surface instead of woodchips. There will be a ramp into the playground. There will be many interactive items that disabled children will be able to enjoy. A ride that spins will can be used by those in wheelchairs. There will be a 4-seat seesaw, a turtle, a whale etc. Soon there will be a climbing wall.

Bicentennial Park will be upgraded next with and will have activities for children who are a little older including taller slides with safety features.

Other recreational activities include Kick Off To Summer at Westport Woods. It will include activities for people with special needs. There will be face painting, special acts, arts and crafts, artists displaying their art, sensory displays and an ASL interpreter for people who have a hearing impairment.

Kick Off to Summer will be put on with the cooperation of the Land Conservation Trust.

There is also an investigation into the possibility of building pickle ball courts at the recreational fields located on Route 177.

Funding for the playground renovations has come from the CPC and anonymous donor. The WCOD has also donated \$5,000.00 to the Recreation Department.

The Food Pantry in town provides distributions of bags of food provides distributions of bags of food at the Grange building on Main Road. The distributions are free and available all residents in the town and in surrounding towns. Pick up is Monday at 9:30 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Fresh produce donated by local farmers plus other food items, canned and bagged are provided. Soon the Food Pantry hopes to start growing produce at the Town Farm.

Wheelchair warranty bill. This bill has been approved by a MA Senate committee, with the help of Senator Rodrigues, and is moving its way through the Legislature.

Accessibility and programs offered by the MOD. The MOD continues to offer grants to communities to improve accessibility. Our own ADA Transition Team has recently received a grant to begin the process of updating our plan.

Beaches and the effects of recent storms. The storms created a lot of damage to East Beach and North Beach AKA Baby Beach. The Highway Department has worked very hard to clear the stone and sand and make the areas accessible. The Mobility Mats will soon be installed at Beach Avenue and North Beach.

Request by Town Planner for participants in the climate change study committee. None of our commission members have been able to find the time to volunteer due to other commitments.

Final Thoughts. MassHealth cuts which will eliminate or cut aid to Personal Care Attendants (PCA). Personal care includes help with food preparation, eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, shopping, laundry etc. The proposal is to cut millions of dollars from the budget to support PCAs which will result in many PCAs losing their jobs or having their work hours reduced. There was a rally on 3/30/24 at the State House in support of PCAs and in opposition to the proposed cuts in the budget. Our Commission will send a letter in support of the PCAs and the services they perform for disabled residents and request that the budget item that supports the funding of the PCA program not be reduced.

Next meeting: April 22, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned.