

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 MEETING OF THE WESTPORT COMMISSION ON DISABILITY.

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Brian Gallagher, chairman, Anders Newcomer, vice chairman, Martin Costa, Kim Legendre, Rick Grundy, Sue Sherman.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETINGS: The minutes of the prior meetings were approved

BEACH STATUS:

Beach Avenue: Ross Moran of the Land Conservation Trust has advised us that the mobility mats have been taken up due to the end of the season. Due to recent storm activity a washout gully has appeared at the edge of the GeoGrids. The Highway Department will fill in that gully. The GeoGrids continue to remain stable. This season there was a step up from the parking area to the beach which was difficult for a disabled person, particularly someone in a wheelchair, to negotiate. It was proposed that next year the mobility mats be extended from the beach to the parking area.

North Beach AKA Baby Beach: Martin reported that the mobility mats are now up. The washed out area has been filled in with stones. Martin will follow up with Sean Leach about the wheelchair accessible picnic table.

East Beach: The handicapped parking signs have not yet been placed in the two parking spots.

Gooseberry Island: The state has done a nice job of making this area accessible.

ADA TRANSITION TEAM: Martín has met with Jim Hartnett, the town ADA Transition Team coordinator as well as a representative of SRPEDD to discuss what, if any, changes/updates are needed to the existing plan. It will cost approximately \$15,000 to retain a consultant to correctly update the plan. Our team members are waiting to hear from Lizbeth at SPREDD about obtaining that grant. Areas to be addressed include updating the town playgrounds, sidewalks in town and Hixbridge Landing. The Plan needs to be updated before grant applications can be submitted. The Hixbridge Landing site plan will require \$50,000 for a consultant to prepare a plan before the plan can be submitted to the state for approval. It is currently estimated that the upgrade at the site will cost \$300,000. Some work on the sidewalks at Westport Point has been done by the Recreation Department but more needs to be done. The plan to place sidewalks on Main Road will require funding.

Once the ADA Plan is updated an application can be submitted to purchase and install more GeoGrids on Beach Avenue.

BILLS #H.1180 S.573 PREVENTING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES. Letters have been sent on WCOD letterheads to Representative Schmid and Senator Rodrigues in support of these bills.

WHITE CANE AWARENESS DAY OCTOBER 13, 2023. Celebration at the MA Statehouse Great Hall to help raise awareness of the law in MA which requires drivers to identify and yield to pedestrians using a white cane or a guide dog at street crossings.

THOUGHTS/CONCERNS: Martin circulated a video which shows a disabled person using a Kayak transition device to transfer from his wheelchair to a kayak and then using a wheeled cart to roll the kayak to the water. Apparently, REI and LL Bean have similar devices for sale. There are also devices where you can paddle a kayak or canoe with just one arm if someone has lost the use of an arm. All of these devices require that the disabled person get assistance to transfer to the watercraft or pull the cart to the water. A good source for information is mass.gov/adaptive-kayaking.

Disabled residents in town can make an appointment with the Fire Department to have a representative come to your home to discuss what you can do to improve fire safety at home. A disabled resident can and should request the Fire Department put a lock box on the door to the house for use by first responders when there is an emergency at the house. A key to the door used to enter the house would be placed in the lock box. Only the first responders, be they from the fire department or the police department, would have the ability to open the lock box. The Town Dispatcher also has a form that

disabled residents should complete and return to the dispatcher. The form identifies the disabled resident together with the nature of the disability.

There was also a discussion about the use of a window sticker, similar to the Tot Finder stickers, that would show the location of the bedroom of a disabled resident. Westport has 3,000 residents who identify as having a disability. Kim Legendre will inquire as to whether the Fire Department has a list of disabled residents. She will also ask if the department has stickers that can be placed on the windows of a disabled resident.

The WCOD website supports the ability of visually impaired users to access and review the site with the assistance of screen readers. It is best when posting pictures to the site to include a description of what the picture shows. That will enhance the experience for a visually impaired visitor to the site.

NEXT MEETING IS OCTOBER, 23, 2023 AT THE TOWN HALL ANNEX.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.