

**Westport Commission on People with Disabilities
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday December 21, 2017 - Town Hall - Rm. 201**

(Please note: Actionable items are now copied and highlighted at end of minutes for easy access)

Attendance: Jim Ross-Chairman, Stacie Curran, Tom Holleman, LuAnn Giunta & Evan Levinson.

Absent Diane Johnson & Marina Derman.

Present from Human Services - Elaine Daignault & Michelle Bottone

First Selectman Jim Marpe

Attendee's – Doug & Derek Rifkin, Tom Tarrant

8:40am - called to order

Review of Minutes from November –

- continue voter registry discussion/accessibility awareness
- Continue work with police police registry.
- Partners in Policymaking - Michelle Bottone has been accepted, it is a yearlong course CONGRATULATIONS!
- Comments on Win Everts presentation - regionalization of our efforts, starting broader conversations with neighboring towns. Watch for regional Summit in 2018.
- Parks & Rec, Jan Fava presented three initiatives: Compo South Beach improvements, Baron's South, and Old Mill.

Motion to approve November Minutes:

- Jim - 1st /Evan 2nd - All in favor

First Selectman Jim Marpe attends

- CPD congratulated him on his re-elected
- Selectman Marpe addressed the CPD
- Acknowledged our communities efforts to embrace its challenges & opportunities, voiced his appreciation for the CPD's efforts to improve Town's accessibility and inclusiveness. Encourages CPD to continue to engage with other town bodies, using the recent presentation and support of the Compo Beach South project as an example of how town bodies can work together to create positive change
- Mr. Marpe shared that he recently had a visit from Fidelco Guide Dogs
- Also mentioned that residents are imperative to assist town officials to determine areas for improvement citing resident Tom Tarrant's successful efforts to improve the crosswalk on the intersection of Myrtle and the Post Road which is now voice activated;
- Sidewalks were discussion: the importance of minimal lip, and contrast of color.

Public Comment:

- **Tom Tarrant**, a town resident, worked with Al Dimera(wspt. police) to identify various locations in need of improved, safe crosswalks and pedestrian areas. Tom reports that there is to be an upcoming meeting, with State Reps on this issue.
- **Action:** CPD will be informed of such meetings and participate when possible.
 - Public Works Director Steve Edwards is retiring in January. The current Town Engineer Peter Ratkiewich will be promoted to Public Works Director and will be the contact for structural concerns of the CPD going forward.
- The Town is in process of RFP to engage in a corridor study from Post Rd/East Main St to Riverside & RR station – a topic of discussion will be to make this area more pedestrian friendly.
 - **Challenge:** working with the state on state roadways where their mission is to move traffic thru and Westport wants to be sure to make our roads and commerce areas accessible and attractive for residents and visitors.
 - In Gathering Data phase, and working with dept. of transportation.
- Jim R: After some time to process Jen Fava's (Park & Rec) presentation, the CPD would like to acknowledge the Parks and Rec staff and Commission on their thoughtful planning process which will preserve the natural beauty of the beach while also enabling improved access for people with a variety of disabilities
 - **Action:** Jim R. made a motion for the CPD to create a letter expressing our full support of the plan they have put forth for improvements to South Compo beach.
 - Jim- 1st, Evan - 2nd - All in favor.
 - **Elaine D.** will get from Jen F. their schedule of upcoming meetings/boards this plan has to get thru and provide it to us so we can get out and show continued support.

DHS Staff Report, Elaine Daignault:

Transportation update:

- DHS is working with Marty Fox & Patsy Cimarosa, Westport Transit Directors, to bring back a "shopping bus" loop for people living outside of the ¾ mile Coastal Link Corridors including locations such as Hales Court and Canal Park.
- This effort/initial research is meant to determine how the Town can more effectively provide accessible and convenient transportation for residents to do basic errands around town including the pharmacy, grocery, and train station. If the service were possible during "off" hours of the commuter shuttles, it would be available to elderly & disabled residents or anyone else who is living or working on the fixed route.

- **Challenge:** There are new State mandates that will require state review and approvals to add or make changes to any subsidized routes.
 - **Question:** What about transportation to/from the YMCA?
 - The YMCA is not currently being considered as a destination because they have their own buses and adding them to the loop would increase travel time significantly. Could CPD contact the YMCA to ask how they use their buses outside of the afterschool program?
 - **Action:** DHS to do a targeted mailed survey to specific area residents to determine interest in such a route. The proposed loop would go to Canal Park, Westport Library, Saugatuck, Hales Court, Trader Joes/CVS center, and Stop and Shop and take into consideration input from the survey on times/locations/days.
- **CT budget** finally passed, but there are still many unfunded and marginally funded programs for people with disabilities. Jim R. noted that the CHIPS program requires continued advocacy to ensure health coverage to children and families with incomes too high to qualify for Medicaid, but cannot afford private coverage.
 - **ACTION:** CPD to better utilize Facebook & Town webpages as a tool of engagement to promote and encourage input and advocacy by all residents. CPD could also encourage more regional efforts in Fairfield County, which is not as active in the disability community as counties up north. Presently the CPD Facebook page re-posts from other pages. Jim encourages CPD members to “write-in” new posts to personalize the pages to our community and inform people about state and federal program updates

Volunteer Registry

- Elaine D reports that we are still working on the logistics for the registry so we are sure to consider all aspects including how the police will utilize the information shared and that privacy issues are addressed thoroughly
 - Wspt Police is in talks to move its dispatch center to former GE headquarters in Fairfield that will offer advanced facilities, systems & cost savings to the Town.
 - **ACTION:** Schedule another meeting with Police Dept. to come up with an acceptable timeline for implementation. The sense of the group is to create something and allow it to evolve and improve overtime. It was stressed that the volunteer registry for people with disabilities will be an option or CHOICE for residents who feel it would be a helpful safety measure for their family.

Committee Updates and Priorities

- **Recreation and Social Activities (LuAnn Giunta)**

WCSA Enhancement Project LuAnn G. update on Sr. Center Enhancement Meeting that she attended. They are making thoughtful progress on accessibility for the “new” center - the plan is to replace the heavy front doors, repair a heave in the front walkway, and improve the parking areas. Through a gift-giving campaign through donations, they have already purchased Hearing Assistance Equipment (Hearing Loop), and are utilizing a gift-giving booklet and website to raise \$\$ to purchase other things they would like to add to the Center. Exercise rooms and art rooms are doubling in size. New Restrooms (all ADA compliant) will have showers - necessary since this is a warming center for first responders.

- **Employment and Life Transition (Stacie Curran)**

Bitty & Beaus Business Model to employ more people with disabilities update - Stacie - the Subcommittee has dubbed themselves as “CAPE” as in “Cape-able” (*working on refining the acronym...Community-Able-Providing- Employment*)

- The woman who started B & B concept won CNN person of the year. The Westport sub-committee is an enthusiastic group from different backgrounds and experiences.
- There is an emphasis through CPD and the CAPE Committee that the project has to be sustainable and beyond the passion of a few.
- Current focus is to find a service or create a product that addresses an unmet need in our community that brings value and commercial viability. The business should help to create more inclusion and encourage employability for people of all abilities.
- The committee is seeking input from community members on what Westport may need or be missing currently. In addition, they will be reaching out to successful business models to inquire about the success and challenges in starting a new business and effectively working with people with disabilities in an employment setting. Jim suggests/Elaine D. suggests, around the Holidays, reach out to dear friends in the Community - share what the Commission is doing, and ask for ideas.

- **Education and Personal Development (Evan Levinson)**

Fairfield University TOPS program - “Fairfield Univ. Pilots new program” which mixes grad students with college-aged adults on the autism spectrum - TOPS - Transition Opportunity for Post-Secondary Success. (See article)

- **The Ruderman Inclusion Summit** is another interesting resource that may be of interest. See link for info.
- **STAR** - Evan has been in discussion with Kate Baskoff, and will discuss her coming to be one of our guest speakers, finding mutually agreeable date.

Other Speakers for future meeting will include:

CLASP, STAR, Kennedy Center, maybe DMA, Rotary’s

Happy Holidays

Meeting adjourned - 10:22am

Respectfully submitted,
Stacie Curran

Actionable items:

Action: Jim R.- motion that we create a letter expressing our full support of the plan Parks & Rec. put forth for improvements to south compo beach.

Elaine D. will get from Jen F. their schedule of upcoming meetings to us.

NEXT MEETING FOR P&Z COMMISSION TO REVIEW COMPO PROJECT is tentatively scheduled for FEBRUARY 15th at 7pm.

Jim R. - Wants to write-in/write-on to make our Facebook pg. stronger tool for advocacy.

Voluntary registry - In January, will meet again with Police Dept. and see if we can get something simple out and start it

Action Item: LuAnn will spearhead research and opportunities to begin an "Are You OK" program via volunteers