



Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging

The Case for More Benches in Downtown Waltham Presented to the Waltham Disability Services Commission February 3, 2023

We appreciate the interest of the Waltham Disabilities Services Commission in our request to bring back benches to bus stops in downtown Waltham. This brief report summarizes the research we have done on the need for benches and how the City might proceed to bring them back.

How the bench issue was raised:

Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging (Walthamconnections.org) first heard about the need for benches in listening sessions we conducted in the spring of 2022 to prepare for the Waltham Healthy Aging Summit in May. Older adults in the sessions described the difficulties they had having to stand to wait for buses going to and from shopping (Attachment 1). They also reported that benches that were there in the past had been removed.

A discussion group at the Summit led to the formation of a group of Waltham older adults interested in working on the bench issue. The group also connected with a Brandeis student disability group. In October, the older adults and the student group both wrote to Waltham Department of Public Works (DPW) Director Michael Chiasson, with a cc to Mayor McCarthy. (Attachments 2&3). The Mayor directed us to make the case for benches to the Disabilities Services Commission.

How bad is the problem?

A member of the Connections group drove up and down the main commercial sections of Main and Moody Streets and documented the dearth of benches (Attachment 4). Of 29 bus stops in the area surveyed, only 7 (24%) have benches. Waltham had more benches at bus stops in the recent past. A 2014 RFB from the City specified the intent that "Bus stops (on Main and Moody) are to have benches. Thirty-two benches shall be provided by the contractor to the City and installed by the contractor as indicated in the attached

drawing.”¹ In discussions with the Commission and others, we have heard that the benches were removed because people experiencing homelessness were sleeping on them.

To better understand the importance of having a place to sit while waiting for public transport, we conducted a literature review of local, national and global sources. (Attachment 5). The review confirmed that seating is important, especially to older adults and others with mobility limitations. It also found that other locales have experienced problems with misuse of benches, but many had found ways other than removing benches to deal with the issue.

How can Waltham bring them back?

The simplest and cheapest solution is to reinstall the benches that were removed. In our discussions with the Commission, we have learned that the DPW has them in storage, although we have not learned how many there are. If new benches need to be purchased to fill in all downtown bus stops, the old benches appear to be Plainwell aluminum model from Landscape Forms, costing \$2,259 per bench. The alternative model with a rail in the middle (which would discourage sleeping) is \$2,461.²

If there are significant costs to acquire and install benches at all bus stops, costs can be covered through sponsorship, as has been done in the recent past (Attachment 6). The Waltham Connections bench group would be happy to help find sponsors and raise funds. We believe that many local businesses would sponsor benches. Our initiative is supported by the Chamber of Commerce (Attachment 7).

Finally, we recognize that there may be problems with misuse of benches by people experiencing homelessness. We hope that the City can find alternate ways to address this problem. It seems inappropriate to have benchless bus stops at the expense of people who really need a place to sit.

Attachments

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¹https://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf6861/f/pages/sidewalks_and_lighting_improvements_main_and_moody_st_rfb_final_1.pdf_friday_march_14.pdf

² (<https://pricebook.landscapeforms.com/open.aspx?pb=91>)

Attachment 1: Findings from Listening Sessions with Waltham Older Adults



The need for benches on Main and Moody Streets

Material from listening sessions with seniors
Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging – April, 2022

In the seven listening sessions we conducted with 87 Waltham seniors in May 2022, a desire for more benches on the main commercial blocks of Main and Moody Streets came up repeatedly, particularly among residents living downtown in subsidized housing. A place to sit while shopping and/or waiting for the bus is very important for seniors with mobility limitations. Seniors remember when there were more benches in the recent past, but many were removed.

Here are excerpts from the listening session at the Housing Authority's high rise on Pine Street near downtown. The question posed was "How could Waltham do more to support healthy aging?"

- "I have told them about the benches and bricks missing on the sidewalks...they didn't do anything."
- "They need to return the benches at the bus stops. I don't have a car, so I walk to Waltham Commons to catch the bus to Hannaford's. When I come out, I am in pain but there are no benches at the bus stop. They moved them two years ago. There was a bus stop at the Pickle, but they moved it."
- "Benches. The bus stop at Pickle has been there for 45 years and it was perfect for the elderly and they depended on it."

After the listening sessions we held a second meeting of seniors who indicated interest in improving outdoor spaces. The discussion moved beyond the need for benches into how to get them.

"I can't walk Moody St. without any benches"

"Is there a plan from City Hall? Seniors should be involved with deciding where those benches should go."

"Let's study successful communities."

"If people feel it would be too expensive, money could be raised. Or sponsored by a business. Needs to be tasteful."

Attachment 2: Letter from Waltham Older Adults to Mike Chaisson



Mr. Michael Chiasson
Consolidated Public Works Department
City of Waltham

October 4, 2022

Dear Mr. Chiasson,

We are Waltham older adults working with Waltham Connections for Health Aging. The Waltham Healthy Aging Summit that Connections held in May focused on issues generated by Waltham seniors in a series of listening sessions. One desire heard in several sessions was that Waltham could use more benches on the main streets near bus stops. People said that some benches have recently been removed. We would love to help bring them back and be part of a discussion about what's needed.

Being able to use Moody and Main Street eateries, businesses, and offices is part of what makes a downtown location good for older adults. However, many folks, not just elders, are unable to stand for a long period of time or cannot stand altogether while waiting at the bus stop or while shopping or walking along Moody and Main Streets.

Here is what some older adults said about benches in the Connections listening sessions:

- 48 Pine Street resident: We need to return the benches at the bus stops. I don't have a car, so I walk to Waltham commons to catch the bus to Hannaford's. When I come out I am in pain but there are no benches at the bus stop. They moved them two years ago.
- Another Pine Street resident: How could Waltham do better? Benches. The bus stop at Pickle has been there for 45 years and it is perfect for the elderly and they depended on it. But they took it off.
- From another listening session: My husband and I can't walk Moody St. without any benches.
- From another listening session: They removed benches because homeless people were sleeping on them, but they should put them back.

We are ready to work with you on bringing back the benches. We have some ideas about how to do this at low cost to the city so that it will have maximum benefit to both residents and visitors alike. This will also help to make Waltham more of a destination city.

Finally, we know about a letter you may soon be receiving expressing similar concerns from the Brandeis Disabled Students' Network. We know you have also heard from Lisa

Lorgeree from the Waltham Downtown Partnership. We hope we can collaborate on our messages and communications.

We would greatly appreciate your help and guidance as to next steps in discussing and addressing our concerns. You can reply to Wilma Ronco, 781-862-2205 or wilma.ronco@gmail.com.

Thank you,

Ivy Grosett
Kathy Kuhn
Gail & Jeff Kurland
Walter & Betsy Leutz
Wilma Ronco
Ann Ross

CC: Mayor Jeannette McCarthy

Attachment 3: Letter from Brandeis Disabled Students' Network

October 10, 2022

Dear Mr. Chiasson and Mayor McCarthy,

"There are small walls about two feet high next to the funeral home and the fire station. I'm sure many people don't notice them, but they are essential to me. They are part of the map I have made in my head of places to rest on Moody street, because I can't walk far without having to sit down. When I walk Moody Street, to and from the train station, I count them off in my head. 'Just get to the funeral home and then you can rest. Just get to the bench by the liquor store. Then to the fire station. Lean on the walls of the businesses on the main part of Moody Street. Sit on the bench by Cronin's landing.' It's a humiliating map, one in which I get stares from passers by as I slowly ease myself down to sit on filthy barriers and lean against walls. But what else can I do? I have to get to the train station, I have to get home, and there are almost no benches on Moody Street" This is a story from a disabled graduate student who attends Brandeis. They live and work in Waltham and have started to call Waltham home; but Waltham does not feel welcoming to them.

We all want to feel like we have a place we belong, and having a city that you can call home is a big part of that. The city of Waltham makes us feel like we are at home and part of the community in many ways: by keeping the roads clean and repaired, maintaining public areas, and providing us with clean water and sewage services. Many of us want to be proud of where we live and find a community and home here, and the city can make that happen by being accessible.

Moody Street stretches 1.1 miles from start to finish. On the Southbound portion of the street there are only two city benches. These benches are .5 mile apart and neither of them are in the main section of Moody street containing most of the shops and restaurants. The last .3 of a mile does not have any bench. The Northbound side is a bit better, with three city benches, but the first half mile of the street has no benches.

It is estimated that one in four Americans are disabled, with many of those Americans having disabilities that can affect their ability to walk long distances. That number is growing as the COVID-19 pandemic continues and leaves more and more people with long COVID. CDC statistics suggest that 1 in 13 Americans now have symptoms of long COVID, which can include shortness of breath, which can make walking long distances difficult. Many elderly people have mobility issues as a result of aging. Having a place to sit and rest can be essential to maintain many peoples' health and wellness.

Adding more benches would open up the public to so many more Waltham citizens, who can then enjoy the space that Moody Street provides like everyone else. Accessibility helps everyone and adding these benches would be no exception. It is likely as more people are able to move freely through the space, they would make use of the space more, bringing more traffic to the stores and restaurants in the area. Furthermore, benches are natural

gathering places, they help create community by offering for people to sit down and talk to each other. These benches would be at the side of the sidewalk to allow people to easily walk by them or roll by on wheelchairs.

Adding more benches to Moody Street would be extremely beneficial to the disabled population of Waltham and the larger Waltham community. So we ask you, please add more benches to Moody Street.

Thank you,

Brandeis Disabled Students' Network
Heller School Disability Working Group

Attachment 4: Survey of Benches on Commercial Sections of Main and Moody



Waltham Connections
for Healthy Aging

Benches and bus stops in downtown Waltham
Data on Main and Moody Streets – By nearest cross streets

Main Street going west starting at Lyman (cross streets nearest stops)	Is there a bench?
Liberty	Y
Common	N
Exchange by bank (not a bus stop)	(Y)
Grant	N
Fiske	N
Prospect	N
South	N
Prospect Hill	N
Lunda	N
Summary of Main going west: Of 8 bus stops, one has a bench. There is one more bench not at a stop.	
Main street east starting at Lunda (cross streets nearest stops)	
Everett	N
Prospect Hill (by little Mall)	N
South St	N
Wellington	N
Francis	N
Harvard (by Hannaford)	N
Daniels (across from Library)	Y
Parking lot entry before Brothers	N
Town common (not a bus stop)	(Y)
In front of City Hall (not a bus stop)	(Y)
Appleton	Y
Heard	Y
Summary of Main going east: Of 10 bus stops, 3 have benches. There are several benches on the Common where there are no stops.	

Moody Street going south starting at Main (cross streets nearest stops)	
Near Brothers	N
South of In a Pickle (not a bus stop)	(Y)
Walnut	N
Maple	N
Ash	Y
Orange	N
Summary of Moody going south: Of 5 bus stops, one has a bench. There is one bench where there is no stop.	
Moody Street going north from Orange (cross streets nearest stops)	
Orange	N
Robbins	N
High	Y
Cushing	N
Pine	Y
Railroad crossing	Y
Summary of Moody going north: Of 6 bus stops, 2 have benches.	
<u>Overall summary</u> : Of 29 bus stops, 7 (24%) have benches. There are 3 more places where there are benches but not at bus stops.	

Attachment 5: Review of Literature on Benches at Bus Stops



Literature review on the case for benches

From Calah McQuarters, Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging

As Waltham considers whether and where to install benches on the main commercial sections of Main and Moody Streets, it is useful to consider benchmarks and existing literature on the advantages and obstacles of public seating. This brief summary of available studies and reports highlights both.

Who needs benches?

It is estimated that over 17% of the US population has some difficulty physically functioning with regard to walking.³ When looking within Waltham, nearly 15% of the population is 65 and older and nearly 6% of the population identifies as disabled and under 65 years.⁴ While this data likely does not represent the total population of possible bench users, it does illustrate a substantial portion of the population that are more likely to rely on public seating regularly.

Where should benches be placed?

There are recommendations from global, national, and local organizations and cities on where benches should be located to best serve a city or town's population.

The World Health Organization published a guide on "age friendly cities" stressing the importance of outdoor seating options near areas seniors live, as well as near transport stops and other public spaces. Recommendations on ensuring appropriate seating that is spaced at regular intervals were also made. WHO highlights this is helpful not just for seniors, but also for caregivers of individuals at any age.⁵

The National Association of City Transportation Officials recommends benches be placed in areas with high onboarding and offboarding, where wait times are particularly long, and

³ [FastStats - Disabilities or Limitations \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/fastats/factsheets/disabilities/limitations.htm)

⁴ [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Waltham city, Massachusetts](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/waltham-city-massachusetts)

⁵ [untitled \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/age-friendly-cities-a-guide)

where there is a large demographic of seniors or young children. At minimum they recommend “leaning rails” that allow users to rest without fully sitting.⁶

The Transit Center assembled surveys conducted around the world on the impact of bus stop amenities, including seating, on usage and discovered many positive outcomes. One particular study noted that bus stops with seating, shelter, etc. result in decreased usage of paratransit methods and increased ridership, having a positive impact on city transportation budgets.⁷

Lastly, the City of Boston updated their program to make the city more age friendly through benches in 2020. Key efforts of the program include ensuring the type of bench supports those who use them; including having an armrest on the ends and in the center of the bench. Additionally, the city is prioritizing locations such as libraries, senior centers, and Main Street Districts close to public transit.⁸

In 2014, the purchasing department of the City of Waltham held a bid to make improvements on Main and Moody St. The bid specifications listed placement of 32 benches, one at each bus stop. Also included in the appendix were recommendations on measurements, materials, and type of bench. This can be used as a source for recommendations on where replacements should be placed.⁹

Summary

We have heard from multiple sources that many benches were removed in Waltham, including Main St and Moody St, with the intention of discouraging those experiencing homelessness to sleep on them. This has been reported in other municipalities as well. However, others have also recognized that removing benches does not solve the issue of homelessness. Instead, it creates an additional difficulty for those who use benches to function on a daily basis. This has prompted our work to reinstate benches, so that those who need them may continue to engage with communal areas in the city of Waltham.

In summary, while there is no mandate for benches to be placed in public spaces, there is substantial literature that stresses the importance of the existence of benches for a city to be equitable and accessible.

⁶ Seating | National Association of City Transportation Officials (nacto.org)

⁷ [Sorry To Superb.pdf \(transitcenter.org\)](#)

8 Age-friendly Benches | Boston.gov

[9 The City of Waltham. Invites Interested Parties To propose the best offer and or bid For the service or product herewith described: - PDF Free Download \(docplayer.net\)](#)

Attachment 6: 2017 Bench Donation Agreement



City of Waltham

Jeannette A. McCarthy
Mayor

CITY OF WALTHAM
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

2017 APR 20 A 11: 27

RECORDED

April 20, 2017

TO: The City Council
RE: Connors Bench Request and Gift

Dear Councillors:

I respectfully request approval of a bench request from Attorney Michael R. Connors. The donation is in the amount of \$1,500.00.

Enclosed please find a letter from Attorney Connors, as well as information from the Planning Department. Once approved and the final cost is obtained, I will be sending a funding request in.

A member of the Planning Department will be available to answer any questions you may have regarding this request.

Sincerely,

Jeannette A. McCarthy
JAM/ccb
Enclosure

cc: Catherine Cagle
Attorney Michael Connors

CONNORS & CONNORS LLP
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
6 LEXINGTON STREET, THIRD FLOOR
WALTHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02452-4416
TEL: 781-894-6000 • FAX: 781-894-6848



MICHAEL R. CONNORS, ESQ.

ALSO ADMITTED IN
NEW HAMPSHIRE

April 7, 2017
Hand Delivered

Catherine Cagle, Director of Planning
Planning Department
119 School Street
Waltham, Massachusetts 02451

Re: Bench – Corner of Main Street & Moody Street on the Common

Dear Ms. Cagle:

Pursuant to my meeting with James LaCrosse of your office, please accept this letter as a request to move forward with the necessary steps to dedicate a bench to my father, Robert E. Connors, Jr. Esq.

If anything else is needed please let me know

Very truly yours,

Michael R. Connors

cc Mayor Jeannette A. McCarthy

RECEIVED
APR 07 2017
MAYOR'S OFFICE

Monaghan, Julie A.

Docu

From: LaCrosse, James
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2017 4:35 PM
To: Monaghan, Julie A.; 'Colette Casey-Brenner'
Subject: Connors Family Bench Quote
Attachments: Q_234661_1 City of Waltham-Phase20.pdf

Good afternoon Mayor,

Please find attached requested quote for bench donations for use in the Connors Family request.

This fee includes the bench, plaque and delivery. The installation costs are separate as you know, in the past they have averaged between \$1,400 - \$1,600.

If you want to include installation as part of the family's donation, I am more than happy to get a quote from M.F. Stankard for his current rate. His last completed bench costs us a total of \$1,570.00

Let me know if I can be of more assistance.

Best,
Jimmy

Jimmy LaCrosse
Principal Planner

City of Waltham Planning Department
Government Center
119 School Street, Suite 25
Waltham, MA 02451
Tel (781) 314-3370 Fax (781) 314-3376
jlacrosse@city.waltham.ma.us

From: Landscape Forms East Coast Sales [mailto:eastcoast@landscapeforms.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 11, 2017 4:20 PM
To: LaCrosse, James <jlacrosse@city.waltham.ma.us>
Cc: Nadene Worth <nadenew@landscapeforms.com>
Subject: City of Waltham-Phase20 -Landscape Forms Q# 234661

Hello,

Thank you for the opportunity to quote our product!

Our quotation is attached and reflects NET pricing. Pricing is valid for 60 days.

**** PLEASE NOTE:** LANDSCAPE FORMS is a manufacturer/supplier only. Plans and specifications are not in our office. The purchaser is responsible for confirming that product, material, options and quantities conform to the project specifications.

- Formal lead-time will be determined at the time of an order.
- Subject to any required approvals.

Freight is FOB Destination and has been quoted as dock-to-dock.

- Shipping and handling charges are shown at the end of the quote.
- Unloading is the consignee's responsibility.
- Lift gate service (not an option for large items) is available for an additional fee.

You may begin the order process by sending your purchase order*:

- Via fax to 269.337.1387
- Via email to eastcoast@landscapeforms.com
- Via ground to Landscape Forms, Inc., 7800 E. Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, Michigan 49048

**If you do not issue purchase orders and wish to sign our document, PLEASE contact us to provide the billing and shipping address information and we will revise our quotation; we cannot accept a signed generic bidders quote.*

Thanks again for your interest in Landscape Forms! Our quality products and superior service have earned us the loyalty and trust of customers worldwide. We appreciate the opportunity to quote our products and services to you.

Good luck with your project!

DESIGN. CULTURE. CRAFT.



Laurie Burkhardt
Sales Support Specialist, East Coast Team
Landscape Forms Inc.
Office: 800.441.1945 ext 1337
Fax: 269.337.1387
eastcoast@landscapeforms.com
www.landscapeforms.com

Quote

Date: 04/11/2017
LF Quote#: 0000234661
PO#:
Project: City of Waltham-Phase20
Bill To: City of Waltham
ATTN: James Lacrosse
119 School St.
Waltham, MA 02451

CORPORATE
7800 E. Michigan Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49048-9543
P: 800.521.2546 F: 269.381.3455
www.landscapeforms.com
Federal I.D.# 38-1897577

Ship To: City of Waltham
ATTN: James Lacrosse - (781) 314-3371
119 School St.
Waltham, MA 02451

Ship Via: Common Carrier
F.O.B.: Destination

Qty	Description	Unit Price	Total Price
-----	-------------	------------	-------------

Tagging Instructions:
Bill of Lading Instructions:

When ordering please confirm:

- Shipping address and contact information (name and ph#)
- Billing address and contact information
- Is your firm or the project tax exempt? If so, exemption certificate must accompany order
- Delivery schedule:

___ Immediately upon completion

___ Target delivery date: ___

1	Plainwell Bench Length: 72" Insert Style: Aluminum Powdercoat Color: Black Standard Features: Freestanding/Surface Mountable	\$ 2,085.00	\$ 2,085.00
1	PL999-06032-BD PLAQ: Plaque for Plainwell bench, 2 X 10, acid etched stainless steel plaque-surface mount	\$ 175.00	\$ 175.00

Item Total	\$ 2,260.00
Shipping & Handling	\$ 325.00
Sub Total	\$ 2,585.00
Estimated Tax	\$ 0.00
Document Total	\$ 2,585.00

Payment Terms: NET 30 DAYS

Landscape Forms, Inc. reserves the right to change payment terms based on payment history as well as information obtained from commercial credit reporting agencies.

- Purchaser is responsible for confirming options, materials, quantities, etc., for completeness and conformity to plans and specifications.

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Ship Date:

Cust #: 0MGCA
SSR: Laurie Burkhardt
Rep: Nadene Worth NE2

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Quote

Date: 04/11/2017
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PO#:
Project: City of Waltham-Phase20

Bill To: City of Waltham
ATTN: James Lacrosse
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ATTN: James Lacrosse - (781) 314-3371
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Waltham, MA 02451

Ship Via: Common Carrier
F.O.B.: Destination

- Changes to or cancellations of orders may incur a penalty charge of 30% or more. Special orders may not be changed or cancelled.
- Studio 431 (custom) orders cannot be cancelled once purchase order is received and approved.
- Studio 431 orders are subject to price increase after engineering/product development is complete and approved by designer, end user and purchaser. Modifications in price will be handled via Change Order.
- No merchandise can be returned without authorization from Landscape Forms. Returns may be subject to a disposition fee of 30-100%.
- Prices based on quantities shown and quantity changes may affect price.
- QUOTED prices are held for 60 days. After receipt of a written ORDER, prices will be held for up to one year from receipt of the order. Changes in quantity or specification may affect pricing.
- Landscape Forms is a supplier only and ships via common carrier. Customer is responsible for offloading and installing unless otherwise indicated above.
- Mounting hardware is only available on a limited number of products. Please consult the installation recommendations or contact our corporate office to confirm. In the event hardware is provided, it MUST be used for proper installation.
- Refer to Care and Maintenance guidelines for more detailed information and instructions.
- All orders ship upon completion of fabrication. A one-week grace period may be available, after which storage fees will apply.
- This Agreement contains the entire understanding between the parties. All prior communications are merged into this Agreement. The terms of this Agreement shall control any conflict between documents.
- This Agreement may be signed by the parties separately and by facsimile, and together they shall be deemed one binding, original Agreement.
- Purchaser shall pay all costs and expenses paid or incurred by Landscape Forms, Inc. in collecting any amounts due for goods purchased by Purchaser, including without limitation, reasonable attorneys' fees and collection costs. Balances on invoices not paid within 30 days of date of invoice, or within an alternate period of time as determined and indicated by Landscape Forms, shall incur interest at a rate of 18% per annum. Cash discounts are not offered.
- Pricing includes selection from our standard color palette. Optional colors and custom color matches are available for an additional fee and will extend lead-time. Please contact our corporate office for more information.
- Tax is estimated. Actual tax will be charged on final invoice and shall be payable by the Purchaser. U.S. customers must provide a valid sales tax exemption or resale certificate to remove liability.
- To the extent purchaser supplies or modifies the standard specifications for any products, Landscape Forms, Inc. expressly disclaims all representations and warranties related to such products or their design whether express or implied except that the products shall be manufactured in accordance with purchaser's specifications.
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Page: 2 of 2

Ship Date:

Cust #: 0MGCA
SSR: Laurie Burkhardt
Rep: Nadene Worth NE2

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Attachment 7: Chamber of Commerce letter of support



Mark Johnson, Chair
Waltham Disabilities Services Commission
610 Main Street
Waltham, MA 02452

Dear Commissioner Johnson,

I am writing to support the proposal from Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging and the Brandeis Disabled Students' Network to install benches at all bus stops on the main commercial areas of Main and Moody Streets. I believe that the benches will not only be beneficial for people with mobility limitations but will also be good for businesses in the area.

Thank you for considering the proposal. I hope the Commission can move this forward with a swift and positive recommendation to the City of Waltham.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Waybright', written over a horizontal line.

Douglas Waybright
President, Waltham Chamber of Commerce