

MAY 21 2014

TOWN CLERK
ACTON

MINUTES
Town of Acton
Commission on Disabilities (COD)
April 15, 2014

Members Present

Steve Baran, Danny Factor, Lisa Franklin,
Madeleine Harvey, Cindy Patton

Associate Members Present

Leslie Johnson, Wen Li

Guests

Bettina Abe, Denison Schweppe, Jim Snyder-Grant

Call to Order 9:30 am

Citizen Concerns None

Announcements

- Owing to Town Meeting preparations, we received no updates from The Board of Selectmen (BOS).
- Lisa reminded us that under Open Meeting Law (OML) rules, if a member of the committee is approached by an outsider concerning COD business, that member should indicate that the topic must be taken up before the full Commission and must notify all members.
- Danny arrived at the meeting at this point.
- Denison (D) Schweppe explained why he felt it was important to correct the minutes of the April 4th special meeting regarding the 475 Great Road variance. He said there was almost no prior paperwork available on the property, and would like to make sure that all records

going forward should accurately reflect all the proceedings and decisions.

Minutes from March 18th Meeting Minutes accepted with corrections.

Minutes from Special April 4th Variance Meeting Minutes accepted with corrections

Town Meeting Review We evaluated the Town Meeting of April 7th and 8th and agreed that:

- The use of cards instead of standing votes did not go well.
- Lisa mentioned that someone from Town Hall was looking into the use of larger, more brightly colored cards for next year.
- Danny reminded us that he had previously expressed concern that the Town saying they would try 3x5 cards was vague. Danny further reminded us that we had only agreed not to ask the Town for further clarification because Deanne assured the COD that the Town had committed to ending standing at Town Meeting.
- Mady pointed out that the Town had only agreed to "try" this new method (cards).
- In 2013 the Moderator experimented with hand-raising, at our request. This was also unsuccessful.
- Mady recommended that we put the past behind us and now look to the future, and what we can do for next year and the years to come.
- Lisa recommended that we write a letter of thanks to the Moderator and Town Clerk for having followed through on the agreement that resulted from last year's meeting with COD representatives.
- It was agreed that Lisa and Cindy will write such a letter and request their feedback on the issue.
- Our own preparation for issuing comments was felt to be insufficient because COD members had not had sufficient opportunity to examine the warrant articles prior to the meeting. The warrant was released later than expected (although thanks to Katie Green of the BOS, we did receive online copies a day or two beforehand)
- Lisa suggested we have some statistics about People with Disabilities prepared to include in our statement for next year.

- We also noted that the wheelchair seating slots were not well marked. Since we don't want anyone to feel restricted to those spots, it was suggested that perhaps we could facilitate the process by notifying the Moderator where to look in the audience for people unable to stand.
- Danny felt that the focus of our concerns should be that it is not burdensome for the Town to eliminate all standing votes.
- Cindy felt that the Moderator knew where she was and was counting her hand-raised vote.
- Danny was pleased that the articles important to the community of people with disabilities that we supported, such as nursing and transportation, had passed.

Open Space Recreation Plan (OSRP) Jim Snyder-Grant presented a draft 3-page spreadsheet for evaluating each recreational and conservation area in Acton. After the final version is included in OSRP, the intention is to keep it available to the public. He requested our input. We suggested making the spreadsheet easier to read. Leslie recommended more outreach and education to let People with Disabilities (PWD) know that we have accessible and conservation areas. Mady agreed and pointed out that the dissemination of this and other PWD information is important; there are many offerings that the PWD community is unaware of.

Bettina and Danny explained that our Town's OSRP expired in 2007 and the old report is incomplete, and lacking required information about the Town Americans with Disabilities (ADA) coordinator. Jim and Bettina copied the missing pieces from the Town of Carlisle ADA Description and Procedures and plan to move forward in asking Acton to officially adopt these pieces as Acton's policies. Lisa asked that the ADA coordinator be required to attend the Massachusetts Office on Disability Community Access Monitor (CAM) course. Danny moved that we advise that it be within the Acton Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and that the Acton COD be notified and allowed to comment on any discrimination complaints that are filed with the coordinator. This passed unanimously. Bettina said that would also be a good time to inform someone about the Commission's existence.

Bettina expects to submit the OSRP to the State by June, and the COD can submit ideas directly to her. Mady was going to check whether Open

Meeting Laws make it possible to make such suggestions directly to her and/or to Danny. Danny, as liaison to DNR, will follow up with Bettina and Jim in regard to our input, and report back to the COD.

COD Website We reviewed our website ideas from the June 2013 retreat and Wen identified which ones had been instituted/completed. Lisa reported that she was told we could have multiple pages on our website. Further ideas include a link that connects directly to COD's agendas and minutes. Danny will come up with a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) portion of the site, with answers. Lisa suggested that we include a section for legislative proposals relevant to disability issues, including phone numbers of our State senator and representatives. Other ideas include links directly to Town transportation options, education, and social and recreational events. Wen will be moving in July, but can assist us with these website updates until then. Lisa indicated that the Town makes occasional corrections to the websites regarding term limits of members. She suggested that individual members should notify IT when they get sworn in again. Danny stated that the Town is capable of making these corrections in a far more timely manner, and the COD should advise them to do so.

Wen had to leave the meeting at this point.

Recruitment of New COD Member(s) We discussed the need to find an associate member to replace Wen Li when she leaves (beginning of July). Danny reminded us that we could also use volunteers to fill in for missing help until then. Leslie will write an ad soliciting new members/volunteers and bring it for approval to COD before submitting it to The Beacon and Action Unlimited. Lisa felt best results are achieved by personally inviting people we know to join our committee. She has already spoken with Dana Snyder-Grant, former chair of the COD. Lisa will also notify the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC) of our need. Leslie mentioned that our meeting time may prohibit some people from joining. With regard to teenagers, Lisa pointed out that they must be 18 or older to become members. Danny and Steve pointed out that there is a good community volunteer program at the high school to get teens to help out. This has been successful in the past.

May Agenda

- Possible executive session (yet to be determined)
- Annual retreat planning
- Inclusion in *The Municipal Quarterly*
- Independent Living (education topic)
- Brochure update
- Recruitment announcement and continuing discussion

Meeting Adjourned

12:30 pm

Documents Distributed (on docushare)

- Spreadsheet of Open Space evaluation (on Land Trust Committee's website)
- Legislative flyers from the Independent Living Education Day at the State House (distributed for informational purposes, but not discussed at the meeting).

Minutes prepared and submitted by
Cindy Patton, Lisa Franklin and Madeleine Harvey