

**Town of Acton
COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES (COD)**

**MEETING MINUTES
December 20, 2016**

Members Present: Madeleine Harvey (Chair), Ann (Nancy) Corcoran, Lisa Franklin

Members Absent: Danny Factor, Cindy Patton (Vice Chair)

Associate Members Present: Joan Burrows, Leslie Johnson

Others Present: Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen [BOS] Liaison), Lea Walton (visitor)

Call to Order 9:30 am

Citizens's concerns None

Announcements

- Lisa noted that Marge Kennedy, Social Policy Chair of the League of Women Voters (LWV) is planning a meeting for caregivers. Joan indicated her interest in becoming involved in this effort.
- Two COD members participated in the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) conference call the previous day. They briefed the group on some of the updates that were presented by MOD staff. These included the following points:
 - CODs that were formed under section 40 8J (which includes Acton) are now automatically eligible/due section 22G Handicapped Parking (HP) violation fees. All HP fees collected are intended to be used for persons with disabilities (PWD) via their city or town CODs.
 - Jeff Dougan, Assistant Director of Community Services for MOD, reminded us that he is available and eager to meet with individual CODs on a range of topics.
 - MOD wants to ensure that cities and towns are meeting their goals with respect to accessible websites. They (MOD) now have training available on new ADOBE programs and will offer technical assistance as needed. All towns have an obligation to be sure that PWD have access to their home page and related websites/links.

- CODs are now permitted to have up to 13 members (up from the previous number of 9). It was further noted that many CODs have difficulty even finding the previous number, but that there is now more flexibility in terms of size.
- Although the issue of accessory apartments was voted down at the special town meeting last October, it remains a topic of concern to various parties, including the COD. Joan and Nancy offered to follow up on this issue with Franny.
- COD wishes to continue exploring the possibility of an answering service that will record messages and numbers and go directly to the chair for a response. Franny is helping the commission to research this issue.

**Board of Selectmen
(BOS) Announcements**

The BOS is following up upon establishment and location of a dog park in Acton. It now seems very likely this will happen.

November minutes

Approved with minor revisions

Monthly Calendar

Determined for 2017

Annual Report

Approved with minor revisions

Meeting to Discuss Philosophy/Process for Going Forward

The COD has had difficulty agreeing on how to proceed with goals and objectives and an overall strategic plan. As a result, it was decided to invite Jeff Dougan of MOD to join our February meeting. Jeff is a good facilitator, has offered these services, and it is hoped that he can help the group find direction and also assist us with the issue of how to plan and accomplish our goals in view of our reduced size owing to the absence of two members and a regular volunteer.

Suicide Prevention

It was noted that several COD members have attended various suicide prevention meetings hosted by the Town of Acton and Boxborough in the past month. In addition, Mady and Joan had a meeting with Dawn Bentley, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services for the Acton-Boxborough (AB) Regional Schools District, so that she could explain to them measures the schools are taking in this regard, and with respect to guidance and support in general, both for students and parents. (As an aside, Franny mentioned that at the Boxborough meeting there was discussion about a grant that has

been received to be used for programs on mental health.) Also mentioned was the “Bridges” program for children and seniors; Joan and Nancy will look into the possibility of implementing this program in our schools. Lisa noted that Danny’s Place in Acton includes young adults age 18-25, and has funding for programs for this group of “older” participants.

Acton COD’s 30th Anniversary

Friday, October 6th from 5-7 pm has been set as the tentative date and time for observing the 30th anniversary of the Acton COD. Various ideas were suggested, and Joan and Nancy will work on details with regard to attendance by previous members, town employees, helpers and others. The event is likely to include awards, a film showing (“Lives Worth Living”), refreshments etc. More details will be worked out in the coming months. It was also agreed and voted upon that Lisa should be honored for her many years of service as chair of the COD.

Mental Health Spring Program

Leslie provided an update on the status of the COD’s May 2017 program on mental health. Two persons with lived experience of mental illness will speak, and she will contact them again in the new year to further coordinate the program. The room and date have already been scheduled, and when Leslie has all the necessary other information, flyers will be produced and we will figure out how best to publicize the event. Leslie will let others on the commission know when she needs assistance with the project.

COD Visibility on Acton Home Web Page

Mady expressed concern that the COD is difficult to find on Acton’s web page. It is not listed with departments under the “Town Directory” and as a result, one must look under “government” and then “boards and committees” in order to find COD. Franny will help us look into ways in which COD could be more prominently featured on the home page.

January Agenda

The commission set a tentative agenda for January.

Updates

- The 33 Nagog variance application extension was approved by the Architectural Access Board (AAB) for one year.

- Teamworks will be having an architect inspecting the property and making recommendations on necessary alterations.
- The Kids on the Block project is in limbo while the local schools deal with suicide prevention problems and other issues; two additional puppets are needed, etc. COD agrees that we should continue work to get this project off the ground, despite several road blocks. Nancy and Joan will continue to work on this project.

Adjournment 12:30 pm

Documents None.

Respectfully submitted by
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey