



## Commission on Disabilities (COD)

Meeting Minutes  
October 15, 2019  
10:00 am  
Acton Town Hall, Room 126

### **Present:**

Full Members: Ann Corcoran (Chair), Joan Burrows, Lisa Franklin, Leslie Johnson, Franny Osman;

Associate Members: Pasha Kokis, Jim Snyder-Grant

Others: Visiting Residents; Town Manager John Mangiaratti; Director of Governmental Affairs Austin Cyganiewicz; Representatives of Friends of Gardner Field Playground Kara Lafferty and Paul Swydan.

### **1. Opening**

Chair Corcoran opened the meeting at 10:10 am.

### **2. Regular Business**

#### A. Shared Concerns (timely issues not on the agenda, formerly “Citizens Concerns”)-

1. Resident with service dog, Nyanna Susan Tobin, advocates for education about service and therapy dogs as well as promoting communication amongst users of these dogs.

2. Ms. Franklin wants to clarify that the Miracle League is not happy with the proposed Dog Park location. Ms. Franklin feels it is part of the COD’s job to support the Miracle League. Chair Corcoran plans to invite a representative from the Dog Park committee to come to November meeting to clarify.

#### B. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes from the COD meeting of 09-17-2019 were reviewed and approved with minor changes by a vote of 5-0. (Motion by Ms., Franklin, COD voted 5-0 in favor of approval, motion passed)

#### C. Announcements –

1. Nov. 6 there will be a group editing of the handbook event in Room 9 of Town Hall.

D. Access Report – none

E. Selectmen Liaison Report – none

F. Dir. of Governmental Affairs report- Mr. Cyganiewicz: Town submitted an application through the Mass. Office of Disability ADA grant program for creating an accessible bathroom on the second floor of Town Hall near Room 204, with a separate entrance.



\$125,000 will cover the bathroom part. There is a plan to move the location of the Select Board desks.

Gardner Field Playground representatives Kara Lafferty and Paul Swydan of the Friends of the Gardner Playground reported on their plans for improvements including a playground with universal design and universal access. They share a paper version of a powerpoint presentation and Mr. Cyganiewicz will scan it and distribute it after the meeting. They have raised \$10,000, hope to raise \$100,000 and to submit a Community Preservation Committee application. Total project cost approximately \$1 million. One of the organizers has a child with disability and had a parent with a substantial disability who lived in a group home in Acton. At Gardner Field, they hope to have an accessible playground and a community space for public events such as Farmer's Market. Right now the playground has pea stone, not easy to navigate, and doesn't have a swing with special supports. Discussion of cost and plumbing/siting challenges of a water-play "splash pad" (\$250,000). If the sewer vote passes, the playground will have access to hooking in. The organizers met with Senator Eldridge. This year legislators secured \$150,000 for the Miracle Field, Mr. Cyganiewicz says. Sen. Eldridge hopes to get an earmark that could help this project. The group hopes to keep raising money even after the \$100,000. Brainstorms from the COD: include tables for sitting (which the Gardner Field people said they had previously heard suggested and which they now do always include in the plan); elements similar to the universally accessible bridge that is at the Acton Arboretum; better snow removal at crosswalk. Positive comments from the group and offers to stay in touch and help publicize as we can. Ms. Franklin shared a related anecdote: Many years ago the Commission bought an adult bucket swing and put it in behind the library. They got a letter from someone who doesn't even live in Acton and she was saying that her 13-year-old daughter had had a stroke at birth and this was the first time in her life she was able to play on playground equipment with her brothers and sisters.

- G. Liaison Report- Town Meeting Improvement Committee- Ms. Corcoran reports on discussion of length of Town Meeting based on three complaints from people related to babysitting. Report to come out in January.
- H. Liaison Report- Commission on Disability Alliance Report- Ms. Franklin reports from the monthly statewide conference call with all COD reps to The Disability Policy Consortium (DPC). Based on education from that phone call, Ms. Franklin is advocating for Sen.Bill 983, House Bill 1487, An Act prohibiting discrimination against adults with disabilities in family and juvenile court proceedings. This is a bill that would require that the nature of a person's disability cannot be used in a custody case or a juvenile case unless it is first determined separately by the judge that it is an issue. Discussion of various bills and use of the COD bulletin board to let people know what relevant bills are being discussed in the legislature. (There would be no opinions stated on the bills, on the bulletin board.)
- I. Liaison Report Report on Commission on Disability Alliance phone call with Disability Policy Consortium. Ms. Franklin notes that there is a new Director of the Mass. Commission on Disability.
- J. Liaison Report- Ms. Franklin: The Housing Authority is still waiting for an agreement from the Town before they can create architectural plans for the housing on Main St. that



was approved at April 2019 Town Meeting. Mr. Cyganiewicz reports forward movement on this front. The Board is convening a committee to review the prospective architects that includes a resident from another development, someone who is an architect, and an interior design person. Ms. Franklin suggested they should have at least one person with a disability and offered to be that person. Ms. Osman made a motion that the Lisa be COD liaison to the Housing Authority Board's architect review committee. Ms. Burrows seconded the motion. The COD voted 5-0 to approve the motion. The motion passed.

### 3. New/Special Business

- A. Discussion of upcoming Picnic at NARA Park. There was some confusion about the wording of the publicity flyers and which staff members were assisting. Lessons learned: use one staff member. Mr. Cyganiewicz can be that person. Take advantage of COD member Ms. Johnson's creativity and gift with language. Hanging flyers was not always easy and was of dubious power in attracting attendees. Personal emails, personal calls and letters, word of mouth, all are useful. Thanks to Joan for a lot of PR and getting the announcement into the Action Unlimited. Noted that even reaching one or two new people is a success. Discussion of method of collecting contacts at an event: free raffle vs. sign-up sheets vs. both. Ballpark 24 attendees expected, including COD members.

B. Discussion of December 2019 Disability "Info Carousel" event. Purpose is to introduce employees in town that support the disability community to the disability community. Health Director Sheryl Ball will provide food. All residents encouraged to come.

When this event was announced at the Council on Aging meeting, many people were excited about coming. Discussion of terms "speeddating" and "conversation carousel" for this activity. The formal letter of invitation to Town employees will say something like, "You have been selected among the Town employees to be the representative of X Dept. at the Information Carousel meeting." Nearly every town department will be included. Residents will sit at tables with employees and when the bell rings, the employee will stand and move to the next table. Residents will stay put.

Discussion of other names for the event. "Speeddating" "Conversation Carousel"

Discussion of whether the transportation dispatcher should be included among the employees at this event. Straw poll with a majority of members feeling the dispatcher should be included.

Discussion of publicity for December event. Mr. Snyder-Grant, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Burrows will be the publicity subcommittee, creating a flyer and putting info out to news, tv, and online.

- B. A motion to adjourn was made and seconded and approved by a vote of 5-0 at approximately 12:15 pm.



Documents distributed at this meeting:

Paper version of a powerpoint was shared by Friends of Gardner Field.

Poster about Gardner Field playground plans was shared by Friends of Gardner Field.