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Minutes
Acton Commission on Disabilities Meeting of August 23, 2013
Town Hall Room 126

Members Present: Deanne Bonnar, Co Chair; Lisa Franklin Chair; Danny Factor, Madeleine Harvey, Acting Secretary
Steve Baran Council on Aging liaison, Katie Green Board of Selectman liaison, Leslie Johnson guest
Members Absent: Cindy Patton

Meeting Called to Order, 10:30 am

Citizen Concerns. Danny followed up on a concern raised by Deanne O'Sullivan regarding handicap access at a local church. We were informed by Tom Hopkins, Executive Director of the Architectural Access Board (AAB) that houses of worship are exempt from these rules by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), but not from the Massachusetts building code. Churches must therefore meet access requirements. However, as nothing new is being built on the site in question, nothing needs to be done at this time.

Introductions. For the benefit of our newest prospective member, Leslie Johnson, we went around and introduced ourselves. This prompted Deanne to remind us that we are all supposed to write a one-paragraph bio of ourselves for inclusion in general COD materials. These bios should be sent to her via email, and/or brought to the next meeting.

Misc. Issues.

- Deanne distributed copies of the most recent *Disability Issues* newsletter.
- We were reminded that there is a mandatory meeting about the open meeting law in September. All committee members must attend on either Sept. 18 or 25.
- Danny said that the School Superintendent, Dr. Mills and J.D. Head, Director of Facilities, have raised issues regarding the lower fields by the

new concession stands; a slope issue. Prior to issuing a variance request, they would like to receive our input. We agreed we need to get Cindy involved. Danny will arrange site visit.

Minutes. Lisa pointed out an error in the minutes of our previous meeting relating to the Olmstead Act date. It should be 1999 rather than 1989. Deanne will make the necessary change. Deanne will also distribute a copy of the revised minutes to all COD members via email, as these were not passed out today. *Minutes approved; Danny made motion, Mady seconded.*

Board of Selectmen Update. Katie Green reported that at present there are no particular issues.

Volunteer Program. We were joined for this segment of the meeting by Sharon Mercurio, Director of the Council on Aging, and Laura DuChamp, Social Services Coordinator. We had a rather lengthy discussion about this, with Lisa outlining the issue. She regularly fields calls from citizens with problems who might be in need of assistance. She then calls around to find potential volunteers to help (for example, shoveling snowy driveways), but this is a bad practice and can be risky for both volunteer and disabled citizen. COD has therefore put a hold on all volunteer activities so that we could examine the situation: how to cover these potential risks , and requested that Sharon and Laura attend the meeting to help us think about these issues. Numerous issues were discussed:

- Sharon pointed out that it is somewhat complicated because of the need for Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks, which are time-consuming, and that waivers often have to be signed etc.
- People fall between the cracks
- Lisa inquired whether there is enough unmet need to get the Board of Selectmen involved, but Lisa said this would probably require additional staff and would get complicated
- How do we determine our success rate in terms of matching people with resources?
- How much should we, the COD committee, be involved?

- How can we utilize high school students more?

We also discussed the fact that the entire process is frequently complicated because many disabled individuals are reluctant to seek formal help, and/or resistant to taking advantage of the services offered. Some find the process too cumbersome in terms of phone calls, paperwork, etc., and go from one source to another to see if there is another way, (Lisa cited a few examples). Some call the Independent Living Center (ILC) Deanne asked how we as a committee can be helpful? Could there be a cadre of volunteers available to help with paper work? Laura said they could explore this, but added that the onus is on the individuals to keep appointments, and do the work at their end, and that often that is where the disconnect occurs. Katie reminded us to direct people to Sharon and Laura. Sharon pointed out that if someone comes forward, there may not be adequate resources available. Steve spoke about determining need before we attempt to start anything. Sharon added that people are often seeking transportation to drive them to and from a medical procedure, for example. Some are eligible to have PCA (Personal Care Assistant) services through Mass Health, but some do not qualify. A more general point was raised about the isolation felt by many disabled people who are in need of help, but may be reluctant to seek it. We agreed that further discussion is required on this matter. Deanne thanked Sharon and Laura for joining us for this initial discussion, but suggested that we need to pull ideas together, and we would like them to come back to our October meeting (10/15) to discuss this further. In the meantime, Lisa will continue to accept inquiries and to maintain her informal list(s) of those seeking assistance. She will, in turn, refer people to Sharon and Laura, as appropriate.

Exchange Hall. This item tabled until the next meeting. We did not have updated information.

Membership. Joy Kahout, our COD alternate member, will step down, and this will allow Steve Baran to become a voting member, and Leslie Johnson to join COD as a full member. Steve already sits on the committee as a representative from another board (Council on Aging), and Leslie has already been approved by the VCC (Volunteer Coordinating Committee), so this should now be a relatively simple process, and both should be able to

join as full members shortly. Joy will send her official letter of resignation to Lisa within the next few days.

Oktoberfest. Deanne, Danny, Steve and Leslie can all staff the COD booth each for a couple of hours during Oktoberfest on Saturday, Oct. 5. (Neither Lisa nor Mady can be there. (Cindy was uncertain.) Times/logistics will be determined at the next meeting. There needs to be a table and canopy set-up, and a high school student might be able to help. Danny and Deanne will coordinate the physical set-up. Leslie inquired what we do at the booth, and we had some discussion about what the purpose is. Primarily, we want to let the public know that we exist, what we do, who they can turn to as a resource. Towards this end, an updated FAQ list would be useful, which Danny will work on. We also might wish to collect names of disabled individuals who wish to be contacted about social events etc. Oktoberfest is set up through Middlesex Bank (contact is Keith Karkane). Materials and brochure copies are needed. Deanne, Danny and Lisa to handle.

Fall Social Event. We have agreed to hold a social event which will not include any COD business, but will be an opportunity to get to know each other and talk about personal events in our lives etc. This will take the form of a potluck early dinner on Sunday, Oct. 20 at 4 pm at Lisa's meeting room at Windsor Green, 68 Windsor Avenue.

Variances. In attendance: Mark Barbadoro (Building Inspector) Steve Steinberg (for Patriots Square office Bldg, 179 Great Road) and Bonny Gossels (for 259 Main Street). We had detailed discussions about variance requests for both of these buildings, having to do with handicapped ramps, parking spaces, and grades in the first case, and entrances, parking spots, and widened van spacing in the second. The 259 Main Street variance was approved after a motion by Danny. The 179 Great Road variance was approved after a motion by Lisa. Specifics:

179 Great Road. It was the unanimous opinion of the COD that the applicant's variance request to allow the two short ramps to remain should be allowed, so long as the applicant: 1) Adds a HP parking spot next to one of the longer ramps on this same (Great Road) side of the building; 2) Installs signage alerting individuals along the Great Road side that there is a fully accessible entrance and parking at the main entrance, which is located on the Northwest side of the building.

529 & 531 Main Street. The COD voted unanimously to advise that the variances requested should be allowed provided that the applicant: 1) Re-stripes the front parking spaces three feet in a northerly direction, creating a van accessible aisle and a lower slope (2-3%) in the areas in which individuals would embark and disembark from their vehicles; 2) Adds window boxes along the wall of the south walkway where the slope exceeds code 3) Adds signage in the front (Main Street) and rear (Post Office Square) parking areas that alert individuals of the location of the HP parking and accessible entrance.

Next Meeting Agenda

- Exchange Hall
- Chronic handicapped parking violations
- Oktoberfest details
- Dividing up duties/reviewing time lines and goals
- Planning October social event
- Discuss how to proceed with volunteer discussion with Sharon and Laura
- One-paragraph bios
- Lower fields site visit. (Deanne O’Sullivan; let’s move to October)

Meeting Adjourned... 12:45 pm

Documents

- Application for Variance for 529 & 531 Main Street, Acton, MA

Additional Note:

We agreed that one or more copies should be made of the charts outlining our goals and timetable, ideally with more suitable stock (vinyl, plastic?) for regular use. We want to be able to post these at some of our meetings, and roll them up for storage without tearing. We agreed that the committee would be able to spend up to \$100 for this purpose.

Notes recorded by Madeleine Harvey