

APR 15 2014

TOWN CLERK
ACTON

MINUTES
Acton Commission on Disabilities
March 18, 2014

Members Present

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

Associate Members Present

Leslie Johnson

Guests

Mark Barbadoro, Deanne Bonnar, Franny Osman

Meeting Called to Order at 9:30 am

Citizen Concerns. No citizen concerns had been received by the Commission, but Mark Barbadoro reported that someone complained to the Acton Building Department that a snow plow was utilizing the Handicapped parking space in the Lower Fields for piling snow. Mark spoke with J.D. Head about the issue.

Minutes of February 18th. Minutes were approved with corrections.

Announcements.

- Mark Barbadoro informed us that 521 Main Street has two new units including accessible bathrooms and access to handicapped parking.
- The Commissions on Disability of Massachusetts sent us a copy of a letter they want to send to the Legislature requesting an increase in

funding of the Alternative Housing Voucher program. COD voted unanimously to add our names to the letter. It was agreed that Leslie would notify them immediately, since the letter was slated to go out on March 20th.

- Franny provided information about voting at Town Meeting and how to get transport to the polls.
- Lisa shared information about Independent Living issues, notifying us of Education Day at the State House.
- Deanne announced that she will be moving in June and will no longer be attending COD meetings, nor otherwise involved with the Committee, but expressed her pleasure at having been part of the process and noted that she will miss us.
- We need to write or email the Committee on Aging (COA) about Town Meeting arrangements for seniors. Steve indicated that he would convey our support to the COA.
- The draft Conservation Department's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) report is now ready for our review and comments. Bettina Abe also provided us with a draft of her proposed descriptions of Acton's ADA grievance procedure for inclusion in that report. We will take this up at our April meeting.
- Danny noted that the Town is committed to updating the OSRP report.
- The issue of the elevator/lift at Exchange Hall is still being reviewed. COD approved of the idea some months ago, but our committee does not have the expertise to determine its efficacy.
- Town Manager Steve Ledoux is now officially Acton's ADA officer, as per papers assigning him this responsibility. COD may have to sign off on this; members should read the paperwork and we will discuss the matter at our April meeting.
- Danny felt that someone should contact the Town Manager directly about incorrect information on the COD website, which we have tried unsuccessfully to have updated. Deanne and Franny disagreed, suggesting that it would be preferable for this issue to go through the Board of Selectmen. Lisa said she would once again talk to Katie Green about the matter.

Students to Assist with DocuShare. As Wen will be leaving this summer, Lisa requested permission to find some high school students to assist with

putting the backlog of items into our docushare working folder. This was approved by the group. Lisa also said she would need help removing the documents from the working folder and transferring them to individual folders that the Commission uses for its own routine work. Cindy offered to assist with this task.

Web Site Discussion. In view of time constraints and the fact that Wen was not able to join us, we tabled this topic for the next meeting.

Brochure Update. Leslie and Steve brought us up-to-date on the work they have been doing on the COD brochure, and showed us a mock-up of the proposed new one. All committee members agreed that their version is a big improvement over the previous one, and addresses more types of disability rather than focusing primarily on physical mobility. There are plans to include photos of Acton citizens with disabilities, both obvious and invisible. Leslie will email us the draft.

Town Meeting Warrant Articles. As Town Meeting Warrant booklets had not yet been mailed out, and committee members had not had time to study the draft report, Lisa suggested that we assign a subcommittee to identify which articles would fall within the scope of the Commission's mission for a formal position and statement at Town Meeting. This idea was rejected, and instead we used a draft of the booklet (which had been electronically provided the day before by the Board of Selectmen), going through the items one by one. With reminders that any member can speak to any article as an individual citizen, we selected the following ones for official comment, and decided upon designated committee members to speak to them as necessary:

- Article 3: Van Enterprise Budget (emphasizing the importance of COA transportation) Article 7: Nursing Enterprise Budget (of special importance to the elderly and disabled)
- Article 10: Transportation Revolving Fund
- Article 11: Transportation Program
- Article 12: Ambulance Enterprise Budget (several members of COD credit Acton's ambulance service for having assisted them in emergencies, and even saved lives)]

- Article 20: Community Preservation Program (including community ADA improvements, Arboretum parking lot and bog walk: C, D, H1, and K)
- Article 21: Acton-Boxborough School District Assessment (including Special Education (SPED) taken out of aides for junior high school budget; COD is disappointed that the SPED money was cut.)
- Article 40: Elderly Tax Relief

In general, we want to emphasize that all of these articles affect inclusion and self-determination for People with Disabilities in the Town of Acton.

Independent Living. This is our educational topic to which we try to dedicate half an hour at each meeting. Owing to time constraints, we were only able to spend 15 minutes on the topic this week. Mady requested that we hear from Leslie, who has a good deal of experience working with disabled persons who are living independently, or trying to, or are in group homes. She spoke about the Club House, a recovery day program for individuals dealing with mental illness, at which she works, and of which there are many others in the area. We discussed the benefits of independent living and the serious disadvantages faced by those who live in isolation, i.e., health issues, lack of transportation, depression etc. Lisa pointed out that “independent living” must be viewed as a philosophy; it is not a strict definition relating to individuals living alone, but rather that the disabled should be in control of their lives, whether on their own or living in a group setting. This conversation will be continued at subsequent meetings.

Agenda for April Meeting. Our topics for April include:

- Recruitment (new COD member to replace Wen Li)
- Web site discussion
- OSRP recreation area chart (with Jim Snyder-Grant)
- ADA coordination procedures (with Bettina Abe)
- Town Meeting review
- Independent Living

Meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm
Documents Distributed (on docushare)

- Letter to Massachusetts Legislature supporting an increase in Alternative Housing Voucher program warrant articles for April's Town Meeting (on Town government website)

Minutes prepared by
Lisa Franklin, Cindy Patton & Madeleine Harvey