

MINUTES
Town of Acton
Commission on Disabilities (COD)
June 21, 2016

Members Present: Madeleine Harvey, Ann Corcoran, Danny Factor, Lisa Franklin

Member Absent: Cindy Patton

Associate Members Present: Joan Burrows, Leslie Johnson

Others Absent: Kevin Antonelli (volunteer), Franny Osman (Board of Selectman liaison)

Visitors: Peter Ashton (Town Moderator), Ann Chang (Acton Area League of Women Voters), Cheryl Snyder (Acton resident), Eva Szkaradek (Town Clerk)

Call to Order: 9:30 am

Citizens' Concerns: None

Board of Selectmen Report: None

Announcements:

- Danny accompanied a local resident to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) to help her arrange to gain control of her personal finances.
- Lisa spoke with the owner of Pedal Power and learned that they are working on having accessible bikes at NARA Park for use on the expanded Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.
- Danny refreshed the group's memory about issues regarding electronic voting at Town Meeting, noting that the Board of Selectmen and ultimately the voters have the final say over what accommodations to have. Danny noted that some Massachusetts towns have implemented electronic voting, and reacquainted COD members with the commission's last communications with the Town on these matters.

Town Meeting Accessibility

We were joined for this conversation by Peter Ashton (new Town Moderator), Eva Szkaradek (Town Clerk) and Ann Chang (Steering Committee Member and Government Chair of the Acton area League of Women Voters). The discussion was a continuation of previous ones around the possibility of electronic voting as opposed to having to stand or raise hands in order for votes to be counted. Peter Ashton stated that there is now a plan for him to present a warrant item at the October 2016 Special Town Meeting (which will be held in the Field House) which would call for changing a town bylaw to implement electronic voting at the annual Spring 2017 Town Meeting. Peter attended a meeting in Wayland that has already implemented electronic voting, and expressed enthusiasm for going forward. Peter also noted, however, that there is a major financial cost associated with this process. He stated that he would try to arrange a demonstration of electronic voting at the October meeting. Danny asked whether the COD could do anything to help, and Peter suggested that he and Danny stay in touch and at the appropriate time the COD could write a letter in support of the proposal to the BOS and the Finance Committee (FINCOM). A mobile microphone was also suggested by Peter, and both the plan for electronic voting and the mobile mike were welcomed by COD members.

Updates

- Acton-Boxborough Schools Access. Danny conferred with Lisa and Cindy, both of whom attended a meeting with the Acton-Boxborough (AB) schools. Access issues at the various schools is complicated by the changing needs of the population and new ideas about teaching. There are a range of modifications to schools that need to be explored.
- The next meeting is in September and several commission members plan to attend. Danny asked that our representatives make clear to the AB schools the COD's concerns about accessibility at the Douglas School and the Administration Building.
- 33 Nagog Park. Danny met Mark Hald (Assistant Town Manger) and Kristen Alexander (IT Department) and was told that the plan is to move the Recreation Department to a building that will be moved to adjacent

There are continuing issues with access at 33 Nagog Park, the temporary home of some Acton town offices. These include a steep slope (11% grade) to the building's entrance, no handicap van parking spaces, and a men's room with no accessible stall. Only two members from the Engineering Department remain in the building, but the Recreation Department is still headquartered there and has many visitors. Danny met with Mark Hald (Assistant Town Manager) and Kristin Alexander (Acton Geographic Information Systems [GIS] Director) and was told that the plan is to move the Recreation Department to a house being moved adjacent to the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA Park) Upper Field parking lot on Quarry Road with a target date

of summer 2017 or possibly later. The house will be made accessible both for the Recreation Department and for those who frequent Miracle Field and the NARA Park Upper Field, and need to use restrooms. The two Engineering Department employees would be moved to the town building on 50 Audubon Drive once the Senior Center is moved out, which is estimated to be the summer of 2018 or possibly later. Danny also discussed with Mark and Kristin the possibility that the town could make some repairs at 33 Nagog Park to mitigate the problems while town employees still resided there, such as creating a unisex rest room. It was decided that the COD would try to reach a consensus on what stance to take on this matter at our July meeting.

- Municipal Properties Building. This building (red house adjacent to Town Hall) was re-visited by Danny and Frank Ramsbottom (Acton Building Commissioner), and they are continuing to review accessibility issues there, such as elevator signage. Danny will bring proposed wording for new signage to the July COD meeting.
- Teamworks (30 Great Road). The alterations for a handicap access ramp have been completed. Frank Ramsbottom will measure the ramp within the next month. There are additional issues regarding the Architectural Access Board (AAB) instructions to Teamworks which will be followed up by Danny.
- Kids on the Block. This project is on hold for various reasons, but two members of the commission (Lisa Franklin and Joan Burrows) have offered to assist in moving it forward.
- Website/docushare. This issue is on hold while the Town develops a new web page and makes changes within its information technology (IT) system, but COD will pursue ways to improve its use of docushare such that all documents are easily accessible to commission members and the public.
- Dunn Pond Picnic in July will be attended by at least one member of the COD, possibly one or two others. Transportation and videotaping options are being considered.

Minutes

Minutes of the May COD meeting as well as a special meeting on COD's self-education topic were approved with minor corrections.

Review of May Self-Education Meeting

The COD agreed that this was a useful meeting in which we explored mental illness (mental health) and had a good discussion.

Review of June Retreat

It was agreed that this year's annual retreat was very useful, and provided a relaxed setting for discussion without the usual time constraints.

Agenda for July

Agenda items for the next meeting were agreed upon:

- Updates
- Municipal properties follow-up
- 33 Nagog Park follow-up discussion
- Mental illness/mental health project
- COD 30th anniversary plans

Information Kits

We agreed that ready-to-go information kits containing brochures and other materials should be readily available to us for events we attend on behalf of the COD.

Public Relations Articles on Variances.

It was agreed that it is appropriate to write articles about town variances in which COD is involved, including photographs, for publication in *The Beacon*. It is important for the public to be aware of these activities and COD's involvement. It was agreed that the individuals representing the establishments involved should be notified ahead of time if they are to be photographed.

Adjournment 12:10 pm.

Docushare: No documents

Respectfully submitted by
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey

