

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

**MEETING MINUTES  
August 15, 2017**

**Members Present:** Madeleine Harvey (Chair), Ann (Nancy) Corcoran, Danny Factor, Lisa Franklin, Leslie Johnson

**Associate Members Present:** Joan Burrows

**Others Present:** Joan Gardner (Board of Selectmen liaison), Five (5) members of the public

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**Call to Order**

9:30 am

**Announcements**

- Mady advised the group that the person she had been working with in Stow has succeeded in having a ramp built for her adult child with disabilities. The work is in progress. It is hoped that this person writes a follow-up letter to *The Beacon* where she initially requested assistance for this project. Mady and Danny gave her multiple references and recommendations, and have remained in touch with her during this process.
- Mady and Danny intend to review the COD Handbook they revised two years ago and make updates as necessary. This will presumably happen sometime in the fall.
- Lisa reported that an accessible pedestrian signal (APS) in West Acton was difficult to hear, but the problem has been resolved. There are no universal APSs at this time, but it is hoped that eventually there will be. Mady mentioned that this issue has been discussed at length among members of the Disability Policy Consortium (DPC) and work continues on the issue.
- Mady announced that the Town has agreed to increase the COD budget by \$600 in 2018 in anticipation of some anticipated additional expenses, and going forward, the COD budget will be increased from \$1,400 to \$2,000/year, reflecting this adjustment.
- Danny has spoken to a strategic planner, Sarah Bursky, about joining us via phone later in the year to introduce herself, in anticipation of her conducting a session for the COD in 2018

## **Citizens' Concerns**

- Tom and Virginia Mooney from 419 Great Road came to discuss issues of access at their condominium. Children who live on the premises have been throwing rocks and leaving debris on the ramp, and often throwing rocks and other materials onto or near cars in the parking lot. It is making it difficult for Tom, in particular, to gain access to and from his unit, as he is dealing with mobility issues. Conversations with the parents and property manager have yielded no results. Danny notes that there is a state code to keep areas repaired and clear of debris, and that this needs to be addressed. Building Commissioner Frank Ramsbottom should also be brought into the loop. It is possible that even the police should become involved if necessary, although preferably this can be avoided. It was agreed that in his capacity as Access Coordinator, Danny would follow up on this matter by conducting a site visit, contacting the property manager, and call the Mooneys in the next day or two to update them on progress. The Mooneys expressed appreciation for the responsiveness they received from the Town, and COD in particular.

## **Board of Selectmen (BOS) Updates**

There were no BOS updates.

## **Approval of July Minutes**

The minutes were approved with minor corrections.

## **Preparing for COD Elections**

The COD will hold elections in September for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. It was also agreed that there should be a Co- Access Coordinator, as this is too large a job for one person. We briefly discussed term limits and identified the individuals we intend to recommend for each position. It is anticipated that we will be able to quickly vote the unopposed slate next month.

## **Associate Member Opening**

The Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC) is publicizing COD's vacancy for a new associate member. The COD has already approached several potential candidates, and two have expressed interest and will submit applications for the position.

## **Volunteers**

It is generally agreed that the COD would benefit by having volunteers, and that the volunteers, in turn, would benefit from working with the commission. This could be an especially valuable experience for high school students, for which they might get community service credit. But Mady pointed out that before soliciting volunteers, we need to have a clear idea of what we want them to do, and what tasks need to be performed. Nancy spoke about the need for these volunteers to have a “key” (figuratively speaking) to the COD/the Town; they need support and access to help us with whatever tasks are decided upon, and someone to oversee their activities. In this context, Mady also expressed concern that there is ambiguity about who in Town Hall is assigned to COD (if anyone) as an administrative assistant. In the past, administrative help was provided by the Building Department, sometimes by the Town Manager’s Office, and more recently, once again by the Building Department. However, there should be a formalized process in place. One of the more pressing issues has to do with COD materials being put onto docushare, but nobody on the commission is familiar with this process, and we do not know where to turn for advice. Danny and Franny Osman (visitor and former BOS liaison) agreed to work together to a) define what jobs volunteers could do and what sort of help they could provide to the COD; and b) to determine who COD’s administrative liaison is within the Town. Danny also suggested that we should have a contact person at the schools. Joan Burrows would like to see some involvement with access site surveys to learn how the law works. Plans are being made for high schoolers using the Kids on the Block puppets. At the next meeting we will discuss a ‘big’ article requiring volunteers, once we have a list of needs and expectations.

### **Strategic Planning**

The COD continued its conversation about inviting a strategic planner (we have agreed to discuss this for 10 minutes at future meetings until such time as we decide whether or not to hire someone in this role). Lisa suggested that we could hire someone, or do this on our own, as there are many issues to be discussed and a list of items we are hoping to get to. She suggested that the previous plan had been dismissed, while it was pointed out that in fact, that plan had simply come to an end, as it was a five-year plan that had expired. Danny suggested that the strategic planner we have in mind, Sarah Bursky, could perhaps come to one of our meetings briefly to let us know the ways in which she could help us. Both he and Franny found her very helpful when she did this for the Green Acton group some months ago. Nancy expressed her feeling that we do not need someone to tell us what to do, and that we have already been through this exercise. Lisa suggested that we could make a list of things not done yet, and address one or two at each meeting. Mady agreed with this recommendation. Danny has concerns that the subject topics are too large to triage into lists, but that we could delegate one or two people to bring Sarah up-to-date and then she could attend a short COD meeting. Nancy thinks that Sarah should perhaps be used in the capacity of a facilitator, but that we have a unique set of goals. There was further discussion, and then Danny requested a straw poll as to whether we should hire a strategic planner.

There were three yes votes, and two no votes. The matter was discussed in further detail, and it turned out that the two members who voted against the idea were mainly concerned about the timing, and would vote in favor of such a session if it were to take place in spring, but not before that, as had been suggested in earlier discussions. A second straw poll vote was then taken regarding the advisability of hiring a strategic planner to conduct a session for the COD in *spring*, and received a unanimous yes vote.

### **September Agenda**

The basic agenda for next month was set. It will include a 20-minute executive session on a citizen's personal issue, and a discussion on housing if we can line up representatives from the Acton Housing Authority and Acton Community Housing Corporation. Danny will contact these individuals and invite them to the meeting.

### **COD 30th Anniversary Celebration**

The COD's 30th anniversary celebration will be held on Wednesday, November 1st from 5-8 pm at the Acton Memorial Library. A sample of the award certificates was shown. Nancy arranged the date, place and time, and with some assistance, designed the certificate. Leslie was asked to insert the disability logo we have used for our brochure, as well as the Acton Town official logo. Joan and Nancy are working together to develop a list of invitees (people who have helped over time), and Lisa will assist with putting together this list. All other members were encouraged to come forward with ideas of other individuals who should be acknowledged and thanked at this event. Nancy's son has offered to scan photos and make slides of pictures. There will be appropriate PR for the event and the Acton cable station will 'advertise' it for us.

### **Procedure for Handling Issues When Chair is Away**

When the chairperson is away, she will designate someone to respond to inquiries, explaining that the chair will handle their request upon her return. Others should not get involved in trying to respond to emails or calls that may be received during her absence. Once a Vice Chair is in place, that person will take on this responsibility.

### **State House Bills**

The COD endorses the State House bills having to do with the Architectural Access code fund and the Alternative Housing Voucher. In conjunction with this endorsement, there was a more general discussion about advocating for and supporting bills and legislation at the local and state levels. It was agreed that if such bills are intended for the improvement of lives for persons with disabilities, the COD may advocate in favor of them, i.e., the commission may write and sign a letter to the appropriate organization.

Danny recommended that the new state laws regarding housing vouchers and health facilities should be read by all COD members.

### **Updates**

- Great Road sidewalk between Main Street and Davis Road: Danny plans to attend the Sept. 13th meeting of the Sidewalk Committee – along with other concerned citizens – and will communicate with the appropriate parties to work towards a solution.
- 248 Great Road (Gould’s Plaza): Danny will continue to follow up with Frank Ramsbottom as to whether the property owner has responded and complied with code regarding elevated handicapped parking signs
- 205 & 209 Great Road (Pine Hills Condominiums): Danny proposes to continue to follow up with the appropriate individuals, and a proposed site visit will be scheduled for the last week of August or the first week in September.
- 30 Great Road (Teamworks): Danny is continuing to follow up with Frank Ramsbottom in arranging a site visit.
- 33 Nagog Park (temporary home of some Acton Town employees): Danny will follow up with Kristin Alexander (Town Geographic Information Systems Coordinator) until all town employees have left the building.
- 77 Great Road (location of Atlantic Sea Grill and other businesses): Danny will continue to follow up with Frank Ramsbottom and the property owner.
- 211 Great Road (Bank of America and other businesses): Danny will continue to work with Frank Ramsbottom on arranging a site visit, as there are no elevated handicapped parking signs at this location.
- Bank of America in Concord: It is proposed that Joan Burrows continue to follow up with the Concord COD.
- Kimball Farm, Westford: Joan and Danny will plan to conduct a site visit this week.
- 556 Mass. Avenue (Moodz Salon): Danny and Frank Ramsbottom propose to follow up with the owner and conduct a site visit regarding whether the salon’s handicapped parking space is in compliance with the law.
- Acton-Boxborough Regional School District: Danny will email J.D. Head (Director of Facilities) to request an update.

### **Adjournment**

12:25 pm

### **Documents distributed**

None

Respectfully Submitted by  
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey