



## **Commission on Disabilities**

Meeting Minutes January 15, 2019

9:30 am

Room 126, Town Hall, 472 Main St. Acton, MA 01720

**Present:** Mady Harvey (Chair), Nancy Corcoran (Today's facilitator), Lisa Franklin, Danny Factor, Leslie Johnson, Franny Osman, Joan Burrows.

### **1. Opening**

Facilitator Nancy Corcoran opened the meeting at 9:30 am.

### **2. Regular Business**

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes from the Commission's December, 2018 meeting were reviewed and approved (with agreed revisions) by a vote of 5-0.
- B. Citizens' Concerns:  
None.

### **3. Town Manager's Report**

Town Manager John Mangiaratti announced that the Town did not receive a Mass. Office on Disability (MOD) grant for accessible walkways and removing barriers to some of our buildings—but we will use Town funds to make improvements as needed. Presently the Town is adding accessibility at some conservation lands, Public Safety building area,. And work is continuing in other locations. It was a good application but there was competition for the grant.

Mr. Mangiaratti said the Town is trying to make the entrance to the Arboretum more accessible—parking lot to kiosk. The COD made mention of an AB high school student working for his senior project on creating accessibility in another area of the arboretum.

### **4. Announcement from Ms. Johnson about adaptive bikes:**

Ms. Johnson gave an update on her work leading the new Greater Acton Adaptive Bike Coalition, including work with Pedal Power, AccessSport America, Friends of Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Councils on Aging.

### **5. Announcement from Ms. Osman about an upcoming Efficiency and Regionalization Grant:**



Mr. Factor made a motion that Ms. Osman be delegated by the COD to coordinate the COD coming up with possible Efficiency and Regionalization grant application ideas and going to the Town via the Town Manager about them. The Commission voted 5-0 to approve the motion. The motion was approved.

**6. Announcements from Ms. Osman about recent transportation work she has been involved with:**

The state Task Force on Performance and Funding of Regional Transit Authorities is developing a draft report.

Microtransit companies that responded to Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Request for Information will soon give presentations about their services and how microtransit can be useful in use cases such as low density suburbs and senior needs. (Microtransit is something like Uber/Lyft for public vehicles.)

**7. Board of Selectmen Update:**

The Board is preparing for Town Meeting. Saturday is the day the Board hears from all the Department Heads.

**8. Old minutes:**

There was a discussion about the difficulty of finding old minutes for the records request that had come to the commission. One member said that Town Manager John Mangiaratti has stated that the background of the request is that the State adopted Open Meeting Law a few years ago and there were a few changes to the law in the last two or three years; and that when John Mangiaratti arrived as Town Manager, he wanted to make sure the that all minutes are in shape.

Ms. Harvey stated to Tara Bicknell in the Clerk's office that the COD is prepared to provide minutes going back to the date when Ms. Harvey joined (March 2013) which she felt was sufficient response to the ongoing records request.

**9. Kelley's Corner Infrastructure:**

The Town issued a written response to the COD in response to questions they had received from members of the COD. Ms. Osman and Mr. Factor both noted the Town (Planning, Town Manager) have been very responsive to questions.

**10. Roll Call vote discussion:**

There was a discussion of whether to regularly have roll call votes and then provide individual COD members' names when including vote results in our minutes.



Mr. Factor made a motion that all our votes be roll call votes. Ms. Franklin seconded the motion, noting that her second was to allow Commission to vote, not necessarily with an opinion.

The Commission voted 1-4 to approve the motion. The motion was denied.

We therefore only have roll call votes if someone makes a motion that we vote roll call on an individual vote and it passes, or when it is required such as to enter into executive session.

#### **11. Individual Citizen Concerns Policy Letter—finalize and give to Town Manager:**

Discussion of whether to wait for an expected citizen to come at 11 am even though we were ready earlier to discuss the letter.

Due to lack of clarity in the agenda (of whether we are talking about policy or this particular letter) it was agreed that the policy wouldn't be discussed today.

Ms. Corcoran made a motion that we discuss the implications of changing our policy around citizens' concerns and our role in responding to them, at our May retreat. Ms. Franklin seconded the motion.

The Commission voted 5-0 to approve the motion. The motion was approved.

Regarding the letter to concerned parties, it was recalled that the plan was that Mr. Factor would enter corrections, give it to Ms. Corcoran, and she would discuss it with Town Manager.

Visitor Terra Friedrichs handed out a document from Assistant Director of the Mass. Office on Disability (MOD) Jeff Dougan related to this topic of how we deal with citizens' concerns they come to us with.

Ms. Corcoran reiterated that we will discuss the policy at the May retreat, which is open to the public.

Handouts and Open Meeting Law plan:

Discussion (again) of the best documentation plan for handouts. Mr. Factor will hand Kim Bricker (our staff member in Buildings Department) the draft letter we discussed, for her to put it on DocuShare.

#### **12. Membership issues:**

There was a discussion about the issue of the majority of COD members being expected (by law) to be a person with a disability (pwd) yet we don't often fulfill that expectation, and we have upcoming openings.



Suggestions heard during the discussion included:

- meeting with the Town Manager and the Volunteer Coordinating Committee (VCC) on the topic;
- the discussion be in a smaller group, not as a large meeting;
- acknowledgment that we don't have people with disabilities (pwd) lined up to join the Commission;
- a plan to get good wording from the state (Jeff Dougan of the Massachusetts Office on Disability) explaining the expectation to people who are asking to join;
- we adopt the state method of staggered terms (3 years for pwd, 2 years otherwise);
- write a letter to the VCC with the state guidelines and informing them that we anticipate two vacancies in May, so there is an urgency to finding people willing to serve on the COD, specifically people with disabilities;
- post the openings in Town Meeting-related materials;
- print a card similar to "Neighbor Brigade AB important telephone numbers" for refrigerators (Ms. Franklin offered to bring a version to the next meeting);
- table at Town Meeting (Town Clerk and Town Moderator have to approve materials being handed out) with call for members and a clipboard for signing up for communications from the COD;
- talk to Council on Aging and Veteran Officer James MacRae about potential members
- Attend "Memory Café" on the second Friday of each month at the Senior Center for outreach

Mr. Factor made a motion that Ms. Corcoran and Ms. Burrows staff a table at Town Meeting and get approval for handouts and that we get signups to staff the table.

The Commission voted 5-0 to approve the motion. The motion was approved.

### **13. Unattached Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU):**

Discussion of whether COD should work to get the unattached ADU issue on Town Meeting warrant.

Comments included:

- A resident who came to the COD a few months ago was looking for a way to care for her mother who had disability issues. While Mr. Factor and Ms. Burrows were assigned to work with her on the issue, the resident has said that while she is supportive, she is unable to meet on the topic;
- two members separately have spoken with Planning staff and/or Housing for All advocacy group to understand the issue;
- campaigns take a lot of work and it is not worth putting in our time and energy if we don't have the resources to do it properly;
- bringing it up at the same time as another housing issue (Main St. property) might make it more likely to fail;



- would want to see a groundswell of support;
- League of Women Voters is planning a March forum on housing alternatives;
- Nancy Pelosi's "Preparation, Practice and Performance" bring success;
- most houses are not accessible so adding units can help;
- need space for elderly relatives or caretakers in lieu of rent;
- don't forget other types of housing needs such as transitional housing;
- suggestion that Mr. Factor and either Ms. Burrows or Ms. Osman will work on this and interface with planning department, decide timing
- flyer with demographics, data;
- don't advertise how to vote but educate the public;
- get data on requests at Town Hall land use counter;
- get data on how many accessory units have been built;
- Planning Board had worried that if brought back too soon it would fail;
- meet with one of the Selectmen;
- groups that would be interested including pwd, elderly, seniors staying in homes and having younger adult in accessory unit;
- suggestion to have a placeholder citizen petition request in by Jan. 28 in case the Planning Board doesn't decide to move the issue and COD wants to;
- meet with Planning Board and tell them our intentions;
- there is an early Feb. Planning Board meeting;
- focus less on economics and more on diversity of culture and age that comes with availability of this type of housing choice;
- note that we already voted to support the issue and Mr. Factor and Ms. Osman have been delegated, in the past, to work on this. Goal is spring 2019 Town Meeting.

Mr. Factor made a motion that we expand his and Ms. Burrows's role as Access Coordinators with regard to unattached ADUs to have goal of a warrant item for spring Town Meeting by the usual methods of working with the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen; and to put in a citizens' petition with ten signatures on the topic by Jan. 28 as a placeholder.

The Commission voted 4-1 to approve the motion. The motion was approved.

#### **14. Brief discussion of email practice:**

Mr. Factor said he was concerned that that the current COD practice of sending email updates—minutes for review, and announcements-- without making them immediately available to the public-- is impermissible under OML and would like to discuss this at a future meeting.

#### **15. Access Coordinators' Report:**

Some parts were crossed out. Mr. Factor said to notify him of any typos. Moodz Salon property is coming off the report as it is now in full compliance. Nagog Mall across from Nagog Pond has reported that they have put in raised post handicapped parking signs.



## **16. Adjournment**

At approximately 12:30 p.m., it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting:**

- Meeting minutes of December 2018
- Document from Assistant Director of the Mass. Office on Disability (MOD) Jeff Dougan related to this topic of how we deal with citizens' concerns they come to us with.