

RECEIVED

NOV 22 2013
TOWN CLERK
ACTON

Minutes

Acton Commission on Disabilities, September 17, 2013

Members Present:

Deanne Bonnar, Danny Factor, Madeleine Harvey, Cindy Patton

Others Present:

Steve Baran (Council on Aging Liaison), Leslie Johnson (Associate Member Candidate)

Members Absent:

Lisa Franklin, Wen Li (Associate Member)

Meeting Called to Order, 10:30 am

Citizen Concerns/Announcements

Katie Green, our Board of Selectman liaison, will no longer be attending regular COD meetings, as she has a new job which conflicts with meeting times. She will keep in contact, but it is incumbent upon us to remain in touch with her. Deanne raised, as an example, the still unresolved issue of Town Meeting accessibility. It was also agreed that in Katie's absence, we as a committee need to be in contact with Janet Adachi to follow up on this matter. Danny was delegated to contact Katie green about follow up.

Variance Report for 111 Davis Road

Guests: Mark Barbadaro, Acton Building Inspector, and Stephen Pappas, Design Director, Stone Edge Design. The issue in question regarded access to the pool walkway and other pool areas at Bellows Farms Condominiums on Davis Road, including an equal access entrance. The COD voted unanimously to advise that the variance should be allowed, but only on the condition that the applicant create a gate to allow individuals with mobility challenges to travel directly from the clubhouse to the pool patio. Said gate--built 1) facing toward the clubhouse and 2) as close to the clubhouse door closest to the existing gate' as possible-- would allow individuals with mobility challenges to directly travel from the pool patio to the clubhouse without leaving the premises. Danny will submit this advisory opinion to the AAB.

We delegated Danny the authority to contact Tom Hopkins, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (AAB) regarding maintenance of older sites to which current regulations may not have applied, and how to lawfully apply building codes now in place that may not have existed at the time certain buildings/facilities were constructed.

Planning of October 20th Social Event

Our pot luck social event will take place from 4-7 pm on Sunday, Oct. 20th at Lisa Franklin's home, 68 Windsor Avenue in Acton. We agreed that we should have an open conversation without a planned format, although Mady suggested that as a starting point, we might discuss books we are reading. The following are the assignments of food to be brought:

Main dishes: Deanne, vegan entrée and Cindy, lasagna

Salads: Mady (green salad) and Leslie (pasta salad or similar)

Beverages: Steve

Before dinner snacks: Lisa

Dessert: Danny

Volunteer Project

We had a lively and productive continuation of our earlier discussions of the volunteer project, and where to go from here. In part, this was in preparation for a repeat visit by Laura DuCharme, Social Services Coordinator, and Sharon Mercurio, Director of the Council on Aging who were originally scheduled to join us again for our October meeting. We agreed this should be postponed until November. October will be Deanne's final meeting, and we will have quite a bit of other business, including another visit from J.D. Head, Director of Facilities.)

There was a discussion about determining what needs to be done next. The thrust of the conversation was that we need to first determine the level and types of need in the Town before we can request a volunteer coordinator. And we need to know if there is a large enough vulnerable population "out there" to warrant a special volunteer group and /or coordinator.

Various members of the committee suggested letters to The Beacon, The Homesteader, Nami (National Alliance on Mental Illness) and possible other publications requesting information on the wants/needs of people with disabilities in our town. Leslie raised the need for information for new members

of the community, pointing out that when she moved to Acton two years ago, she received little or nothing in the way of a welcome packet, nor any information about services for the disabled. The COD committee should reach out to various organizations to help determine need (for example, asking Wen Li about meeting with Asian parents of children on the autism spectrum), etc. In short, we need to do some of our own homework before we can formulate a plan. (This raises the question of how to solicit this sort of information without being invasive.)

Leslie also cited the example of lack of information about transportation options for disabled individuals who cannot drive. Mady suggested that this is something that should be included on the COD website, or at least there should be a link directing people to relevant sites.

We agreed to further discuss this matter when Laura and Sharon join our next meeting, and to also talk about the possibility of preparing mailings/packets to be sent to new Town residents. Other agencies should be involved, such as Social Services, Acton Community Housing, etc.

Oktoberfest Plans

Deanne and Danny said they had discussed the logistics around Oktoberfest, as they had promised to do at the last meeting. We proceeded to a natural segue from the previous discussion, i.e., how to identify persons with disabilities at the Oktoberfest, and learn about their needs and requirements, as opposed to offering our services (volunteer assistance not being among those). Leslie raised the issue of the importance of peer group members in addition to (or in place of) volunteers, and how it would be helpful if the disabled population could identify ways to navigate this process. In this regard, we tried to formulate one or more questions that could be disseminated at Oktoberfest. Danny suggested the question "What do you think makes up a community?" but Cindy suggested that was too broad and seemed as though it would require an essay-length response. Leslie recommended that we ask: "How would you like to see Acton become more inclusive for people with disabilities?" and we agreed that this was a useful and viable question.

We reviewed staffing. The fair runs from 10-3 and we believe parking will be available at the fire house. Coverage is as follows:

Deanne and Danny will - between them - be there throughout the day.

Steve will join from 10:00-11:30

Leslie will join from 11:30-1:00

Cindy will join from 1:00-3:00

Lisa was not present; we are not sure when she will join.

Mady is unavailable that day.

Dividing Up Duties in Light of Three-Year Plan

This topic was postponed to the next meeting, particularly since Lisa was not present, and we felt we could not assign tasks without her participation.

Updates/Announcements

Danny told us that as of today's meeting, currently open variance issues had been concluded, although there may be some old variance issues for future discussion. He also expressed gratitude that AAB had cited our work, and for the cooperation of J.D. Head at a previous meeting.

- Deanne distributed Orientation Books to those who had not received them earlier, quickly walking us through the various sections, and added a few announcements and items for inclusion in the book adding " Person Centered Service".
- Copies of Mady's updated COD membership list were distributed.
- Deanne and Lisa have come up with a list of acronyms commonly used at our COD meetings, and distributed those. The list is not complete, and we are encouraged to add any that we can think of or come across.
- One-paragraph bios should be submitted to Deanne if they have not already been. These will be distributed for our internal use.
- Deanne reminded us of the mandatory Open Meeting Law sessions in September, to be attended by all COD members. All of us – with the exception of our new associate member Leslie – were already signed up.

Agenda for Next Month

- Policy around scheduling meetings
- Dividing up duties
- Variance approach/follow-up/site meetings
- Review of Oktoberfest
- Website
- Parking violations

- Town Meeting access (resolution needed)
- JD Head to join us regarding
 - Lower Fields
 - Douglas School

Meeting Adjourned at 12:45 pm

Documents

- 111 Davis Road variance request
- Person-Centered Planning document

Notes recorded by Madeleine Harvey and Cindy Patton