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TOWN CLERK
ACTON

Minutes
Acton Commission on Disabilities
December 17, 2013

Members Present

Lisa Franklin, Madeleine Harvey,
(Danny Factor, briefly)

Associate Members Present

Leslie Johnson

Guests

Bettina Abe, Deanne Bonnar,
Glenn Berger, Jim Snyder-Grant

Members Absent

Steve Baran
Cindy Patton

Associate Member Absent

Wen Li

Meeting Called to Order at 9:40 am

Citizen Concerns: A citizen (who was unable to be present) called Lisa to inquire about the privileges accorded to a driver with a state handicapped placard, and wished to know if the Acton Police were aware of these regulations. Lisa advised the citizen to call the Massachusetts Office on Disability and informed COD about the request. It was further conveyed that the caller wished our Commission would get more involved with preventing violations of Handicapped Parking (HP) spaces in Acton. Deanne suggested that this would make a good topic for a letter to The Beacon newspaper and Mady also recommended a similar article for The Homesteader.

Minutes of Nov. 17th Meeting: Unanimously accepted with minor language changes.

Announcements: See DocuShare.

Board of Selectmen Report/Announcements: There was no report from the Board of Selectmen liaison. We spoke briefly about the need for a new liaison, since Katie Green, our present representative, is no longer able to attend meetings.

Evaluation of 2013 Goals: We reviewed our 3-year strategic plan to determine whether any items needed to be dropped or added. While noting that we have not done as good a job as we would have wished on focusing on a full range of disabilities (the focus has been primarily on issues of physical mobility), we felt the overall plan still held value as our guide for the future. Looking back over our plan, we were pleased to note that with the exception of holding a community event and codifying our policy of respect within the Commission (which we felt to no longer be an issue), we successfully met all of our objectives, including our goal of growing COD as a group (i.e., new members etc.).

2014 Goals: In this regard, we reviewed a long list of our possible goals for 2014, including our over-arching one, "To increase education and awareness around disability issues." Towards this end, we went over the list of past and potential project ideas, eliminating those that did not directly fit this goal and/or appeared not to be feasible. Among the goals we determined we should hold onto for the coming year:

- Hold a community event
- Create information to assist newcomers to the Town of Acton
- Investigate the possibility of speaking with health care students at Minuteman Tech
- Speak at the Special Needs Parents' Night event
- Assist Town boards and commissions to be more accommodating

- Meet with local ministers' council to discuss access at houses of worship

We did not have sufficient time to complete our review of the list of possible 2014 goals and objectives, so intend to continue the discussion at our January meeting.

Trail Access Survey. Jim Snyder-Grant (Acton Land Stewardship Committee) and Bettina Abe (Friends of the Acton Arboretum) presented their nascent idea of developing guides to the Town's recreational trails. They asked for our input on what features to incorporate and the best way to chart and present these features. They are using the State DCR (Dept. of Conservation and Recreation) accessible trail guides as a starting point, and are using the Massachusetts State and Federal rules that include information about trail access difficulty that would be helpful to individuals with disabilities. A motion was passed that Danny would be our contact person for this project. They will return in January to continue soliciting our ideas and presenting theirs.

Exchange Hall Stage Access: Glenn Berger of Exchange Hall requested our support for his proposed use of a new lift called the "Convertastep" for the stage in the Exchange Hall ballroom. Currently the AAB has prohibited him from public use of the stage owing to the lack of handicapped access, and the applicant said that the Massachusetts Historical Society will not allow him to remove the stage steps in order to install a lift. There is, however, no room for a standard ramp or lift. The Convertastep is portable, can be stored underneath the stage, and works by lifting the user over the steps. We agreed by unanimous vote that the AAB should seriously consider Convertastep as a way to provide access to the stage. We highly approve of this proposed device, and Danny will write a letter to the Architectural Access Board (AAB) saying so. We appreciated Mr. Berger's initiative in coming up with this proposed solution.

Next Meeting and Agenda: Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 21st from 9:30 to 12:30 in Town Hall, Room 126. (We agreed that the extra hour is necessary and valuable.) Topics for the next meeting include:

- Continuation of our conversation about 2014 goals
- Variance application on Exchange Hall, 2 School Street (on DocuShare)
- Continuation of conversation with Jim Snyder-Grant and Bettina Abe about Mass DCR trail guides
- Advertisements describing the Convertastep, if approved
- Possibility of providing lunch for our longer meetings

Meeting Adjourned: We adjourned our meeting at 12:15 owing to snow.

Documents Distributed (on DocuShare):

- Minutes from last meeting for review
- Goals and objectives for 2013 for review
- Goals and objectives for 2014 for discussion
- Photos and descriptions of Convertastep

Minutes Submitted By
Lisa Franklin and Madeleine Harvey