

Town of Acton
Commission on Disabilities (COD)

MINUTES
November 18, 2014

Members Present: Steve Baran, Lisa Franklin, Madeleine Harvey

Members Absent: Danny Factor, Cindy Patton

Associate Members Present: Leslie Johnson, Karen Troy

Guests: Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen Liaison), Randy Wallen

Call to order: 9:37

CITIZENS' CONCERNS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

At special town meeting, Acton Nursing Service (ANS) was overwhelmingly supported and continued, funded out of general funds. Pharmacy drive through window was not passed.

COD postponed announcement on 470 Mass. Ave. variance as Danny was not present.

Board of Selectmen (BOS) REPORT

Franny noted several disability issues re: town meeting. Moderator says, "raise your hand" but he never says, "this is how many hands I can see." Screen very clear when focused on person standing up. But from Franny's seat, she couldn't see clearly. For next year, Franny will recommend a split screen in front of the Moderator showing all six microphones. A further discussion on these is scheduled for the next BOS meeting.

UPDATES

Web site update: Karen talked to Kaitlyn twice about the website. Unless we stay with the town format, we will have to pay for hosting and domain name registration. Kaitlyn has left her position with the town. Karen will start over. Franny recommended talking to Mark Hall. Acton 2020 pays for their own site.

Karen: Tracking tool for our calendar, goals, and projects not started yet.

Franny: Open Meeting Law (OML) – do not reply-all to emails, etc. as it is too close to deliberation. Questions on agenda should go directly to Lisa. Some discussion around what this means in terms of emails or discussions with other members. Franny says we shouldn't be afraid of talking to each other one on one. Lisa commented that anything we might vote on at any point shouldn't be

emailed. Can send an article, for example, that might be of interest to committee members. Lisa said that we try to get as much work done as we can between meetings. So, for example, email only typo changes on minutes. Anything that needs discussion needs to wait for a meeting. Lisa asked if there were any questions regarding email and OML? No, unanimous.

PRIOR MINUTES

We have 3 sets to review.

October 7: Special meeting on objectives. Lisa moved accept without changes. Mady seconded, unanimous approval.

October 21: Mady sent typos to Lisa. Mady suggested attendees should be listed in alphabetical order. Lisa said Mary Beth Coyne was listed first, but had some self advocates who are People With Disabilities (PWD). Lisa thinks they are as important as Mary Beth. Steve moved to approve minutes with the alphabetical order change and Mady's suggested typo changes. Seconded, Lisa. Approved unanimously

October 30: Special meeting to discuss funeral home variance. Lisa asked that we modify the section that reads, "preparing our recommendation for the Architectural Access Board (AAB)" to add, "from a decision statement written by Danny Factor prior to the meeting." Lisa moved to accept with corrections. Mady seconded. Passed unanimously (with Karen's vote as associate to make a quorum; Steve couldn't vote, as he had been unable to attend the special meeting).

AGENDA TEMPLATE, MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES DISCUSSION

Karen and Lisa met to talk about issues with the agenda template. They agreed that the agenda template was to be used as placeholders for discussion items, but that we needn't constrain ourselves by the number of items or suggested times on the template. Karen also said that she and Lisa had agreed that the problem was less with the template, and more with lack of clarity in member roles and responsibilities.

Lisa wants us to set a deadline by which agenda changes need to get to Lisa. Mady said the agenda needs to get to the town by the Thursday before the meeting. Randy said that times on an agenda get us into too much trouble. Randy asked, do we operate under Roberts Rules? If so, can call a question which will stop discussion. Franny said that rather than calling a question, we can move that we stop discussion. Lisa suggested submitting agenda items at the beginning of the month. Franny said that is not fair to members of the committee. Danny wants it to be mandated that the group set the agenda for the next time. As Danny is not here today, tabling that part of the discussion. Lisa asked if

anyone had any objections to the guidelines she sent out? Steve moved that we cut off discussion now and vote. Steve's motion is that we accept the guidelines Lisa sent out and that we accept and respect as individuals and as a group the roles that we as a group have agreed to, including that the chair establishes the agenda, and the vice chair directs the meeting using the agenda. Lisa seconded. Unanimous.

LESLIE'S REPORT ON CONFERENCE

Leslie and Franny attended a conference run by Work Without Limits, sponsored by UMass Medical, Raise the Bar Hire initiative. Franny asked Leslie to report on the conference. Mady suggested that Leslie type it up and send it out. Leslie said she attended a session on self employment. There aren't a lot of options for PWD here. There are a lot of innovative states on this issue, but unfortunately, Massachusetts is not one of them. Leslie mentioned a person with a mobility disability who got a full time job at BCBS, but now needs an important assistive device that he can't afford. He went off disability, but now can't get around. Franny said it was a great conference. Karen Martinez from Department of Labor asked Leslie to send her more information. Leslie said there were speakers from companies on what they do to hire and accommodate PWD. This is the second year for this conference. Franny attended a session for people aged 18-25 on what their challenges were. Randy suggested we scan all the materials from the conference and put them on the web site. Franny suggested that she and Leslie give all their materials to Karen for scanning and adding to the website.

BREAK

TEMPORARY DISABILITY

Leslie spoke about temporary disabilities, and a letter she was proposing sending to the Beacon on the subject.

Lisa questioned whether the term "temporary disability" has any weight. Officially, the term temporary disability doesn't exist. Leslie said we need to decide if there is weight to that term and we need to decide what we as a commission will do if there is internal disagreement here? Lisa asked if this is the population that we need to represent? Lisa believes they are not our population. Temporary disability is an oxymoron. The commission was developed based on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition, which is a permanent condition or chronic condition. A person can be temporarily inconvenienced but are not in danger of losing their rights. Steve said he agreed with Lisa. Mady does not agree, saying we are the Commission on Disabilities, not permanent or temporary or whatever. We should support those with temporary disabilities. Anybody who has a temporary disability raises consciousness about what it is like to have a permanent disability. Karen said we should err on the side on inclusion, not exclusion. Although temporary disabilities don't necessarily affect

people's ability to live where they want, worship, dine, etc., we shouldn't say you are not like me so I don't care about you. Leslie added that people with mental illness can be temporarily disabled based on their condition, and may at times need all the supports. Amputees with prosthetics can be disabled when they are not using their prosthetics, and otherwise not disabled. Temporary disability is a fluid concept and we should respect that. Randy commented that this was a new paradigm for her. Are there any changes in what the commission does based on including or not including temporary disabilities? Lisa said that it is hard enough to work into our schedule what we already do. For example, we say call us for more information, but do we want to accept the responsibility of taking action on such calls?

Mady asked in follow up to Randy's question, who *should* someone call if they need a temporary HP placard, for example? If they call us we can point them in the right direction. Lisa said they should ask their nurses. Leslie said her nurses didn't know. Randy said if she were voting, she'd agree with Lisa. She knows many people who have hip replacements, broken legs, etc. – do we want them calling us?

Lisa moved that Leslie can send the letter to the Beacon, but not under the COD name. Steve questioned whether we were not ready to take a vote. Lisa said that Leslie should mention the ANS as a helpful first step for people who are wondering where to turn. Mady moved that Leslie send the letter as a member of the COD, with a change to emphasize using the ANS as the first step. Lisa seconded. Unanimous. Mady volunteered to help Leslie cut it down to fit the Beacons requirements (maybe an article?)

TRACKING TOOL

Short discussion Karen's project to track our progress on things. Karen has not completed this yet, but will present a template next time.

Council on Aging (COA) UPDATE

COA committee size agreed to – 10 members

Steve called Sharon Mercurio to find out what's going on with Council on Aging's web site. Steve to talk to Karen about COD web site for next time.

The COA would like the town to look into and build a new senior center, where business would be undertaken. This had been tried before, but voted down by Town Meeting because they were not informed in advance about the details. Leslie asked what advantage would a new site offer that the current one wouldn't? Steve said primarily, size. There is no one constituency that really needs a community center.

FEBRUARY EVENT

We need to choose a topic for the February event, to be open to the public. Leslie suggested a resources presentation. Lisa said it could include ANS, COA, others. We would provide refreshments. If room 204 is too small, the safety building auditorium is accessible. This would be an opportunity to get PWD together so they could get to know us and we could get to know them. Danny had suggested showing a disabilities video. Objective is to get PWD together to start to form a community. Randy is concerned about February, with bad weather, ice, etc., and that people tend to hibernate. Lisa said that even if only 4 people come, we've reached 4 people. Karen said we need to increase outreach and visibility. Steve suggested that we do it in conjunction with COA. Karen asked, would that dilute us? Lisa said COA events have "regulars," and they sometimes resent younger PWD. Mady moved that the topic of the community event be to disseminate information and work toward creating a sense of community of PWD. Steve seconded. Vote unanimous.

CALENDAR

Mady moved to accept the basic calendar Lisa has presented. Steve seconded. Unanimous.

DECEMBER AGENDA

Possible agenda items:

Lisa said Danny wants to raise an issue about the new member handbook.

Mady said we never have time to talk about Independent Living (IL), so maybe we need a special meeting twice a year where that is all we talk about. Lisa thinks we just need to commit to it more.

Danny and Lisa have a disagreement on a policy for variance comments.

Possibly a discussion on the web site.

Start planning the details and steps to completing the February event.

Lisa said we need to discuss the status of doing the next agenda (is it flexible or mandatory that we set it in the previous month's meeting?)

We all need to agree if things come up between meetings, we need to be flexible about adding them to the agenda

ADJOURNMENT

Mady moved to adjourn 12:30. Lisa seconded. Unanimous.

Documents on docushare: meeting guidelines, 2015 calendar

Respectfully submitted by Karen Izbicki Troy