

**Minutes
Town of Acton
Commission on Disabilities (COD)
August 18, 2015
9:30 am Town Hall, Room 126**

Members Present: Madeleine Harvey, Cindy Patton, Lisa Franklin, Danny Factor, Nancy Corcoran

Associate Member Present: Leslie Johnson

Guest: Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen liaison), Joan Burrows

Call to order : 9:30 am

Citizens' concerns : An Acton resident called Danny looking for a modified toilet for a family member. She was referred to the Council on Aging (COA) and some other medical supply stores. Someone with a mental illness called Lisa to say that someone in the Emergency Room at Emerson Hospital was rude to her.

Announcements : The Architectural Access Board's (AAB) decision was to deny the variance for Teamworks. On the way back from the site visit, Danny and Frank Ramsbottom talked to Pedal Power about their bicycles blocking the sidewalk. Frank will write them a letter.

At the next meeting of the Minuteman Regional Coordinating Committee (RCC) on transportation they will be discussing taxi and livery service. Franny invited everyone to the meeting.

Board of Selectmen report :

The Senior Center Study Committee has rename itself the Adult Community Center Study Committee. They decided to buy rather than lease. They voted to mainly focus on the Arlington Street site.

Review of June 16th minutes and August 7th special meeting minutes :

Both minutes were accepted with corrections.

Updates:

- **Allen Engineering (handicap ramps):** Danny put Julie Cafta in touch with Mike Kennedy, Head of the Statewide Independent Living Council. Danny will follow up.
- **Douglas School :** Nancy and Danny are delegated to work on the access problems at Douglas School. They think that a site visit is warranted. JD Head agrees and would like the site visit to occur this Thursday (8/20). Anyone who wants to attend should call Danny.

Lower Fields : Danny and Frank were insisting that something be done about access issues at the Lower Field. JD Head is going to apply for a variance.

- **Town Meeting access** : To begin the meeting Eva Szkaradek informed the group that all future Town Meetings would have a CART reporter. There was a discussion about what screens would be used. It was finally decided that there would be two screens, one on each side of the auditorium. Then there was a lengthy discussion about what type of screen would be used. It was decided that two 60" flat screen televisions would be used. The topic turned to the issue of requiring standing to vote when a two thirds vote is needed. Several methods for having residents who cannot stand to vote were discussed including: using sticks, raising hands and electronic voting. It was decided to use electronic voting for residents with standing difficulty. Both CART and electronic voting for residents with standing issues will be used at the November Special Town Meeting. It was stated that this will be used as a trial and there may be problems. The group decided that we should meet again before the November meeting.
- **Debriefing on Statewide COD** : Mady went over the highlights of the meeting. There were several presentations on the new Open Meeting Law rules, handicapped parking fines and emergency preparation for seniors and people with disabilities. The meeting was too short and people didn't have time to give their views or ask questions. Some COD's don't get variances until after the AAB has made a decision and some COD's are not recognized by their towns.
- **Walker property/community center** : The town voted to purchase the Walker property at the Special Town Meeting in July. There was no decision about what to do with this property. Danny wants the COD to come out in support of a community Center, especially because it will help people facing isolation. The COD needs to know what will be the purpose of the center. Joan says it should be an inclusive center, perhaps have the center open in the evenings for teenagers. The center should meet the needs of all the people in Acton. The COD needs to talk about this soon. The next meeting about the center is Friday, August 28 at 9:30 am at the library. Danny says that someone from the COD should go to the meeting.

Interfaith Network event: discuss format, budget for and ordering of food,

ideas for discussion : The COD will meet with the Interfaith Network for lunch on Wednesday, October 14. The COD should order food for representatives. The COD needs to establish a budget for food, who is coming and what we want to talk about. Our agenda should be the COD encouraging them to talk to each other about problems with access that they have and solutions they have found. The COD has a handout that gives ideas for topics for discussion. Mady will revise it. Lisa reminded all that we are not coming to grade them. We will send them the handout for their own information. Franny would like to talk about transportation challenges. Some churches have meetings for developmentally delayed individuals to talk about religion. We want to know where they are meeting needs and how the COD can help. We are a resource for them. Lisa will lead the meeting. The meeting is at 12 pm at Congregational Church in

Acton Center. We need to budget up to \$200 for supplies (especially food). It was determined that all members of the COD are coming to the meeting. Lisa made a motion that we spend no more than \$200 for supplies for the October 14th meeting. 2nd Nancy, unanimous

Officer duties : Mady and Lisa came up with lists about COD officer duties. Lisa is looking forward to having a new chairperson. Lisa and Mady will help with the transition. We need to see some different approaches to meetings. Danny said that members should be taking turns at different officer positions. Danny found out that there are 10 COD's that have co-chairs. It was suggested that we follow by-laws which state that elections should be in June, and new officer need to take charge in July. Maybe we need to amend the by-laws. Lisa thinks it should be co-chairs, but not officially and there should be term limits. Nancy made a motion that we create a slate of officers to be voted on in Sept. and take effect immediately. Lisa 2nd. Danny wanted to know if this means that the people nominated will not discuss this outside of meetings. Franny said that two people can talk about it outside the meeting. The vote was unanimous.

Preparation for elections : Mady was nominated for chairperson. She accepted. Cindy was nominated for vice chair. She accepted. Leslie was nominated for treasurer. She accepted. Cindy was nominated as secretary. She accepted. We need to do the elections in September. Gratitude was expressed to Lisa for her hard work and many years of service.

Solidify ideas (visions and goals) from June retreat : Lisa came up with five goals. Danny said we should look at the history and incorporate what we decided in 2012 into the new objectives and goals. Danny said that all of the five goals need to be rewritten. Mady and Danny will work together to put the objectives into the five goals for 2016 - 2020. October is when we usually do goals and objectives.

Elm Street group home plans/issues : Franny reminded the COD that a 40B low income unit can be built by developers until the percentage of the town reaches 10% low income properties. Until this happens developers can build outside of the town's laws. The owner of 34 Elm Street wants to make a group home and 12 units, some of which will be for low income buyers. Some people in Acton think it is too dense for this neighborhood. People were supportive of the group home, but were not happy with the low income units. There is a Facebook page that has 500 members against the plan. Danny said he is concerned that a lot of them are against the group home. We have tried to stand up for the needs of the people with disabilities by supporting the need for more independent living arrangements. Historic properties should not trump the needs of people with disabilities. Lisa made a motion to approach Molly Loughman from The Beacon about writing objective and educational articles about the

history of group homes. No second. We will not go forward with this. Acton Community Housing Corporation (ACHC) has come up with a compromise proposal to make a smaller group home, 4 beds instead of 8. Leslie said that the lower number of beds is better for the home. A motion was made by Danny that the COD write a letter to the Beacon supporting the group home at 34 Elm St. speaking in general terms about the need for Acton to be an inclusive community for people with mental disabilities. 2nd Cindy, unanimous. Danny and Leslie will write the letter, send it out to all COD members and it will be shared at the next meeting.

COD Handbook update : The handbook is not ready. Hopefully, it will be ready by the next meeting.

Prepare agenda for September :

Remote Access
New member search
Community Center
Elections
Report on Town Meeting
Schools update
Pedal Power
Allen Medical
Duties of the Chair

Finalize Steve Baran memorial ideas (determine our individual contributions) :

Nancy will receive monies from others and she will send in the donation. Checks should be made out to Ann Corcoran and sent to 13 Martin Street, Acton.

Adjournment : 12:25 pm

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Patton (clerk)