

Minutes
Town of Acton
Commission on Disabilities
November 17, 2015
9:30 am, Town Hall, Room 204

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

Associate Members Present: Leslie Johnson, Joan Burrows

Guest: Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen (BOS) liaison) (arrived at 11:45 am)

Call to Order: 9:30 am

Citizens' Concern: None

Announcements:

1. Some members of the commission took the maiden voyage of the CAT (Cross-Acton Transit) bus. Danny was pleased with the service, but was disappointed that there was no wheelchair lift. Lisa spoke to Franny and she said that that model does not come with lifts. Mady sent information about the CAT to her neighbors.
2. Jeff Dougan, from the MA Office on Disabilities (MOD), loved the handbook and wants to design one for the State.
3. A grant of \$18,000 was awarded to Acton Human Services. A committee is meeting regularly to determine how the grant money will be used. The grant money needs to be used by December 2016. The COD has members on the committee.
4. Joan and Lisa are meeting with the staff of The Beacon to give a presentation about language in regard to disabilities. The brochures and poster (recently purchased) will be given out. Mady made a motion to authorize Lisa and Joan to speak to The Beacon about language. Nancy 2nd, Unanimous.
5. Mady said that she has an idea about putting a banner over Main Street to publicize the COD. We will talk about it at the next meeting.
6. Lisa mentioned to Franny that the new business coming to town (Associated Environmental Systems (AES)) will need to have 7% of their employees be people with disabilities. In the negotiation between AES and the town this matter may have already been discussed. This may be an issue that the COD should look into.

Board of Selectmen's (BOS) report: None

Review of October 20th minutes: Nancy made a motion to accept the October 20th minutes with corrections. Mady 2nd, Unanimous.

Updates:

- **Acton-Boxborough Schools (ABS):** Cindy attended a meeting with JD Head, the school's architect and several other people from the town about the 5-year plan for the schools. The major topics discussed were changes to make all of the schools accessible and traffic flow problems. Cindy suggested and Lisa moved that we do site visits for all of the schools and administration building. Danny 2nd, Unanimous. Lisa said that there should be a school transition plan.
- **33 Nagog Park:** Architectural Access Board (AAB) granted 33 Nagog Park a variance for only 1 year. We should make sure that the changes are done before another lease is written. Nancy made a motion that Danny write a letter to Steve Ledoux saying that the changes should be made before the next lease is signed. Lisa 2nd, Unanimous.
- **Town Meeting Accessibility:** The captioning at Town Meeting was great. Danny will not send the complaint e-mail because the captioning was used. Lisa could see captions, but not well. A woman said that there was not enough handicapped parking (HP) for Town Meeting. Lisa said that the town is responsible for the parking. Danny said that we could mention it to the Town Meeting meeting group. Lisa did notice that there was no place in the warrant about accommodations. It should be in every warrant. Danny would like to send a letter about the 4 points – HP parking, accommodations in the warrant, captioning, standing to vote - to *The Beacon*. Danny and Cindy will discuss these issues and how they should be stated in the letter.
- **Teamworks:** Mark Harrington (owner) has not come to Frank Ramsbottom about a variance. The owner said the ramp will be done before winter. We need to decide about a site visit for the whole property.
- **Municipal properties/veteran's affairs building accessibility:** Frank says that there are more accommodations that could be done. Appropriate signage is not there and what is there is not in Braille.
- **Automatic doors in public buildings:** If we want to pursue this matter we should contact Andrea Ristine (Head of Municipal Properties). Danny will talk to Andrea to see if this is in the works. He will keep Kevin informed.
- **Welcome Kit:** Leslie made an Excel table for the Welcome Kit. We got an updated responses from Roche Bros. There are not a lot of responses. The COD members should come up with a list of places that they know are overwhelming helpful to people with disabilities. Each member needs to come up with a place. This information should be sent to Leslie.

Determination of 2016 Objectives: Nancy, Mady and Leslie went to a workshop for the Acton Human Services grant to decrease isolation in the community. Nancy said that the topic of mental illness was discussed. She said that there should be objectives for mental health. At the workshop, the police said that there had been 70 pink slips (involuntary custody of individuals with mental health issues) issued this year. Isolation may be the cause. We need to

support families and individuals who are dealing with mental illness. Cindy said we should pick the goal that will focus on mental illness. Danny said that we already voted not to set a goal for the year. Danny wants to choose objectives that fit projects that we think we can accomplish. Lisa said that objectives need to be achievable in real time, sustainable and measurable. Mady says we need to publicize the COD and the needs of people with disabilities in Acton. We need to improve the website. Nancy said that we should have a power point created to inform residents about Town Meeting accommodations. She also said that we should increase visibility in local papers about: Town Meeting, publicizing the COD and the needs of people with disabilities via advertising, improving the website and our visibility on the Acton Cable. Mady suggested hanging a banner over the road on Main Street. Lisa said that our objectives should mirror the State about transitioning youth to independent living as adults. The COD should coordinate with Acton housing groups and others to advocate for more housing for people with disabilities. We could host an informational meeting about housing for parents of children with disabilities. We need to network with coordinating programs in Acton with appropriate commissions, councils and committees. Leslie suggested that we could invite the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) local chapter to do a presentation on mental illness at the town hall or library. Joan says that we need to start with educating kids, parents are already pretty set in their ways. We can improve the awareness of Acton youth about people with disabilities through the Kids on the Block project. Danny wants the COD to choose housing as an objective. He is very concerned about housing options for people with disabilities. After getting more information from Acton Housing Authority (AHA), Acton Community Housing Committee (ACHC) and stakeholders we should propose an idea to the town asking for more housing for low income people with disabilities. Leslie said the AHA and AHCH have been working on solving the problem for a long time. What can we bring to them? We should be building ties so that people are more aware of what the COD does. Leslie said that there is a lot of information that we need. Danny said we should have only one project next year. When asked about the number of projects that we should do in a year, members responded: Mady one, Nancy two, Leslie two, Lisa two, and Cindy two. Lisa said that if a project comes up next year with something else that we need to focus on then we need to delete a project. We settled on the following list of objectives as possible objectives for 2016:

1. Support individuals and families dealing with mental illness through meeting with stakeholders and supporting an information presentation,
2. Publicize the COD and news of people with disabilities via improving the website, publicizing Town Meeting access on Acton TV, and hanging a banner on Main Street,
3. Transition youths with disabilities to independent living as adults through the Kids on the Block program and networking with stakeholders,
4. Raise the awareness of Acton youth about people with disabilities through the Kids on the Block program,
5. After building ties with stakeholders throughout the year, propose an idea to the Town to create more housing for people with disabilities, especially low income people with disabilities.

Everyone should be prepared to choose two objectives by the next meeting.

Set Agenda for December:

Finalize objectives

Automatic doors

Handbook feedback

Publicity

Updates: KOB, 33 Nagog, Teamworks, ABS, Municipal Properties, Welcome Packet, Town Meeting Access

CAT Bus

Annual Report feedback: Danny made a motion that that our mission statement on the website should be the official mission statement. Mady 2nd, 4 for, 1 against. Corrections and ideas were given to Mady to make changes.

CAT: Franny was not aware that the fixed-route van was not accessible. Someone should write a letter to the Transportation Department about the fixed-route van not having a lift.

Handbook feedback: To be discussed at the next meeting.

Adjourn: 12:31 pm

Respectfully submitted, Cindy Patton (secretary)