

Town of Acton
COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES (COD)

MINUTES
October 18, 2016

Members Present: Madeleine Harvey (Chair), Nancy (Ann) Corcoran, Danny Factor, Lisa Franklin

Associate Members Present: Joan Burrows, Leslie Johnson

Others Present: Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen [BOS] liaison), Cheryl Snyer (visitor), Lea Walton (visitor)

Members Absent: Cindy Patton (Vice Chair and Secretary)

Others Absent: Kevin Antonelli (Volunteer)

Call to Order **9:30 am**

Announcements

- It was noted that *The Beacon* now has a new editor, Lisa Stratton. The previous editor, Bill Fonda, is now Director of Print Production. Ms. Burrows will soon go to *The Beacon* office and introduce herself to Ms. Stratton.
- We were reminded that a special COD meeting was scheduled for later in the week (October 19th) to discuss the continuation of a variance application for 33 Nagog Park, where some town employees are still located.
- Ms. Johnson will bring the COD Resource Guide to next month's meeting so we can decide how and where to distribute it.
- Mr. Factor and Ms. Burrows plan to follow up with Frank Ramsbottom, Acton's Building Commissioner, about mandatory access rules for banks. This is the result of a problem at Bank of America in Concord, which has some disability access issues that have not been resolved.
- Ms. Corcoran was congratulated for her appointment to the Acton 20/20 Committee.

Citizens' Concerns

None.

Board of Selectmen Updates

- Ms. Osman suggested that one COD representative might wish to be involved in the Morrison Farm property issue, as a lot could be created for persons with disabilities (PWD) and the selectmen need our input as to what is needed, i.e., educational and therapeutic programs as opposed to low-income housing, although it is recognized that this too is needed.
- Ms. Osman noted that Insulate, a new company producing innovative insulin products, made a presentation to the BOS and may be locating to Nagog and may also be hiring. This is a good opportunity for PWD to apply for work. She noted that we should check the BOS agenda's time line.
- Patio problems of a resident at Windsor Avenue were discussed; Mr. Ramsbottom has checked the situation; Ms. Osman will follow up.

Approval of Letter to The Beacon

COD approved Ms. Franklin's letter to *The Beacon* about the importance of PWD to vote. The letter included information about early voting in Acton.

Minutes of September Meeting

Minutes of the September 20, 2016 COD meeting were approved with corrections. It was noted that in the absence of our Secretary, several people are now involved in the process of producing minutes.

Updates

- Teamworks: no update
- 33 Nagog Park: no update (special meeting scheduled for following day)
- Municipal properties: no update
- Kimball Farm: access issue will be followed up by Westford's Building Inspector and work will be performed in off-season.
- The Town's engineering department has replied to the person with a Windsor Avenue sidewalk complaint. He has explained that the work will be done when construction is completed.

Public Relations (PR) Articles for Local Papers

Ms. Burrows and Mr. Factor will finalize articles on the Commission's part in access and variances, after meeting with Mr. Ramsbottom. It is important for Acton town residents

to be aware of what assistance is available from the Commission and the Town, and how the process works.

Transportation Funding

It was agreed that reasonable funds should be drawn from the COD's budget for transportation for COD members (and occasionally other PWD) for official COD conferences, meetings, and other events.

School Committee Comments (from meetings attended by COD members)

Mr. Factor reminded us of the importance of Commission members to attend meetings regarding Acton schools. A public presentation by the School Committee will take place on November 9, 2016. Ms. Burrows and Ms. Franklin will attend. The Commission's ongoing concerns regard the lack of accessibility at the Douglas School, and the lower level of the Administration Building, where adult education classes are held. Mr. Factor intends to speak with J.D. Head, Director of Facilities and Transportation, about whether this issue (the Administration Building) will be covered at the meeting.

Mental Illness/Mental Health Program Update

Ms. Johnson (who is spear-heading this program) met with the person who is likely to be the keynote speaker at our mental illness/health program in spring of 2017. A second speaker (who has a family member with mental illness) has also been recommended to us. The commission continues to discuss the title for this program. While most of us were pleased with the original title of "Listening to Mental Illness," we also recognize that the emphasis of the program should be positive and should concentrate on the journey to mental health. On the other hand, we need to try to reach the people we can help the most, which suggests use of the term mental illness. We will consider this further and hope to settle on a title soon. Flyers will be prepared and distributed in advance of the event. Ms. Harvey asked that Ms. Johnson be sure to request whatever assistance she needs in organizing details of the program.

Review of 2016 COD Objectives

One of COD's objectives for this year was to "support individuals and families dealing with mental illness through meeting with stakeholders and supporting an informational presentation. We have been actively engaged in part one of this objective, and part two (a presentation/program) is underway. The second objective was to "raise the awareness of Acton youth about PWD through Kids on the Block" program. While the actual program is not in place for a variety of reasons (including the fact that the company which began this program and produced the puppets has been dissolved), the groundwork has been laid. Several commission members have worked long and hard on this project, and a number of administrators at the Acton schools have agreed to work on the program as we go forward.

Begin Planning 2017 Objectives

A list of over a dozen ideas was offered for 2017 objectives. These included:

- Coordinating activities with other CODs
- Learning about and improving DocuShare as it relates to our commission
- Considering policy on handicap parking fines to benefit PWD and COD (including checking on police enforcement of violations)
- Enhancing our volunteer network
- Revising our bylaws
- Considering public housing improvements for PWD and non-disabled persons
- Working with Acton Housing and state housing committee
- Developing a 5-year strategic plan
- Presenting overview/training on Whole Health Acton Management (WHAM) and Wellness Recovery Access Program (WRAP)
- Share our goals and coordinate with other town groups; we can be of help to each other
- Increase our work with senior citizens
- Start a cable TV show
- Show *Healing Voices* video
- Attending meetings with local land use and economic development groups
- Having a realtor join one of our meetings and recognize the value of handing out COD resource/welcome packets

From this list, the commission will decide on two or maximum three objectives for next year.

Setting November Agenda

Next month's agenda items will include:

- Food assignments for COD's annual social event
- Consideration of a COD phone answering service
- Mental illness/health program update
- Concord Bank of America accessibility (continuation of earlier discussion)
- Determination of where to distribute newcomer resource guides
- Selection of 2017 objectives

Adjournment:

12:36 pm

Respectfully submitted by
Joan Burrows, Interim Secretary and Madeleine Harvey, Chair