

**Town of Acton  
COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES (COD)**

**MEETING MINUTES  
March 21, 2017**

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

**Members Absent:** Cindy Patton (Vice Chair)

**Associate Members Present:** Joan Burrows, Leslie Johnson

**Others Present:** Jeff Dougan (Assistant Director of Community Services, Massachusetts Office on Disabilities [MOD]), Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen [BOS] Liaison), Lea Walton (visitor)

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**Call to Order** 9:30 am

**Citizens' concerns**

- An Acton resident complained about an accessibility issue at her condominium complex, and the COD is following up with appropriate measures.

**Announcements**

- Mady had several conversations with an Acton resident who is blind and who works for the Commission for the Blind, who is putting together a resource guide for the blind and visually impaired in the Town. Franny and others have also provided this person with assistance for producing the guide.
- Danny announced that the League of Women Voters (LWV) were holding a Town Meeting warrant meeting on March 22nd which would include information on the new electronic voting system.
- Lisa reminded us that the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) was holding a meeting on the same day.
- Danny reminded us of all candidates on the ballot for the Board of Selectmen.

## **Board of Selectmen Updates**

None.

## **Minutes of February 2017 meeting approved with minor revisions**

### **Presentation/Discussion with Jeff Dougan**

We had an hour-and-a-half lively discussion and Q&A session with Jeff Dougan of the MOD. Salient points:

- We are clearly a small but unusually energetic and committed group, but need to “ease the burden” on ourselves. We are a volunteer commission and all of us have other lives and should not over-extend ourselves and reach the point of burn-out.
- We need to refer people to MOD, and to other town and state departments, rather taking on all tasks ourselves. We are not responsible for everything. We should freely use our Board of Selectmen and other entities for assistance. (Find/use helpers: volunteers, schools, the Council on Aging etc.)
- Our COD meetings are much too long in Jeff’s opinion. Most other COD commissions have meetings that last one hour or maximum an hour-and-a-half. We should figure out a way to tighten up/pare down our agendas and all meetings should end on time, even if a member is mid-sentence and we have not completed all the items on our agenda.
- We need to set realistic goals. Our commission has too many and they are too large and ambitious for the small group we are, especially with two members absent on a regular basis owing to serious personal issues. We should select fewer projects, perhaps only one, and do it to completion, rather than taking on multiple ones.
- Items need to be closed out after 6 months. If they have not been resolved or completed in that time period (including projects), figure out a way to put an end to them. Perhaps they can be resurrected in the future, but these topics should not remain on the agenda beyond that length of time. (Some of these items can and should be passed on to appropriate departments and are not the COD’s responsibility. Involve the Building Department, for example, with respect to variances. Jeff Dougan’s office is also pleased to assist with accessibility issues and site visits and work-ups.)
- It is important for one or another member to occasionally attend other meetings such as the BOS, but only now and again, and when it works for our schedules. We all have busy lives and should not feel obliged to do more than we can.

Insofar as we have a BOS liaison to the commission, that person can fulfill that role in many cases. Learn to delegate.

- The Town needs to have an updated Transition/Self-Evaluation Plan. At the current time, there are planning and project grant funds available from MOD in conjunction with these plans, but these monies will only be available until June 30, 2017, so applications must be submitted very soon. More information is available at [www.mass.gov/mod/adagrant](http://www.mass.gov/mod/adagrant). In order to be eligible, towns need to be part of the Community Compact of Massachusetts. 80% are.
- We discussed the issue of handicapped parking (HP) fines and that regulations are now in place for all Massachusetts cities and towns to collect and give these funds to their CODs (or be otherwise used for the benefit of people with disabilities). Jeff would like to be kept informed of if and when Acton puts this practice into place, as he is tracking what all the cities and towns in the State are doing in this regard.
- Review our mission statement again, and MOD's statement as well (which was distributed). How do our objectives align with the mission?
- MOD documents were passed out.

### **Mental Illness Program Update**

- Leslie and Mady drove around Acton the previous day distributing flyers for the program. More will be distributed in the coming days/weeks, as we identify appropriate locations.
- Joan has put an announcement on Acton Cable TV and local papers, that will run through April.
- Mady has gotten agreement from Mark Hald, Assistant Town Manager, to publicize the event on the TV screens at Town Meeting in April.
- Speakers from NAMI have been confirmed, and the program is set.
- Mady will order food as the date draws closer and we have responses.
- Brochures are being collected for distribution at the event.

## **Warrant Articles for April Town Meeting**

The commission voted to address (if necessary) the issues of the Acton Arboretum Kiosk, the Transportation Enterprise Fund, accessory apartments, and Defending our Democracy. It was determined which member would speak on each issue.

## **Setting of April Agenda**

The commission agreed to a tentative agenda for the following month, to include follow-up discussion on relevant Town meeting items, re-appointments to COD, further discussion about Jeff Dougan's recommendations regarding shorter meetings, an annual retreat date, and an update on the May mental illness program.

## **May Wellness Fair**

There was discussion about possibly having one or more representatives at the May Wellness Fair in West Acton.

## **Updates**

Owing to a special presentation requiring the COD meeting to run well over schedule, we tabled most of the updates. It was simply mentioned that Danny will recuse himself from the issue of pool renovations at Briarbrook Condominiums on Davis Road, as he owns a condominium unit on that property and therefore will not engage in these deliberations.

**Adjournment**                      1:10 pm

## **Documents Distributed:**

These documents will be available on docushare at a future date.

- Wellness Fair flyer
- COD/NAMI mental illness program flyer
- MOD flyer
- Commonwealth General Laws relating to COD documents (mission statement)

Respectfully Submitted by  
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey