

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

**MEETING MINUTES
July 18, 2017**

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

Associate Members Present: Joan Burrows

Additional Citizens Present: Two citizens

Call to Order

Moment of Silence for Cindy Patton, COD member who died on July 15, 2017

Announcements

- Mady mentioned that she had been working with a woman in Stow who wishes to bring her disabled son home to care for him, but cannot afford the handicap ramp and walkway that would be required to do so. With suggestions from two other COD members, Mady has been in regular touch with this person and offering her ideas and suggestions.
- Mady noted that she had followed up with a citizen who complained last year about a sidewalk/access problem On Windsor Avenue in West Acton. The individual told Mady that the situation has now been resolved.
- Danny explained that a grant proposal to the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) for the Acton sports pavilion was denied because the funds were already exhausted, but that the Town was encouraged by MOD to reapply as soon as possible for funding next year. It was noted that Bettina Abe, Natural Resources Assistant for the Town of Acton, did a wonderful job preparing an extensive and detailed grant proposal.
- Danny proposed that we not use visitors' names in the minutes. Lisa seconded the motion. It was pointed out, on the other hand, that it is important for the public to note that visitors are welcome and regularly attend our meetings, and bring with them personal issues and/or those of the organizations they represent. A vote was taken, and it was voted unanimously to discontinue the practice of identifying visitors in the minutes (although it is fine to indicate that citizens outside of commission members were present).

Board of Selectmen (BOS) Report

- Danny reported on a BOA meeting at which housing was discussed, including two new projects: Main Street and Mass. Avenue. Acton needs to meet the requirements for 10% affordable housing and 40B full accessibility. The building on Mass. Avenue is for senior housing and is accessible; more low income housing is required for those below the age qualifying for “senior” citizens. We agreed to invite Nancy Tavernier (Chair of the Acton Community Housing Corporation) and Bernice Baran (Acton Housing Authority) to join us at one of our COD meetings this fall to discuss these issues.

Citizens’ Concerns

- Danny explained that a citizen/acquaintance had approached him about a concern which is personal in nature. As a result, the commission will hold an executive session at its August meeting to deal with the concern. Lisa noted that this sort of thing comes under the purview of the Town Manager and should be addressed in the Transition Plan. It was further agreed that the Search Committee for a new Town Manager should review the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) responsibilities of the manager, and Nancy noted that these responsibilities should be included in the job description.

Approval of May Minutes

- The May minutes were reviewed and approved.

Review of June Retreat

- The consensus was that the retreat was worthwhile and that the group exercise was good, but a bit too long.

Visit of Strategic Planner

- Having agreed at a previous meeting to hire a consultant to help COD with its strategic planning, Danny identified someone who has worked with Green Acton who is willing to serve in this capacity. Costs and other details were discussed. There are issues in terms of timing and when the commission feels ready for such a session. The group voted unanimously that there would be further 10-minute conversations about this at the next few meetings, and likely if we decide on having this session, we will have it before the end of 2018. In the meantime, the individual who has offered to conduct the session may phone in at one of our meetings.

Kids on the Block (KOB) Puppet Project

- Joan and Nancy brought the COD up-to-date on progress that has been made with the KOB project. Several additional puppets have been purchased (after much difficulty, since the original company is out of business), and enthusiasm has been demonstrated by the Acton-Boxborough (AB) high school to go forth with the program. Between the KOB company shutting its doors and the problems that occurred at the school last fall, and the death of the COD member who had originally initiated a resumption of KOB, the program was de-railed this past year, but it now appears we can move forward.

Use of Volunteers

- Owing to lack of time, this topic was tabled until the next meeting.

Review of Agenda-Setting Process

- At the previous COD meeting, a vote was taken to change the way the agenda is set, i.e., that the chair should be responsible, seeking input from other members a week or so prior to the meeting. Mady (chair) explained that this actually has made the process more complicated and time-consuming, and she and Danny agreed that the original method of determining the main topics at the previous meeting is more democratic and also makes the job easier. A vote was taken to revert to the original policy. Four members voted in favor of doing so; one member (Lisa) voted against. It was further agreed that a 10-minute slot should be included in each agenda for general discussion, time permitting.

Setting August Agenda

- The main topics for the August agenda were agreed upon.
- Agendas for future months were also discussed, with a view toward a strategic planner consultant, visits by representatives from the housing organizations, and need for discussion about housing in advance of the December Town Meeting (i.e., warrant items COD might wish to weigh in on).

Budget Issues

- General budget issues were discussed including cost of KOB puppets, retreat lunch, which expenses come from the 2017 budget and which from the 2018 one. Clarification is needed on this.
- Lisa requested that the COD purchase a copy of the *Lives Worth Living* film about the history of the ADA movement, and that this come out of our budget,

and be loaned to the Acton Library and others who may wish to view it. It was voted unanimously to allow Lisa to research this further and purchase the film, using up to – but not exceeding - \$275 from the COD budget for this purpose.

- Requesting additional funding for 2018. Insofar as we may hire a strategic planner and also have other anticipated expenses, it was unanimously voted that COD should request \$500 additional for its 2018 budget. Mady agreed to contact the appropriate officials in the financial office regarding this issue. Generally COD does not use all of its annual budget, but in anticipation of these expenses, it was agreed that we should have a “placeholder” in the form of additional funds, and these will be returned to the Town if not used.

COD Elections

- Cod elections take place in September, and Mady requested that members give thought to what positions they might be interested in.

Updates/Old Business

- 205 & 209 Pine Hill Condominiums: This is an issue regarding the need for railings and improved access. Danny sent an email to the property owner which went unanswered. Ms. Patricia Kokis, a condominium owner occupant, spoke to us about the challenges of persons with disabilities (PWD) and senior citizens because of the lack of railings and other accommodations. Danny has been given charge by the COD to discuss the matter with the property owner, and to conduct a site visit that Frank Ramsbottom, Building Commissioner, has agreed to attend.
- 30 Great Road (Teamworks): Work remains to be done, especially inside. A new site visit will be arranged. Danny will follow up with Frank Ramsbottom.
- 33 Nagog Park (temporary location of some Town offices): All town employees will be moving out by October 1, 2017. The Recreation Department will be moving to 50 Audubon Drive by October 1st. The new location for the Engineering Department employees has not been determined yet. Danny will follow up with town Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Coordinator Kristin Alexander.
- 77 Great Road (location of Atlantic Sea Grill and other businesses): Handicapped parking (HP) signage has now been added as per the COD’s recommendation, but it is hoped that a curb cut will be added for increased accessibility. Currently, the restaurant, for example, can only be accessed for persons using wheelchairs by the side entrance at the fish market. The long range plan is to build a front entrance ramp. Danny will follow up with Frank Ramsbottom and the property owner.
- 211 Great Road (Bank of America and other businesses): HP signs are needed because they are only noted on the pavement, which is covered during snow etc. Danny is pursuing this with Frank Ramsbottom.

- 248 Great Road (Gould's Plaza) Elevated parking signs are needed in this strip mall. Some have been installed recently; a review must be done to see where others are required.
- Bank of America in Concord (used by Acton citizens): Joan is working with the Concord COD Commission, which continues to try to gain better access with the ATM and bank entrance.
- Great Road sidewalks: With the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail construction and other issues on Great Road/Main Street intersection, the situation is worse than before. There are still no sidewalks at all. Danny witnessed a citizen fall there recently, and it was again noted that many PWD walk down that strip of road using walkers and canes, en route to the pharmacy and supermarket. Danny has been in touch with the Sidewalk Commission about this urgent problem.
- Kimball Farm in Westford: The Acton COD got involved with this issue because of access problems for PWD from our town (in particular, the food/grill area). The COD has received a report that improvements were made, but it cannot be confirmed that the necessary improvements have in fact been made until the COD conducts a site visit. Joan and Danny will try to coordinate this.
- 556 Mass. Avenue (Moodz Salon): Danny and Frank Ramsbottom plan to follow up with the owner and do a site visit.
- 21 Davis Road (Briarbrook Condominium) pool renovations: No work has begun yet. Joan will follow up with Frank Ramsbottom.
- Acton-Boxborough (AB) schools (access): Danny has left a voice mail with J.D. Head, Director of Facilities and Transportation for the AB Regional School District to get an update.

Adjournment

Documents

No documents were distributed at this meeting.

Respectfully submitted by
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey