

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

**MEETING MINUTES  
April 18, 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:** Franny Osman (Board of Selectmen [BOS] Liaison), Lea Walton (visitor)

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**Call to Order** 9:30 am

**Citizens' concerns**

Mady brought to the COD's attention a request from an individual to post a job announcement on the commission's bulletin board. The COD decided this was not appropriate, as the job was not for a person with disabilities (PWD), and further, we should not set a precedent for posting job notices on our small board in Town Hall.

**Announcements**

- Danny proposed that while last month's minutes do not need to be amended, it would be useful to produce a short document with regard to the March visit of Jeff Dougan of the Massachusetts Office of Disability (MOD) to distinguish which comments were offered by Jeff, and which were offered by COD members in the course of the conversation. The COD voted unanimously to do this.
- Nancy suggested that corrections to the minutes be sent around ahead of time by members who wish to make them, and while substantive changes would still require discussion, this would save time at our meetings and make it easier on the person who has prepared and has to correct the minutes. Danny said he would call the Attorney General's office as to the legality of doing this.
- Danny suggested that his title be changed from "Variance Coordinator" to "Accessibility Coordinator." Lisa expressed concerns about expanding the role of the COD to non-variance accessibility.

### **Board of Selectmen Announcements/BOS Liaison Replacement**

- Mady announced that Janet Adachi of the Board of Selectmen (BOS) - and its new chair - informed her that a new BOS liaison would be selected later this month.
- Franny Osman told the group that she intends to continue on with COD as a volunteer and is pleased to informally serve as a BOS liaison and/or report back to them as necessary.

### **Town Election Results**

- The COD acknowledged the election of Peter Berry and Joan Gardener as BOS members.

### **Follow-up Discussion of Suggestions from Jeff Dougan of Massachusetts Office on Disability**

- It was agreed that the discussion with Jeff Dougan in March was very productive.
- COD continued the discussion about shorter meetings, as recommended by Jeff. The commission unanimously agreed, however, that 3-hour meetings are useful; there is rarely enough time to cover any issue in depth, and the problem would be exacerbated if our meetings were shorter, particularly since we are not permitted to conduct business outside of monthly meetings, owing to the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law (OML) regulations. It was decided that for the time being, we will continue to hold 3-hour meetings.
- There was brief discussion on other points that had been raised in March, including the need for stress reduction and avoidance of burn-out. This conversation will be continued at the COD's annual retreat in June.

### **Town Meeting Review**

- All COD members were pleased with the implementation of electronic voting at the April Town Meeting, and were impressed with how smoothly it went.
- There remain some issues about seating for PWD in the upper rows of the auditorium, and this needs to be reviewed further, but was not attributed to any fault on the part of the Town, who clearly marked the seats as being reserved for

those with mobility issues. Lisa will follow up on this issue with Town Clerk, Eva Szkaredek.

- Mady suggested that credit be given where due; that in all the time she and several other members have served on the COD, this was the first Town meeting at which almost all accessibility issues have been satisfactorily addressed. This required much work on our commission's behalf, but it was recommended that in addition to the personal letter of thanks Mady had sent to the Town Moderator and Town Clerk, a letter should also be sent on behalf of the COD thanking the Town for its efforts and results. Joan agreed to draft such a letter and pass it by Mady for editing, to be sent to the appropriate individuals in Town who are or have been involved in bringing about these improvements.

### **COD Retreat**

It was decided that the COD's annual June retreat will take place on June 20th, in place of its normally scheduled meeting, as this was one of the few dates when everyone was able to attend. Discussion followed as to the schedule and content of the retreat, and whether we wish to bring in a facilitator (someone to conduct group exercises) or a strategic planner. The group agreed that a facilitator would be useful, and that we would contact an individual who led us through useful exercises two years ago. It was further agreed that a strategic planner should be invited for July, once we have had our retreat, engaged in group activities, and had general discussion. Lisa will try to reserve the common room at Windsor Green for this event, and Mady will order lunches.

### **Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) Grants**

Mady inquired about the status of applicants for grants being offered by the MOD for projects and programs, as described by Jeff Dougan at our March meeting. Franny and Nancy assured us that these were in progress and on schedule, being handled by the appropriate individuals in various town departments (this is not an activity in which the COD is involved). Franny also mentioned that they are continuing to look into the possibility of MOD grant funding of an MV1 (Mobility Vehicle 1) van.

### **COD Membership/Make-Up of Commission**

Mady raised the question of whether – under the circumstances – Cindy Patton (who has been unable to join our meetings for much of the past year) might temporarily change her status to associate member, therefore allowing Leslie (who has been on the commission for nearly 4 years) to step up to a membership position. Mady agreed to call and write Cindy about this matter. This led to a longer discussion about the make-up of COD commissions, the requirements regarding number of members, quorum, full versus associate membership, the need for an elected official of another commission to be a member, and a check of the bylaws and regulations as set by the MOD.

## **Mental Illness Event Update**

Leslie provided an update on details relating to the May 8th Mental Illness program we are co-hosting with NAMI. Most details are in place; Mady, Joan, Lisa and others are offering assistance to Leslie as needed, and will continue to do so in the coming weeks leading up to the event. There have been no RSVPs, but we agreed that since this is a public event, probably people have not noticed or have disregarded the request for responses, so we will have to guess about the number of people who will attend, and order food accordingly. Leslie has worked with the library on details regarding seating arrangements, audio/video equipment etc. Leslie also briefed us on the format of the event, i.e., that she will open the program, the presenters will show a brief video and then speak, and there will be time for questions and answers. COD members will arrive early to assist with check-in, setting up refreshments, etc.

## **May Agenda**

The May agenda was set. After a short briefing by Danny Factor about the Neighbor Brigade program, it was decided that we would invite to the May meeting Kathleen Surdan, the Acton point person for Neighbor Brigade, to spend about 10 minutes with us describing the program. Mady suggested that as we go forward, we should also consider inviting other guests to upcoming meetings, including Steve LeDoux (Town Manager), Frank Ramsbottom (Building Commissioner), COD chairpersons from neighboring towns, Matt Frost (from Acton's Internet Technology Department) to discuss and help us with Docushare, and Sheryl Ball (Acton Health Director), among others.

## **Wellness Fair**

Lisa, Lea and Cheryl Snyer (who has formerly joined the COD as a visitor) are working on this, including getting a table, making sure they have flyers, etc.

## **Updates**

Danny provided updates on all of the items listed on the agenda, the majority of which are ongoing, while two have not yet been pursued. It was agreed that two items will come off the list for the future, as they have been satisfactorily dealt with, i.e., Acton Medical Center and Pedal Power (access issues). Updates remain on the list until there has been resolution.

## **Adjournment**

12:45 pm

## **Handouts**

No documents were distributed.

Respectfully submitted by  
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey