

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

**MEETING MINUTES
December 19, 2017**

Members Present: Madeleine Harvey (Chair), Lisa Franklin, Leslie Johnson

Members Absent: Ann Corcoran, Danny Factor

Associate Members Present: Joan Burrows, Franny Osman

Others Present: Joan Gardner (Board of Selectmen [BOS] Liaison), one member of the public

Call to order:

9:30 am

Citizens' concerns

None

Announcements

- Franny is working on a taxi for seniors to share with several towns. Sudbury is very active in this area, with a woman from their Council on Aging leading the effort. One problem is identifying the neighborhoods where the service would be most needed.
- COD voted unanimously to purchase a tape recorder (not to exceed \$100) to record meetings and assure that everything is being correctly noted.

Board of Selectmen Updates

- The Acton tax rate will remain the same in 2018.

Annual Report Draft

- The COD annual report was approved with a few minor changes, notably that more information be included about deceased member Cindy Patton, including a photograph if possible.

Town Meeting De-Briefing

- The Town was not prepared for the large turnout (about 2,000 people), and “runners” were not available at first to assist people. Lines were long and people with invisible disabilities had a difficult time. Some left because they could not stand and wait. There were two methods of check-in: a faster one using ID’s, and one by street name. However, there was no signage indicating these options.
- The COD voted unanimously to send a letter to Town Meeting Moderator Peter Berry thanking him for the way the meeting was handled in view of difficult circumstances, and also expressing our concerns and making recommendations for the check-in procedure and other matters, for future meetings.
- Some of the suggestions to be included in the letter:
 - Have additional wheelchairs available
 - Provide better sound in the overflow rooms
 - Have closed caption/speech to text screens in overflow rooms
 - Have additional closed caption screens in the main auditorium, so that people in the back rows can read them
 - Have more electronic clickers available so hand counts are unnecessary
 - Offer more priority seating
 - Have “runners” to notify people in line of situation/length of wait
 - Be attentive to “invisible disabilities” affecting people on line, such as difficulty standing, vision problems, individuals who may be post-surgery, the elderly, etc.
 - Have Peter Ashton attend one of our COD meetings to further discuss these issues prior to the next Town Meeting

Master Calendar

- The master calendar was set for 2018. This calendar includes items that must be dealt with monthly, in addition to new issues and regular business.

DocuShare

- For a variety of reasons, COD has been unable to post items on DocuShare for the past two years. Joan Gardner spoke to Kim Bricker in the Building Department, who has agreed to assist us with posting documents.

Updates

- It was again agreed that updates on access issues should be provided in writing by Danny and Joan Burrows in advance of meetings, and Franny suggested that the only ones that should come for discussion are those that might require a vote. As much administrative work as possible should be done ahead of time to save meeting time. Only substantive issues should be raised at meetings. The COD took no action on this.

January Agenda

- The preliminary January agenda was set, to include:
 - Executive session to approve letter and minutes
 - Sara Bursky (strategic planner) to call in for introductions
 - Taxi for seniors report by Franny (in this context, Leslie mentioned that recovery learning centers are usually in or near cities but are needed in suburbs. Lisa noted they are part of the Independent Living Centers and are hoping to open a satellite nearby)

Handicap-Accessible Campsite at Camp Acton

- Franny, Danny, and Bettina Abe (Natural Resource Assistant, Acton Conservation Commission) visited the site and noted the following:
 - Parking is good
 - Vehicle access and walking paths are good
 - Access is needed to Port-a-Potties (i.e., a ramp) and those facilities need to be handicap accessible.
 - A raised fire pit could be built
- The group voted unanimously to sign a letter Bettina had drafted to the Natural Resources Department from COD requesting funding
- Mady signed the letter on behalf of the commission

Access Issues in Progress

- Senior Center restrooms
- Gould's Plaza HP elevated parking signs
- Town Hall automatic door openers to gain access to clerk and building departments
- Teamworks
- Ace Hardware

Adjournment

11:30 am

Docushare Items

- Bettina Abe's letter to Natural Resources Department
- Master calendar for 2018

Respectfully submitted
Joan Burrows and Madeleine Harvey