

## Commission on Disabilities

Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2019

10:00 am

Room 126, Town Hall, 472 Main St. Acton, MA 01720

**Members Present:** Nancy Corcoran (chair), Joan Burrows, Lisa Franklin, Leslie Johnson, Franny Osman

**Selectman Liaison Present:** Joan Gardner

**Staff Liaison Present:** Austin Cyganiewicz

**Others Present:** Resident volunteers

### 1. Opening

Chair Corcoran opened the meeting at 10:00 am.

### 2. Regular Business

- A. Announcements: 1. When emailing something to COD before a meeting, send it to Kim Bricker so it can be posted on docushare.
- B. Citizens' Concerns: none
- C. Board of Selectman Update: There were 15,000 people at the Fourth of July event at NARA Park.
- D. Approval of Meeting Minutes: Due to problems with the email shell, not everyone received the May minutes. It was decided to approve the May minutes in September.
- E. Access Report: none
- F. Set next month's agenda: There was a discussion about what process of setting the agenda would allow sufficient member input and still stay within Open Meeting Law guidelines. Mr. Cyganiewicz offered, as staff liaison, to collect emailed agenda items and send them to the chair.

### 3. Introduction of Austin Cyganiewicz, Director of Governmental Affairs.

Austin will be staff liaison to the COD and to the Transportation Advisory Committee. Austin worked as a selectman in Winchendon for four years. He worked at a startup company in Maynard for a couple of years.

Mr. Cyganiewicz also reported on a few issues:

The town is applying for the Americans with Disability (ADA) grant from the Mass. Office on Disability (MOD) which was applied for last year. Details on the application: Deadline Oct. 1. There are two applications you can submit—planning and projects (removing barriers, adding accessibility). Up to \$250,000 [per community?]. Grant requires Town to have policies not just for the projects but internal policies e.g. anti-discrimination, grievance policies. The Recreation

Commission has these policies in place and Mr. Cyganiewicz will work on trying to make them townwide. He seeks feedback on projects we want to see townwide. Only one application in the state has gotten the full \$250,000 in the past. There was mention of the transition plan under development with Corey York. It was noted that the transition plan is a pre-requisite for these grants and some other grants that MOD offers. Bettina Abe helped Town get some grant money when Town Manager was becoming the official ADA coordinator. Mr. Cyganiewicz said that the anti-discrimination policy will be housed at the Commission on Disabilities or Human Resources website. Suggestion that there be an accessibility plan similar to the open space plan and the master plan. Mr. Cyganiewicz said the intent is to do this, by department. Mention of Miracle Field, its bathrooms, a budget earmark.

Discussion of which transportation issues Mr. Cyganiewicz is responsible for (all same as Doug Halley). Transportation concerns can be addressed to him.

#### **4. Adaptive Bike Coalition**

Busy period for Pedal Power bike store in summer. Owner purchased an adaptive bike to rent out. AccessSport America has given two or three of their older adaptive bikes to Pedal Power to be used. Some members of the Acton COD, as well as the owner of Pedal Power, attended the June Concord COD meeting. Next step for the owner is to figure out financially how much it cost her to do this rental service.

Concord COD has offered to help out financially. Appreciation for Selby's (Land Use and Economic Director) TV spot before the adaptive bike event, good PR. Question about cost to user, noted that vouchers can be funded by CODs. For coalition's work, slow is ok, doing it right is best. Discussion of legal issues when renting and who is responsible when someone needs assistance as they use the bikes. One COD member said she realized she needs a personal care attendant with her when riding. She pointed to "Dignity of Risk and Individual Responsibility".

#### **5. Mass. Commission on Disabilities news**

Usual monthly phone call that Ms. Franklin participates in. One issue discussed was concerns about the effect electric scooter rentals have on people with disabilities (tripping hazard). Telephone call report put on docushare.

#### **6. Discovery Museum accessible slide issue**

We reviewed pictures of the slide and museum and saw letters we received on the issue. There had been problems with the accessible slide that have been resolved. Frank Ramsbottom, Building Inspector, was involved with the issue. Discussion of whether there was a second slide planned. Apparently now it is not being planned. Some COD members visited the site. Despite the spontaneous visit on a very busy day, staff showed them around.

#### **7. Town Meeting Improvement Committee**

After many complaints about Town Meeting and a desire to increase attendance, the Board of Selectmen have formed a committee to look at all the issues. They are looking for a representative from COD.

Ms. Franklin made a motion that Ms. Corcoran represent COD on that committee. Ms. Osman seconded. COD voted 5-0. Motion passed.

Other comments on Town Meeting were handed to Ms. Corcoran to bring to the committee, including issues at sign-in; signage at the door near the auditorium about how people with disabilities can sign in; help for people with invisible disabilities to sign in easily and with less walking; and questions about why people with wheelchairs have to switch into a different wheelchair to enter the auditorium.

#### **8. Brainstorming ideas of what COD could do during the next few months that could open doors for people with disabilities**

Ms. Corcoran proposed we work on Acton accessibility activities for a few months, allowing the COD to be more proactive and active in the community. We would take board meetings on two month rotations where we focus for two months on providing an activity; the activity would take place in the second month in addition to our regular monthly meeting. Ms. Corcoran's proposal is based on Natural Resources Director Tom Tidman's idea of a "know your town" activity in the early fall. One member was concerned that two months might not be long enough but was willing to try.

Ideas shared:

- 1) Picnic at arboretum, provided for people with disabilities. (proposed for September to October 2019)
- 2) A sharing and appreciation of our Town employees. "Know your Town Employee." In Room 204, it could be like a dating event. Residents sit at tables, staff rotate to tables to introduce themselves to people who may use their services, all eat coffee and donuts. (proposed for November to December 2019)
- 3) An activity that draws more people to the Council on Aging; 1200 people go regularly yet there are 5000 age-eligible.
- 4) The Commission owns a movie on the history of the disability movement. We could show that movie and provide popcorn.
- 5) Teenager service club that will perform errands or volunteer in parking lots to fetch items from the store.

Ms. Osman made a motion that the COD try Nancy's idea of every two months having two meetings plus an activity, for this coming year. The COD voted in favor, 5-0. The motion passed. simple things with select board. want to be careful.

Adjourned 12:20 Nancy adjourned.

## **7. Adjournment**

At 12:20 pm, it was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting.  
The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Documents and Exhibits Used During this Meeting:**

- Copy of announcement from Action Unlimited for Adaptive Bike Demo Day