



Commission on Disabilities

Minutes

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

10 am

The meeting was virtual, at
<https://actonma.zoom.us/j/94313570425>

Attendees:

Members: Pesha Kokis, chair; Lisa Franklin; Franny Osman; Melissa Wingfield, and Joan Burrows.

Missing: Leslie Johnson

Select Board Liaison: Jim Snyder-Grant.

Visitor: John Gianetto

Town Staff: Wanjiku Gachugi

Public Concerns:

Franny shared a concern that we do not have options for people with disabilities to get anywhere by public transportation on weekends or evenings. She tried to find a ride for a woman who uses a wheelchair, from Avalon to RJ Grey Jr. High, for Open Door Theatre. The woman could not physically get into two different vehicles that volunteers came to her house in recently. She can get into certain small sedans and also wheelchair accessible vehicles. NO livery services were able to be found to do this trip. Pesha mentioned that she is unable to get into a lot of Uber vehicles as she is too short.

Announcements and Liaison Reports :

Select Board Liaison Jim announced that Ed Mullen is our new Building Commissioner. Reach him at Building@actonma.gov and (978)-929-6633.

Franny reported from Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC): Members of TAC will participate in interviews by MassDOT about the idea of creating Regional Mobility Managers. TAC was reached out to by Rachel Fichtenbaum of MassDOT on this matter.

Announcement of Austin Cyganiewicz, the Government Affairs staff person from the Town Manager's office who functioned as our Transportation Coordinator, leaving to take a job as Town Administrator in Rutland, MA. A discussion of our transportation program and its shortfalls ensued.

Lisa reported on the CODA meeting. It reminded her that we should have a retreat to look at the roles of the chair and to discuss the basic infrastructure of our Commission and the specific duties of the chair.

Franny reported that the Mass. Commissioner for the Blind, David D'Archangelo, recently resigned after a vote of no confidence, organized by residents and the Massachusetts Association for the Blind.

Approve Minutes: Minutes of March 21, 2023 approved. Moved by ___, seconded by ___. All in favor, 4-0.

New Business:

Pesha will talk to Kim Bricker in Planning to make sure our **\$50 donation to Acton Arboretum** is moved from COD account to the Acton Arboretum, as voted at our previous meeting.

On behalf of the group Housing and Climate Justice for Acton, Danny Factor presented about Article 45 at the upcoming Town Meeting, which is a non-binding article meant to help renters feel safer asking the Health Department to inspect their home by assuring them the landlord would not be informed of the inspection unless a violation was found. The article was not meant to discourage people from talking to their landlord about the concern as a first step, but for renters who are not comfortable talking to their landlord or feel threatened with retaliation, this would allow them to seek help from the Town in determining if there was a safety violation in the home before asking the landlord to remediate it.

We discussed the Town Meeting warrant articles and voted on the importance of considered articles. If we deemed them important to the COD, we assigned someone to speak up on that issue at Town Meeting if needed. To be considered, Lisa shared her philosophy that that article has to affect people with disabilities in particular, not just be relevant to them because they are people. For example, world peace is important for people with disabilities, but not specifically for them, so we would not consider that an issue we have to weigh in on.

Results of warrant article discussions:

Article 9- Community Preservation Program appropriations .

After discussion of various parts of the CPC article, Franny moved, Lisa seconded, that we support items B (Camp Acton Road Regrading), C (Woodlawn Cemetery Chapel Exterior Accessibility Design), E (Acton Housing Authority, 362-364 Main St. development), G (NARA Bridge Boardwalk Reconstruction), and L (Acton Community Housing Corporation Community Housing Program Fund). Approved 4-0.

Article 27- Transportation Enterprise Budget - If this enterprise budget is challenged, we would speak up in support of the budget and to say the Town must make sure all modes of transportation accommodate a wheelchair.

Lisa moved as described here, Pesha seconded. 4-0 in favor. Franny or Pesha will speak up at Town Meeting.

Non-binding Article 39- Anti-Bias Training - asks that all Town officials participate in anti-bias training. We will speak up in support of this article and ask for reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities at these trainings and to make sure bias based on disability be included in the training.

Lisa moved, Pesha seconded, that we speak up in support. Approved 4-0. Lisa or Leslie will speak up at Town Meeting.

Non-binding Article 45- Renters ' Access to Confidential Health Department Inspections

“Acton shall publish an informational brochure for renters on health inspections, and requires that the brochure be issued to renters by landlords at the initiation of their lease agreement.

When a renter calls to report a complaint in their unit or in a rental property, the Health Department and the Board of Health shall inspect the premises complained of with the occupant prior to notifying the property owner. In compliance with State Sanitary code 105CMR410, the Board of Health will only contact the property owner if a violation or citation is issued or if further information is needed. The purpose of this policy is to keep renters safe from being retaliated against or harassed prior to an inspection.”

Pesha moved, Lisa seconded, that we speak up in support. 4-0 approved. Franny or Pesha will speak up on this article at Town Meeting.

Lisa expressed a reservation: she was under the impression that this is how the Health Department functions anyway and that they only contact the landlord when they need permission to enter the building. Lisa said the Health Inspector told her an inspection could be done anonymously. Lisa is in favor of the educational pamphlets. She said right now the Health Department doesn't have enforcement ability.

Non-binding Article 46- Kelley 's Corner, asking that the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee be asked by the Select Board and Planning Board to review and update the 02/04/2016 Kelley's Corner Improvement Initiative Plan this year, and to work with the

Planning Department to develop an updated draft zoning plan for Kelley's corner. Franny moved, Lisa seconded, that we support this article. 4-0 approved. Lisa or Leslie will speak on it.

Meeting adjourned 12:25 pm.

Acronyms:

ARPA American Rescue Plan Act

CODA Commission on Disabilities Association (Mass.)

COA Acton Council on Aging

HSC Human Services Committee

MAPC Metropolitan Area Planning Council

TAC Acton Transportation Advisory Committee

SB Select Board

SMOC Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council, Inc.

VCC Volunteer Coordinating Council

The listed agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law. Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Please allow advance notice. Send an e-mail to manager@actonma.gov or call the Town Manager's Office (978) 929-6611, or contact the Chair, Pesha Kokis, 18peshadev@gmail.com or Vice-chair, Lisa Franklin lisafranklin58@gmail.com.