

Acton Commission on Disability (COD) Minutes: May 21, 2024

Members Present: Lisa Franklin, John Gianetto, Pesha Kokis, Melissa Wingfield, Jim Snyder-Grant (Select Board Liaison), and Wanjiku Gachugi (Town Staff Person)

Called to order at 10:13 AM. (We got started late due to technical difficulties).

Announcements:

1. One person at town meeting was there remotely, under a new state law. See below (under "Town Meeting") for more details.
2. The applicant at 29 Knox Trail is appealing the decision of the Architectural Access Board (AAB). The new hire at the AAB did not know to notify the COD of the hearing dates in the matter.

Public Concerns:

1. Town volunteer (person with hearing difficulties) mentioned the bad acoustics in Room 204 that are making her work on a town committee difficult. It is believed the town is in the process of working on this issue.
2. Complaints about the shuttles at Town Meeting blocking accessible ramps and curb cuts, which created a barrier for people not riding the shuttle to get on the side walk to the accessible entrance.

Select Board Update:

1. New officers for the Select Board (SB) were chosen. Fran Arsenault is the Chair, Dean Charter is the Vice-Chair, Alissa Nicol is the Clerk, and members Jim Snyder-Grant and David Martin continue to be on the SB as well.
2. Jim Snyder-Grant continues to be the COD SB liaison.
3. There is an updated chart being produced with Department Heads and phone numbers. In the meantime, people can call the town hotline 978-929-6600 to be connected with who they are looking for. The hot line

operator may even know how to resolve whatever issue is being called about.

Minutes:

1. We unanimously approved the minutes for February 6, February 20, and April 16. We are currently caught up on approved minutes.

Liaison Updates:

1. The Healey administration's current budget and plans will remove consumer control from the Personal Care Assistant (PCA) program and threaten to disqualify 6,000 consumers from receiving PCA services. That will also result in unemployment for many people currently working as PCAs.
2. The state legislature has called for updating the language on all documents referring to and about People with Disabilities.
3. The Acton Human Services Committee is coming up with suggestions for the SB to consider when they work on their long term and short term goals for the coming year.
4. Acton has a new Human Services Department that is comprised of the old Health Department, the Town social worker, the COA social worker, and the office of Veteran's Affairs. Penelope Funaole is the Head of the Department.

Town Meeting:

1. We discussed access at the May 6th Town Meeting (what worked and what didn't work).
2. We reviewed a new state requirement that people with disabilities whose disability prevents them from physically attending town meeting must be allowed to attend remotely. (There are specific sets of circumstances to be allowed to do this).
3. We voted unanimously to send a letter to the Town Clerk and the Town Moderator praising them for their good work in dealing with so many

people, and addressing our concerns and ideas. A copy of the letter will also be sent to the League of Women voters Acton Area. Lisa and Pesha will write those letters.

Miscellaneous:

1. After a discussion about taking the summer off from having meetings, we unanimously agreed to suspend work for the months of July and August. Melissa will notify Lisa and Pesha if the Commission receives any emails or phone calls that need to be answered.
2. We are scheduling a meeting for training COD members on how to use Zoom and run a Zoom meeting.
3. Jim will let the Volunteer Coordinating Committee know we are looking for an associate member, and that we are also looking for other ways to get the word out.

We adjourned at 12:10 PM.