

Andover Commission on Disability

Wednesday, April 26, 2023

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**Call to Order:** Chair Justin Coppola called the virtual meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

**Members Present:** Trish Leelman, Y; Stephen Surette, Y; Katherine Ananis, Y; Eileen Reilly, Y; Carlene Bell Flanagan, Y; Bernadette Lionetta, Y; Justin Coppola, Y.

**Also Present:** Janet Nicosia, Director of Facilities and ADA Coordinator and Liam Flanagan, Andover High School Liaison

**Liaison Reports & Announcements:**

Janet gave a brief update on the following:

New England ADA Conference -- Andover was highlighted in a presentation for its ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan as well as for its implementation. Next week Valerie Fletcher, the Institute for Human Centered Design Executive Director, will join Janet for a segment on our Accessible Andover TV series on the Americans with Disabilities Act which will be available on our web, when available: <https://acod.mhl.org/acod-disability-resources-available-on-video/>

Doherty School -- A Mass Architectural Access Board (AAB) variance was requested with a list of ADA improvements for the Doherty School on a 5-year schedule with an annual reporting to the AAB. One of the items MOD is looking for clarification on is the lift (preferred) versus ramp to access the stage in the auditorium.

Doherty School Elevator Project --There were no General Contractors bid on the first round so the bid has been re-worked within its original scope for a second attempt. When asked, general contractors cited the stops/starts to the project and architects have changed the paperwork so that it will start in January and finish in August, which is the same end-time as the original proposal.

Town Offices -- Renovation work including the focus on ADA compliance is on schedule, to start June 1, 2023.

Kayak Launch at Nason's Landing -- Will be taken up as Article 19 at Town Meeting. Pros and Cons will likely be discussed. The Town and Conservation Commission have prepared information for the Town Meeting. Katherine asked about reasons against, Janet noted parking on or near abutters land, changes to conservation land use, dams change from Ballardvale are a few issues. Some abutters have said they did not have sufficient notice.

Justin encouraged members to vote in favor of Article 19 at Town Meeting.

Ellen gave a brief update on signage going up around town and the Conservation Commission's work with Marisa MacDonald on the design of signage meeting ADA and criteria for "universal access."

**Approval of March 27, 2023 Minutes:**

It was moved by Stephen, seconded by Trish, and voted 7-0 to approve the March 27, 2023 Minutes.

Roll Call: Katherine Y; Eileen, Y; Carlene Y; Trish, Y; Stephen Y; Bernadette, Y; Justin, Y.

### **Old Business:**

DPW & ADA Update accessible Projects -- Stephen reported progress on paving and Main St. scheduled to start next week.

MBTA crossing at Ballardvale -- Stephen said work will start at midnight through the night to help with traffic.

New England ADA Center Conference -- Justin said some ACOD members attended, reported on Andover's ADA transition plan, and thanked Janet for her impressive presentation. As noted by Janet, Andover was highlighted as one of 5 cities/towns from New England for its ADA plans. Justin said Janet's progress on ADA was by far the best and it was clear Andover has put a lot into its ADA transition plan. Carlene said she felt proud of Andover and Janet for her presentation.

Assistive Listening – Detailed instructions are included in the Finance Book for Town Meeting.

ACOD will be available to provide resident's assistance in using the system.

Ironstone Field Trip -- Justin reported on the recent trip to Ironstone Farm and that the meeting with Kerri Whalen, Director of Ironstone Farm was great. He said Gail (COA Liaison) is working on connecting Ironstone and COA for possible programs.

Eileen said her husband will volunteer at Ironstone Farm as a carpenter and that it is a very good facility.

Justin noted that Ironstone Farm is also working on programs for veterans.

Old Town Hall Workshop -- Justin, Carlene, and Liam attended, there was a good attendance and the future of this iconic building and accessibility issues were discussed.

Shawsheen River Masterplan Version 1 is released -- Justin said the info and graphics are impressive and are available on the web: <http://experience.arcgis.com/experience>

MBTA Communities Zoning law -- Justin noted cities and towns serviced by the MBTA to zone a district of reasonable size for multi- family housing near MBTA stations. Justin asked if anyone was interested in participating or providing input as this will affect housing opportunities for people with disabilities.

Goldsmith Reservation -- John Hess, President of AVIS, said Goldsmith Reservation "All Person Trail" is going forward and that the grant decision is imminent.

Human Library -- Justin said an analogy is using a library book for people to tell their stories virtually. It is a place where real people are on loan to readers. Zoom format will be available on the 4th Sunday of the month. Trish attended and said it is a good forum.

Action item: Justin will send a flyer with the details on this to ACOD members.

Accessible Andover on Andover Cable Access TV series recordings scheduled are:

Janet with Valerie Fletcher, on "ADA" is scheduled for May 2.

Stephen Neal and Robin Cataldo on "Project Lifesaver" is scheduled for May 9.

### **New Business:**

#### **Elder People/ People with Disabilities Tax Relief**

Jemma was not available tonight but asked Justin to request the commission for funding for this program which offers a reduction in taxes for homeowners with disabilities, or dependents of elders, homeowners, owners, and elder home owners age 62 and above, with a combined income less than \$40,770 and for owners age 62 and older, with a combined income of \$54,930. The award is not to exceed \$1000 per household or up to 10% of the applicants' property tax bill.

It was moved by Bernadette, seconded by Trish, and voted 7-0 to approve the remaining ACOD budget for FY 23 to fund the Town Tax relief for elders and residents with disabilities in the amount of \$4400.02.

Roll call: Eileen, Y; Bernadette, Y; Trish, Y; Carlene, Y; Stephen, Y; Katherine, Y; Justin, Y.

#### **Preferred Disability Terminology**

Eileen asked at the last meeting about preferred terms and Justin sent out a copy of terms for discussion. He asked members to discuss what they thought next steps might be to move this discussion forward. Trish said the outcome should be decided before language is changed.

Carlene said updating language to reflect today's times is a first step for commission members in using the preferred terminology.

Katherine asked about posting terms on ACOD's website as a resource and Justin said that might be a natural first step.

Eileen said current language for students receiving services is at least 15 years old, and asked whether the use of preferred rather than official terms was something Merrimack students were looking at.

Carlene referred back to a teachable moment when a Merrimack student was upset because of language inadvertently used and said she has ongoing interaction with students there. Possibly consider some terms this Fall when students return.

Action Item: Katherine said she would reach out to UMASS Boston for preferred terminology and will forward to ACOD members.

Bernadette said terms are fluid and may not be accurate going forward but posting best practices and asking for input may be the way to start with the web site. Trish agreed that outreach to find out what people are comfortable with is key.

Ellen noted she saw on local Facebook confusion around the terms "neuro divergent" versus "neuro diverse" and people don't know where to start with these terms.

Justin said the MHL Library has an "Inclusivity Committee" and they have agreed to work with ACOD. Justin asked them to research who is the expert in the field with the master list?

Carlene said she advised a student who asked whether to use person or disability first and she advised checking with the particular organization you are working for what they use for their “niche” terms.

Trish said terms used are the choice of the individual.

Action Item: ACOD will start with putting terms on the web site and adapt going forward.

Eileen will work with Trish to get this project started.

**Announcements:**

04/28/23 Andover Rec -- info sharing adaptive programming specifically for Recreation.

05/01/23 Town Meeting -- ACOD Assistive Listening Booth 6 PM for downloading app  
prior to meeting at Collins Center.

Support our Nason’s Landing Warrant #19 Collins Center 7 PM.

05/15/23 Caregivers Support Group at Robb Center -- Cynthia Hession Richard AgeSpan.  
(Formerly Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley) at the Robb Center 1:30 PM

05/24/23 Andover Commission on Disability meeting, on Zoom, 6:30 PM.

Meetings on Zoom have been approved by the State for 2 more years!

**Adjournment:**

It was moved by Eileen seconded by Stephen and voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 P.M.

Roll call: Eileen, Y; Carlene, Y; Trish Y; Bernadette, Y; Stephen, Y; Katherine, Y; Justin, Y.