

Town of Andover Commission on Disability

Minutes of the November 16, 2022 Meeting

6:30 P.M. Virtual Meeting Broadcast on Andover TV

Members Present: Justin Coppola Sr., Jemma Lambert, Eileen Reilly, Stephen Surette, David Kahan, and Trish Leelman. Katherine Ananis arrived after roll call.

Also Present: Janet Nicosia, Facilities Director/ADA Coordinator, Ellen Townson, Vice Chair, Conservation Commission, and Gail Bloom, Council on Aging and Monica Gregoire, Town Planner.

Call To Order: Justin called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM and took roll call as follows:

Roll Call: Eileen, Y; Jemma, Y; David, Y; Stephen, Y; Trish, Y; Justin, Y.

Justin noted Liaisons: Jemma (also a voting member), Gail, Janet, and Ellen were present and welcomed Monica Gregoire as a guest.

Liaison Reports:

Jemma—nothing to report.

Janet—Reported the Architectural Access Board (AAB) variance for Shawsheen Pines was granted. Her office is actively campaigning recreation providers in town - especially the Conservation Commission, the Recreation Department, and Andover Trails, to be aware of the need to have accessible recreation programs in town. Compliance of ADA accessibility at the outset, is required or an AAB variance must be granted.

Nason's Landing Accessible Kayaking Grant request has been submitted to the Mass. Office on Disability (MOD) and we are awaiting their decision. This will make accessible kayaking available in at least one site in town. The request is also in the CIP notwithstanding the grant outcome.

Janet noted some pushback around AAB rules. The bottom line is: you build something accessible or get the required variance from the AAB.

The Doherty School elevator project should go out to bid early in January, 2023. This will likely be a two-year project; HP bathrooms and a ramp near the Guidance Office are also in the project's scope.

Justin noted the "Assistive Listening" instructions inserted in the Town Meeting Booklet was a timely addition and Janet thanked Rebecca Delrosso for this. The Robb Center will be re-tested to ensure it has equipment, and training for assistive listening, the Collins Center and the Library are ready, and posters with instructions for listening devices will be supplied at the various buildings.

Ellen—thanked Janet and noted briefly that the Dale Street Bridge on the Shawsheen River would make a good a good viewing spot. A brief discussion followed on the need to make this bridge ADA compliant. (Discussed further below) Justin announced Ellen is now Vice Chair of the Conservation Commission.

Gail—nothing to report

Minutes of October 26, 2022:

It was moved by Eileen, seconded by Katherine, and voted 7 - 0 to approve the October 26, 2022 minutes.

Roll call: Eileen, Y; David, Y; Stephen, Y; Trish, Y; Katherine, Y; Jemma, Y; Justin, Y.

Old Business:

DPW & ADA Update: Accessible Projects: Stephen reported work is being completed on Haverhill Street.

Justin noted ACOD needs to stay on top of issues such as the content of the Master Plan. ACOD members in attendance added many ADA recommendations at the latest meeting. Justin was invited by Ann Ormond to attend and provided input to the Public Art and Placemaking Community Workshop for Downtown/Historic Mill District. Also, Justin attended the latest Shawsheen River Master Plan meeting where details of the Dale Street Pedestrian Bridge were discussed.

Accessible Andover on TV - Justin reported that there are now three programs on “Accessible Andover” available on the Cable Access TV show “There is Something About Andover”. Streaming at andovertv.org under Recent Media and on our web. Two shows are currently being edited, and the segment on transportation is scheduled for January 10th. Justin and Kathleen are in process of planning additional segments.

Janet watched all the segments and praised Eileen’s presentation, as well as the one on the Mason’s hospital equipment loan program.

New Business:

Dale Street Pedestrian Bridge over the Shawsheen River:

Justin attended the Shawsheen River Master Plan meeting which included the proposed Dale Street Bridge over the Shawsheen River. The bridge will be ADA accessible but will lead to a non-accessible trail - on the East side - once crossed. He didn’t sense a strong commitment to developing accessible trails later, even if feasible.

Janet clarified that if a structure is built in compliance with AAB, such as a bridge in this case, a variance is not needed, but if the compliant bridge leads to a non-compliant recreational trail, then she suggested the town may not be meeting its obligation to provide “Program Access” options to people with disabilities in violation of MOD rules and ADA law. The “Program Access” issue for access to trails is the same as with the kayaking proposal.

Ellen said a public survey led to the Dale Street Bridge choice. The Abbot Bridge crossing did not allow for access under the Horn Bridge which can’t be expanded to include a pedestrian walkway. Justin said although there might be a possibility of funds down the road for the Dale Street area, the problem remains with the inaccessible trail and therefore the Dale Bridge is a bridge to nowhere.

Janet said that the proposed kayak launch, as well as the Dale Street bridge project, though not suitable for ADA recreation now, should focus the town on providing similar types of compliant activities to satisfy the ADA.

Jemma suggested looking at outdoor resources which could be redesigned for trail access, as well as partnering with other entities. She mentioned trails within the Phillips Academy (PA) bird sanctuary as a possibility. Janet clarified the town cannot spend money for projects on private land or land trusts. Ellen suggested looking at the Haggett's Pond Rail Trail as an alternative, since it has the least slope problems. Previously, traffic management was cited at this site as an issue because of its proximity to the town water supply. Ellen noted the Conservation Commission is the custodian of the property even though the town owns the land.

Further discussion on locations for ADA accessible areas followed, including the newly acquired pig farm area on Chandler Road in West Andover, Pomp's Pond Rail Trail, the proposed boat launch area behind the Vocational School, and the area around Berry Pond in the Harold Parker State Forest.

Monica asked about linkages with trails and the connection with transportation for possible grants and other opportunities. Ellen said linkages with groups including AVIS should all be pursued.

Eileen asked for clarification on the Program Access piece and Justin re-capped the idea of two different projects - making structures (bridge) accessible under the ADA while also providing accessible recreation programs (even if a trail associated with the bridge - the East side) is not compliant at the same time as the bridge. In such cases, there must be access to another trail so that the public, including the public with disabilities, are able to participate in the program offering. Currently, plans for the Dale Street Bridge are still in the early stages of planning, there is no final design or CIP funding for this year. Ellen suggested next steps might include collaboration with ACOD and the Conservation Commission to start the process of choosing trails.

Jemma further noted the need to consider other entities such as the AVIS land trust, private PA land, and Harold Parker State Forest, run by DCR for partnership opportunities.

"StoryWalk:"

Justin reported on a "StoryWalk" which is a page-by-page story - kiosks with books inside, 1 page per kiosk - placed along an area, in this case the conservation land behind Penguin Park off Burnham Road.

The story book/walk for parents and children is the only one in Andover and therefore, the conservation land must comply with the ADA law. Ellen specified the StoryWalk was installed on the Sacred Heart reservation, near the area she used for a little fairy garden. This area covers a grassy hill which leads to a boardwalk, both of which are not ADA compliant. Ellen pointed out that the StoryWalk were not brought before the Conservation Board and the staff have asked for guidance on ADA issues and particularly for town and town-counsel approval for projects going forward.

Janet suggested adding other StoryWalk's in town that are ADA compliant rather than remove the current one and encouraged Ellen to call on resources including Chris Clemente locally, and Jeff

Dougan from MOD or experts from AAB to provide guidance on this issue. The need for funding for additional walks and projects was briefly noted.

Monica said that arts, culture, and place making are ongoing initiatives that could also be introduced in the downtown area.

Janet responded, in answer to Justin's question, that ACOD could set up a table for Assistive Listening information and outreach at 6:15 PM for the 7 PM Town Meeting on December 1, 2022.

Announcements:

11/19 Public Art and Placemaking Community Workshop - Old Town Hall 11 AM - 2 PM

12/01 Assistive Listening Outreach—Special Town Meeting - Collins Center 6:15 PM - 7:15 PM

12/01 Special Town Meeting - Collins Center 7 PM

12/08 Andover High School Building Committee Community Forum - Virtual 7 PM

12/28 ACOD meeting - Virtual 6:30 PM

Adjournment:

It was moved by David seconded by Jemma and voted 7 - 0 to adjourn at 7:46 PM

Roll Call: David, Y; Eileen Y; Stephen, Y; Trish, Y; Jemma, Y; Katherine, Y; Justin, Y.