

Meeting Minutes
Andover Commission on Disability
Memorial Hall Library Activity Room
November 20, 2013

After the agenda was duly posted and distributed, the meeting was convened on Wednesday, November 20, at 6:37 p.m. in the Activity Room of the Memorial Hall Library.

Present: Maddy St. Amand (Acting Chair), Julie Pike, Bernadette Lionetta, Stephen Surette, Justin Coppola Jr., Ruth Rosensweig, Donna Gorzega, and Jade Perry.

Also Present: Justin Coppola Sr. (former ACOD Chairperson), and Sarah Paterson, guest, who is considering joining ACOD.

Bernadette made a motion to accept the October 23, 2013 minutes, Julie seconded, and the minutes were passed unanimously.

Old Business / Updates

Spot Checks—Stephen reported that the parking lot across the street from the lot behind town hall now has a pay and display rather than meter system, but there is no ramp near the pay and display kiosk. Even though it was noted that people with handicap placards do not need to pay, it did raise concerns for people who might have a temporary disability who may not have a temporary placard with them at the time.

Over the last month or so, the highway department has completed the re-paving and removal of brush overhanging the sidewalk on the Elm street sidewalk.

My Own Voice—Maddy gave a brief overview of this “spin-off” of Treble Chorus and past ACOD sponsorship, for the benefit of our new member and guest. Bernadette went on to explain that this program is unique because it is the only professional children’s choir in the area which uses peer mentors for “access to opportunity” or “inclusion” in the performances. She reiterated her

interest in ACOD support for additional outreach into the community through printed information or CDs, and the like, for the entire community.

Kids on the Block—Bernadette described the history of this disability awareness puppet show and its use in the Andover schools. The commission sponsored the purchase and it was given to the school department. Barbara Murray of the Doherty Middle School continues to coordinate the training and the educational presentations. ACOD purchased the original disability package several years back and also purchased a follow-up ‘autism package’ two years ago. Bernadette will inform the commission of future presentations.

Basic Access—Ruth gave a brief overview explaining that the concept of basic access is to have at least one “no-step” entrance in new home buildings. She reported that the next house in Andover to be built by the Andover Conservation Trust (ACT) will be a basic access home. We also hope to influence Habitat for Humanity to also consider Basic Access but it is much more difficult when rehabilitating old houses.

New Business

Administrative business – Prior to the meeting, Maddy interviewed Sarah Paterson for a vacancy on ACOD. Sarah attended tonight’s meeting where she introduced herself and told a bit about what she does in her position as Operations Manager for the University of Massachusetts Boston Institute for Community Inclusion. She is a grant monitor for the Institute, and is also responsible for software accessibility. After a brief discussion in executive session, Bernadette nominated Sarah for membership, Stephen seconded, and the nomination vote passed unanimously.

Bancroft School Project – As previously discussed, this project is in its build-out stages until at least February or March or 2014, so monitoring access will be an ongoing process until completion. Justin Sr. reported that the architectural firm is known to the town, and the sub-committee completed a blueprint review this month. A few minor issues will be clarified such as the stage area in the cafeteria. The

remaining concerns include slopes outside the building which need to be graded for final leveling. Stephen raised a concern regarding the need for space to dump snow during snow removal.

Outdoor Dining-- Maddy spoke recently with building inspector Chris Clemente about the walk-by study completed by a commission sub-committee on all outdoor dining offered in town. Some of these outdoor eating areas have not been accessible to the entire community. Chris and Maddy will meet in December to address the complementary roles of the inspectors vs. the commission and how and when ADA concerns can be raised. Current violations such as table heights, space between tables, etc. could have been avoided if the commission had been involved in an educational capacity at the start of such “renovations”. It would be much more cost effective and helpful to review dimensions prior to the purchase of expensive furniture and should probably be part of the license application rather than a critique after the fact. Since the restaurant owners are required to re-apply each year, the process will be re-evaluated so that ADA specs are taken into consideration, perhaps even as a pre-condition for future licensing.

Meeting with Chief Patrick Keefe

Since Maddy will be meeting with Chief Keefe, she opened the floor to discussion of any items of interest to present to the new Chief from ACOD.

- (1) It was noted that although MOD initially trained ACOD members to “ticket” cars that were parked in handicap parking without placards, there really has not been much ticketing in the last few years.
- (2) Members noted that abuses such as parking in handicap spaces, even temporarily to run an errand etc. are still occurring – however - due to the “invisible nature of some disabilities” caution and discretion are required before ticketing perceived parking abuses. Maddy will discuss this issue with Chief Keefe to find out what the current public safety policy is regarding misuse of placards.
- (3) Stephen will follow-up on missing handicap penalty signs in the library parking lot.
- (4) Since ACOD has previously sponsored “Project Lifesaver”, for which the public safety center is now responsible, Maddy will report back on an update about this program to the commission.

(5) Justin Jr. noted that there may be a need for greater awareness of people with disabilities in town who would need to be targeted for assistance in case of evacuation or other emergencies. One of the difficulties is getting citizens to “self-report” to the police department and Maddy will inquire about the effectiveness of the E-911 system and possible notifications about self-reporting using the police website.

(6) Lock Box Program - A few lock boxes have already been installed for residents who are disabled and/or elderly, and Maddy will ask for an update as demand for the program increases.

Announcements

The commission was saddened to hear that Jade will be leaving the commission in the near future as she is leaving Andover in March of 2014 to return to South Carolina where she will be pursuing an Education degree.

Adjournment

Julie made a motion to adjourn at 8:20 p.m., Stephen seconded and unanimously passed.

No meeting in December due to the holidays.

Next meeting: Wednesday, January 22, 2014, 6:30 p.m.

Activity Room, Lower Level, Memorial Hall Library

Respectfully submitted,

Susan McKelliget