

Andover Commission on Disability

Virtual Meeting—Andover TV

February 23, 2022

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**Call to Order:** Co-Chair Justin Coppola called the meeting to order at 6:35 PM.

Roll Call: Trish Leelman, Y; Eileen Reilly, Y; Jemma Lambert, Y; Katherine Ananis, Y; Rebecca Schnopp, Y; and Stephen Surette, Y. Also Present: Plant and Facilities Director/ADA Coordinator Janet Nicosia, and Liaison and Conservation Commission member Ellen Townson.

**Guest Speaker:** Albert Pless, Directory of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI)

**Approval of Minutes:**

It was moved by Eileen seconded by Steve and voted 7-0 to approve the minutes of January 26, 2022.

Roll Call: Trish, Y; Jemma, Y; Eileen, Y; Katherine, Y; Rebecca, Y; Steve, Y; and Justin, Y.

**Liaison Updates:**

Justin asked whether the liaisons had anything to report, and Janet reported the following: She met with IT this afternoon and it is likely the listening devices discussed at previous ACOD meetings, will be ready for town meeting scheduled for Saturday, June 11, 2022. The meeting will be held in a tent at 10:30 AM, similar to town meetings held the last few years. Steve reported that access will be from the West Middle School parking lot with access ramps, mats, and a sidewalk out to the field.

Janet also talked about mulched playground at Bancroft which will be replaced with rubber matting allowing easier access for children with disabilities. The rubber squares to replace the mulch cost \$25K and an additional \$13K will cover rubber matting installation at the playground at Rec Park. Jemma asked about the Robb Center restrooms and Janet noted that new raised seats have been ordered for the toilets which have been appreciated by the Center.

Ellen said she will present warrant articles to the commission at the next meeting, and that snow fall and general winter conditions have put things on hold with respect to the Shawsheen River.

**Guest Speaker, Mr. Albert Pless, Director of DEI:**

Justin then introduced Mr. Albert Pless, Director of the newly formed DEI.

Mr. Pless said the goal of DEI is to work collaboratively with a number of groups in Andover, including ACOD to ensure inclusivity in the community. The commission is looking at groups or individuals who may have been excluded in the past. Mr. Pless said that the recent Open Mic Night for Black History, held at the Andover History Center for History and Culture was a success and gave some exposure to the commission. Katherine said that she was interested in attending DEI meetings to represent ACOD and discussion followed. Justin suggested this would be a good opportunity for Katherine to fulfill a liaison role and Mr. Pless invited Katherine to participate in that role. He further explained that the DEI is a 13 member commission and he is the staff liaison to that commission. In addition, Jemma said that DEI meetings are open to the public and all are welcome to attend.

Ellen reported a very positive experience discussing food insecurity and physical as well as other barriers with Mr. Pless and encouraged interactions with him.

**DPW Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Updates:**

Steve reported that Justin and he attended a recent DPW meeting and assisted with some ADA access issues. He noted that work on the water mains begins today on Shawsheen Road. They are still working on getting contractors for some of the ADA work that is out to bid. There was a brief discussion about metal rather than plastic tactile pads

being tested at a curb cut at the Town Offices. Steve said that the plastic mats need to be replaced frequently due to snow-plow and other machinery damage. Although the color is not the prescribed yellow, Justin said that the Mass. Commission for the Blind has approved the existing color.

### **New Project Ideas:**

Justin talked about developing new project ideas using our existing budget and outlined expectations. He mentioned previous initiatives such as **Project Lifesaver** and the **Lock Box** which were funded as start-ups by ACOD and then turned over to the appropriate public safety departments. In the case of Project Lifesaver, a wearable tracking device for people who wander can be tracked by the police department. This device is used around the world and has located thousands of people. The Lock Box is a device attached to a person's door and the Fire Department has a key to unlock the box in the case of an emergency, thereby allowing entrance to the house. These two examples are the type of initiative Justin is looking for with follow-through with the appropriate town department.

Jemma brought up an idea and discussion followed. Jemma suggested funding a "scholarship" for a person trained to assist children with disabilities who wish to attend summer camp at the recreation center and the beach at Pomp's Pond but require one on one assistance. Possible grants and other options were discussed, and Katherine said she was interested in finding out more about training volunteer(s) for this role. Eileen asked Jemma how many children attend this summer camp and Ellen noted that some families may be concerned about their children near the water. Jemma said this is an issue that needs to be discussed further but there are training and other options to make this summer experience fully accessible to all families.

### **Announcements:**

Justin reported there are three ADA training sessions to be held virtually in June, September, and November, 2022. Janet talked about her experience with the Community Access Training she previously attended which was a Level 1 two-day event. She noted that there was a lot of information but much of it was through video presentation. She was interested in a Level 2 session for her staff when it is ready. Justin will check with Jeff Dougan from MOD to check the status of the next level and will send the course syllabus for the upcoming training to members and liaisons who Justin also welcomed to attend. Tuition for ACOD members will be covered. Eileen and Ellen said they would like to attend.

Justin announced that on March 8, 2022, an Andover Housing Coalition virtual meeting will be held at 6:30 pm. The information about this is on the town website and there is also a DEI meeting at 5:00 pm at the Robb Center on March 8, 2022.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, March 23, 2022 at 6:30 PM Virtual

### **Adjournment:**

It was moved by Eileen, seconded by Steve and voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 PM.

Roll Call: Eileen, Y; Jemma, Y; Rebecca, Y; Katherine, Y; Steve, Y; Trish, Y; and Justin, Y.