

Andover Commission on Disability

Virtual Meeting—Andover TV

May 25, 2022

Call to Order: Chair Justin Coppola called the meeting to order at 6:34 PM.

Roll Call: Kathleen Dolan, Y; Jemma Lambert, Y; Trish Leelman, Y; Eileen Reilly, Y; Katherine Ananis, Y; Stephen Surette, Y; Justin Coppola, Y.

Also Present: Facilities Director and ADA Coordinator, Janet Nicosia.

Liaison Reports and Announcements

Jemma had no announcements. Janet had nothing specific to report but noted her staff completed the ADA Advanced Training and there was positive feedback. Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) Director Jeff Dougan offered this training on-line for the first time and the accessible trails piece was also part of the training.

Stephen said it was a good training course and he said it is useful to pick up new things, Justin agreed that it was very well done for on-line training. Justin asked whether anyone was aware of further discussion from the Conservation Committee on the proposed Merrimack River Conservation accessible boat launch area. Janet responded that there is only one boat launch site with a proposed accessible ramp which is located behind 5 Campanelli Drive (behind the Vocational Tech School on River Road). She is going to ask the engineer about working with IHCD for peer review of the site design. Janet clarified that this boat launch is not suitable for kayaking, but rather it provides an opportunity for people who would not otherwise be able to get on a boat, to do so. Janet reported that the Fire Chief met with Doherty students who presented a power point on existing non-ADA compliant signs and this feedback will be used for signage updates.

Justin also said that preliminary ADA compliant signage template for the kiosks for the Conservation lands are impressive. Project lead is Marisa Browning-Kamins, Conservation Land Manager.

Approval of Minutes:

It was moved by Eileen, seconded by Trish, and voted 7-0 to approve the minutes of April 27, 2022.

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

Old Business

- **DPW and ADA Accessible Projects**-Stephen did not report.
- **Shawsheen River ADA**—Justin reported the Shawsheen Pines ADA non-compliant canoe boat launch area is still on hold. William Joyce, Architectural Access Board (AAB) Executive Director met with us and verified that a variance is required. As part of the variance process, we need a concrete plan that the town commits to. Janet added that the contract took some time to negotiate, and the scope of work involves a preliminary look/study at schematic designs for boat launches listing pros and cons for Shawsheen Pines, Ballardvale Flats and Pomp's Pond. The funding priority is for accessibility on the Shawsheen River, and her office will apply for an accessibility grant. A CIP article for ADA access for one of two places on the Shawsheen will also be submitted in the Fall for the next Town Meeting.
- **Assisted Listening Project**—Eileen reported that assistive listening devices used at Town Meeting were a success, the process flowed, and the hearing was instant. An information table with an ACOD banner was situated near the sign in tables, and there was good signage on how to access the various assistive listening devices which included hearing aids with blue tooth, phones, earbuds, and a broad spectrum of different devices. Molly Bicking showed how people could watch close captioning.

Janet agreed the listening devices were a great addition to Town Meeting and noted IT staff Steve Douglas and Wes Murphy worked behind the scenes to make it happen. Justin noted the QR code and instructions could be included in the Town Meeting Book for future meetings.

- **Accessible Andover on Andover TV**—This agenda item was inadvertently left until the end of the meeting at which point Kathleen reported the following: The ACOD series has been launched on Andover TV starting with an introduction of what ACOD does and the people involved. Other subjects are in the planning stages for presentation. The Town Meeting assistive listening device project will be presented by Eileen and Janet, noting challenges and successes. Assistive listening in other town buildings would also be noted. Memorial Hall Library, which recently received a generous donation from ACOD to fund resources will also be featured with the Director and IT staff discussing those new materials. Project Lifesaver, Emergency 911, and Lockboxes are also slated to be presented in the future.

New Business

- **Personnel changes**—Justin reported that Kathleen is stepping down as Co-Chair of ACOD and Rebecca is moving out of state. He thanked both for their work. Kathleen will continue as an ACOD member.
- **ACOD Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group**—Justin introduced this new ACOD working group, and asked Katherine and Trish to talk about their ideas so far. Katherine reported that she and Trish spent significant time discussing how best to address issues faced by those with disabilities and they agreed that rather than focusing on physical barriers, they wanted to address implicit biases and work toward both inclusion and normalizing the spectrum of disabilities. The surveys they looked at focused on physical barriers and they talked with Jemma about a possible community survey on the implicit bias issue.

Trish noted that developing a survey would be difficult as people generally are not aware they are biased or may be unlikely to admit it if they were. Katherine said the goal is to ensure inclusion becomes normalized whatever the disability. Jemma asked whether it would be valuable to survey all residents to identify unmet needs of individuals or families caring for someone with a disability. Jemma added that data needs to be available to come up with a plan of action to identify obstacles to inclusion and build up support.

Eileen agreed we might find families who have experienced implicit bias through a survey, but this may be difficult to pursue. Katherine knows an expert/author in this field who is a major advocate of inclusion, and other ideas might be to work with schools, and or parents involved with PACs for children with disabilities. Kathleen commented that what she is hearing are goals when at this point specific plans to reach those goals are what is needed.

Katherine and Trish said they are on the same page with understanding the main issues and will come up with some concrete ideas for the commission to consider, perhaps over the summer. Eileen mentioned the implicit bias test on race from Harvard and suggested there may be other such tests. Jemma suggested that Merrimack College could be contacted to see if they have something like the Harvard test or possibly develop one.

Perhaps having a voluntary type test from ACOD on Andover Day was suggested.

- **Human Library Books Project**—Justin proposed inviting them in to have a Pilot on this project when ACOD gets together in person. He suggested possible team building between ACOD and the DEI Commission before moving on to a larger venue of the Human Library Project. Jemma said she would work with Justin and get an ad out to the community. Katherine said there may be some PAC parent members who have kids with disabilities as part of this outreach and Justin responded that would be part of the description he would put together with Jemma.
- **Announcements**—Justin announced the following:
June 6th 6:30 PM ACOD/Shawsheen River Master Plan Vision Opportunity for Input Hybrid/Library first floor.

June 9th 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM virtual COD regional meeting of local Commissions on Disability **instead of our June meeting**, Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) Guest Speakers. New Laws, etc. Link sent day before by Jeff Dougan to ACOD members.

Virtual ADA training (CAM) three sessions planned this year by MOD

June 8th and June 15th from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM September 13th and 21st and November 2nd and 3rd

July 27th ACOD meeting

August no meeting (our traditional vacation)

Next Meetings: Wednesday, June 9th, 10 AM (Virtual) Regional COD Meeting in lieu of monthly ACOD meeting

Wednesday, July 27, 6:30 PM (Virtual) ACOD Meeting

Adjournment:

It was moved, by Eileen, seconded by Jemma and voted 7-0 to adjourn the meeting at 7: 44 PM.

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