

Concord Commission on Disability Meeting

Minutes

April 15, 2021

Present: Jean Goldsberry, Chair, Bonnie Albright, Janet Beyer, Jennifer Brooke, Jane Hotchkiss, Meryl Schwartz, and Karen Young (via Zoom)

Absent: Marybeth Barker, Lloyd Price

Guests: Carole Yelle, Prow Sarns

Minutes from the March 11 meeting were approved as written.

Old Business

Needs of people with cognitive disabilities—Town Meeting: Lloyd was unable to attend tonight but had prepared notes for Jean to present. He spoke with Erin Stevens, Public Information and Communications Manager, who told him that the reading materials prepared for Town Meeting are geared toward the 6-8 grade reading level. The text of the warrant must conform to established legal protocols and these standards observed. Carmen Reiss, Town Moderator, is interested in working with the COD to further explore this issue and will attend a future meeting to present additional information and engage in discussion with us. Lloyd noted that the Council on Aging may also be helpful in working with us on this topic. Jean talked about communication strategies used with MinuteMan Arc consumers. She emphasized there are multiple forms of communication used, including pictures for the non-verbal, and signing, in addition to printed materials prepared at the 3rd-4th grade reading level. She described the process used with the self-advocates who attend Town Meeting which focuses on articles of particular interest to the consumers, for example, expanding the minimum voting age and environmental issues. Once the articles are identified, those interested decide who will attend and when. Preparation is essential and must also be impartial. It is possible that the COA may be able to use a similar approach.

Concerns about Vaccine Distribution and Eligible Groups: Since our last meeting there have been big changes in the distribution process for vaccines to the disabled, including delivering vaccines to the homebound, widening eligibility criteria, and expanding access to transportation to vaccination sites. No additional discussion ensued.

White Pond Update: Kate Hodges was unable to attend tonight but will update us at the next meeting. Via email she conveyed to Jean that plans are continually evolving, which was confirmed by Jane who had attended a presentation with the White Pond Advisory Committee. More natural elements are being incorporated, such as stumps to replace some benches. Drainage continues to be a big topic. Public input is ongoing and the plans are very much a work-in-progress. It was agreed that being involved in the planning stages is extremely important for the COD, as is involvement in the Middle School planning.

Funding Process and Requests:

Jean received a letter from the CC Theater/CCHS Performing Arts, requesting \$1,000 to support an accessible performance of the radio play, Twilight Zone. The funding would cover the cost of 2 ASL interpreters and one deaf consultant. The COD had previously discussed requests for financial assistance and what that process should look like. This request prompted discussion among the members. Janet asked if we had decided on frequency of reviewing requests. Meryl noted we should know about requests well in advance of events so that we can publicize the participation/support of the COD. In this case, the play had already taken place prior to receipt of the letter dated March 19, and due to our meeting schedule, we were not able to review it prior to the production. Carol Yelle, representing the CC Theater, described the production which replaced the annual musical this year and which had previously received funding from the theater budget. This is the first time a fully accessible program has been offered and was reported to be highly successful. There was agreement that the COD needs to set up criteria and a methodology for reviewing and awarding funding in order to address the several requests received to date. Jennifer and Bonnie will make a first pass at outlining the process which we will discuss at our next meeting.

New Business:

Legislation to Capture History of State Institutions: This topic arose from the controversy surrounding the holiday light display held on the grounds of the Fernald School. The effort is aimed at promoting legislation to collect the history of the five "State schools for the retarded". Unmarked graves and a history of abuses need to be officially recorded and documented as a means of preserving this horrific chapter of our history and preventing this happening again. The process includes writing the legislation, then contacting local representatives and senators and encouraging them to vote

for funding to write the history. Jane suggested reaching out to high school students who might be interested in becoming involved in the project.

Correspondence and Miscellaneous: None

Public Comment: Prow announced that the CMS Building Committee has agreed to support the larger gymnasium and auditorium, both of which will be fully accessible. At this time the actual size of the gym and auditorium have not been determined and are dependent on the approved budget. There is strong interest in seeing the plans for the new building.

Next meeting: May 13, 2021 at 5:00 p.m., via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Young