



May 11, 2023
Commission on Disabilities

Present Jean Goldsberry Janet Beyer, Bob Andrews, Karen Young, Meryl Schwartz, Lloyd Price,

Guests

Ed LeClair, Grazie de la Cruz, Megan Zammuto, Melissa McCarthy, Elizabeth Betsy Olsson-Mackckowski, Linda Escobedo

Meeting called to order 5:10

Bob moved minutes of April meeting be approved.

Approved unanimously

Lloyd: Questionnaire about accessibility of businesses in Concord.

Highlights: a number of businesses are not accessible. Nut and Chocolate shop, Nashoba Bakery, Natural Gourmet main store, West Concord Pharmacy, Helen's restaurant, Salt Box Kitchen, barber shop in West Concord and probably all stores near there, consignment shop opposite Deborah's, Priscilla's. Some of these businesses were not accessible because of narrow aisles.

There are places you can get into but not navigate once you get in.

Karen: Concord Outfitters, you can enter through the back.

Melissa McCarthy: West Concord Dance academy, Concord Revolution.

Janet: The Village restaurant in West Concord

Jean: As a committee we will get information and reach out to those businesses. We will let them know we would like to work with them. We might help them retrofit or encourage them to meet us outside. It would be easy enough to put in a doorbell to alert them to open.

Jennifer: We will collect the information and talk to the store owner about making it accessible. The burden of enforcement is on the people for whom the laws were written. Education is the first wave.

Bob: My understanding of accessibility is not only do you get into a place but then you can use it. Hearing loss is a disability. Some places you go to eat are so noisy people with hearing loss cannot eat there.

Meryl: In the Globe there was an article about some people making an App about what is accessible in Boston.

Discussion to be continued

Jean: No more info on Sudbury Road crosswalk.

Bob Andrews: The Hearing Loss Advocacy Committee, an independent group of volunteers led by Bob has been working collaboratively with the Town's ADA Coordinators and other relevant town staff. They met with the new Deputy Town Manager and ADA Coordinator, Megan Zammuto, recently and discussed the progress made in achieving several goals over the past several years.

The first goal was to have good hearing assistance systems equipment available in all places where public meetings are held. The Town has bought such equipment and it has been installed in Harvey Wheeler; the Hearing and Select Board rooms at the Town House, and the main floor conference room in the Keyes Road building. A second goal was to make sure that the equipment was connected with existing sound equipment for maximum effectiveness. Even though the purchased equipment is good the way it is installed is inconsistent in effectiveness. There is still work to be completed. Ms. Zammuto is considering hiring a short-term consultant to guide the town staff on making the systems more effective.

Third goal: make sure people running equipment are well trained. People need to feel comfortable using it.

Fourth goal: Consistency of signage

Fifth goal: A way for people using equipment to inform ADA coordinator.

In a few years there has been advancement but more is needed.

Ed: Those of us who have early loss of hearing are embarrassed until we know there are advocates. Some of don't like to see the hearing loss equipment around their ears. More young people are losing hearing.

Megan, deputy town manager starting end of April. She has been appointed Town ADA coordinator. She thought the meeting with Bob was productive.

They want to ensure anyone wanting to attend a meeting is able to do that. She wants more people to understand how hearing equipment works.

Jean: Meghan, I would like you to attend our meetings.

Megan agreed.

Melissa: Our son is legally blind. We have had problems with his getting around because where we live in the Habitat homes it is difficult for him. We have asked

for a flashing light because he is 14 and doesn't want his parents with him all the time. He has to cross the street. He needs one place where he can cross safely. There are crosswalks at Main and Commonwealth and at Main Street and Pine. They are not audio. He needs an audio signal and he needs the time to cross. Unless there is an adult with him, he cannot cross the street.

Jennifer: My son is deaf and blind. We have to tackle these one at a time. The part that is more important: The welcoming.

In the past our Public Works applies for money to accommodate. It has to be on the schedule for public works. The first step is to make them aware.

Jean: To some degree it is a traffic issue and something that has to be brought to the attention of the Concord police and if they gave out tickets for not stopping for school bus, crosswalks, stop sign or lights that would help.

Jennifer: Public works needs to pay attention.

Jean: Alan Cathcart is aware of this. We have been unable to obtain funding.

Jennifer: It requires a realignment of the road where Melissa is. I wonder if the school would consider a crossing guard there.

Jean: We can reach out to the school.

Meghan: I am meeting with transportation committee and would like to follow up with Melissa. I want to schedule a site visit so I can be sure we are talking about the same area.

Meeting adjourned 6:15