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Wilmington Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes

TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

12/14/22

Present in the meeting: chairperson Dr. Dee Genetti, Robert Oliveri, Carol Hilbinger, Dave Gavegnano, Roberta Biscan, interpreter, and an interpreter in training.

Absent: Gary DePalma

- I. Meeting Called to order at 6:34 PM**
- II. Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. Welcome to new Commissioners:** David Gavegnano and Roberta Biscan

Dr. Dee Genetti introduced herself to the new commissioners and provide a summary about what the Wilmington Commission on Disabilities represents.

Recording secretary Thomas Donahue introduced himself as the recording secretary for the commission, and the senior clerk for the town manager's office.

Mr. Oliveri introduced himself, a veteran liaison, serving 5 years on the commission.

Ms. Hilbinger introduced herself, as a commission member representing the deaf and hard of hearing.

New commissioner David Gavengnano introduced himself as a Wilmington resident, an attorney, and he has two sons with special education and anxiety issues.

New Commissioner Roberta Biscan introduced herself as a Wilmington resident. Her son was diagnosed with autism at the age of two and a half. From that point on she explained her fierce advocacy for him to help ensure that he had the supports he needed. Ms. Biscan works for a human service agency supporting children and families struggling with various issues including autism, mental health and learning disabilities.

- IV. Minutes of October 4, 2022:** Motion to accept the minutes as written made by Mr. Oliveri, Seconded by Carol Hilbinger, voted on and unanimously approved.
- V. Commission correspondence or inquiries received**
 - a. Resident complaint followed up by Dr. Dee Genetti:** Dr. Dee Genetti followed up on a residential complainant. She informed that this was a tricky call that is unusual, but we have to be prepared to answer responsibly. The complainant did not want to identify the issue and instead asked for personal information on Dr. Dee Genetti's background and profession. Dr. Dee pointed out that we are all responding as Commissioners on Disability, not our private or professional roles. Dr. Dee also reported that her responses to the complainant were copied and inserted into emails to people the complainant felt were transgressors but did

not give permission for us to speak with. Dr. Dee read the response she sent to the complainant which will appear here as a reference for how to answer such calls:

“You reached out to us. If you have an issue we can help with, we would be happy to. As a Commission on Disabilities, our goal is equal participation in all activities for people with disabilities. We work with town residents, town departments and local businesses to ensure equal access to services, programs and buildings. We provide information, referral, advocacy and we also provide technical assistance and community access monitoring surveys for town departments and businesses.

If you feel your civil rights may have been violated as a person with a disability, let me know what the issue is so that we may assess whether we can help you or refer you to someone who can.”

- b. Resident complaint followed up by Carol Hilbinger:** Carol Hilbinger reported that a resident had an issue with a family member who wants to move to another unit overseen by the housing authority. The situation was not a good one. Carol was unsure if the resident had requested an accommodation formally. Carol stated she is currently working on clarifying the issues the resident is facing. The initial contact had been unclear.

Dave Gavegnano informed Carol Hillbinger that he himself had worked in similar situations with housing transfers and offered his assistance if it should be needed.

Roberta Biscan also offered her resources in housing to assist with the inquiry if need be.

- c. Any new correspondence:** Dr. Dee asked Carol Hillbinger if there had been any new correspondence, to which Carol responded there was not.

VI. Topics for Discussion

- a. Follow-up on MOD Emergency water pickup requirements:** Dr. Dee Genetti has spoken with George Hooper, the Wilmington ADA coordinator and Superintendent of Buildings. Dr. Dee reported that the MOD asked COD's and ADA's to review their accessibility requirements for emergency water pickup sites for people with disabilities, an obligation under the ADA. This is requested as we were currently in a drought condition. Mr. Hooper informed the emergency location is at the high school which is very accessible. They reviewed that travel to the site is free of obstructions, has accessible parking, will provide assistance carrying the water out to a person's vehicle if they are unable that signage will be available, is accessible by wheelchair.

Carol Hillbinger asked if a person was unable to get out of their home, or the person does not drive, what would be the plan to this person getting water? Dr. Dee discussed this with Mr. Hooper. There will be a telephone number available to ask for a reasonable accommodation. This brought up another issue. Dr. Dee brought up the concept of having a contact list of people with disabilities in the community so they can be contacted in an emergency to see if they need assistance. Dr. Dee reported this has been tried before, but the residents did not want to share their names and contact information on such a list. This is an idea we should take up at a future date.

- b. 3 Openings on the Board follow-up:** Dr. Dee Genetti informed the group that the commission would need the next new member to be a person with a disability. Dr. Dee stated that she had been in contact with a gentleman who was disabled. If resident were to join, the group would be at the ideal number of seven commissioners.
- c. Fliers:** Dr. Dee Genetti informed the group that the Wilmington Commission on Disabilities had participated in the Welcome to Wilmington event, hosted by the Wilmington Memorial Library. Herself and Carol had run a booth and presented fliers to the community. Dr. Dee expressed her interest in distributing fliers further. Carol Hillbinger noted the accessibility and ease of emailing the flier.
- d. Update on Website Discussion:** Dr. Dee motioned to table the discussion of the website to a later date.
- e. Survey Discussion:** Dr. Dee Genetti tabled a full discussion on this item until the next meeting. In the interim, she asked if the two new members could access the link provided by Carol Hilbinger to our Commission share drive to view the survey draft and see if there is anything they would like to add.
- f. Library Video to demonstrate access while in a wheelchair:** Dr. Dee Genetti referenced her experience working with the Wilmington Memorial Library, as she participated in the video produced to demonstrate access to the building from a wheelchair. Dr. Dee informed the group that with ADA guidelines the building technically does not need to have an elevator. Dr. Dee noted a grant opportunity which may be available to the library to allocate a more sufficient elevator. She will share information on the grant and information on elevator companies along with ideas for placement of the reasonable accommodation.
- g. Annual Report:** Dr. Dee asked the group to provide any insight about things the group has completed via email, as she would be composing the annual report.

VVI. Topics for discussion

Robert Oliveri asked the board how many members attended Veterans' Day ceremonies. Roberta Biscan and Dave Gavegnano both stated that their families do attend. Roberta Biscan detailed her neighbor's involvement in such events.

Roberta Biscan expressed her interest in working with the Recreation Department to establish accessible activities. Burlington was referenced in their inclusive and accessible programs for citizens with special needs. Dr. Dee requested the group send her an email about any recreation opportunities in other towns. We can plan to have a meeting with the Recreation Department Director Brett Sawin to discuss making our Town's programs more accessible.

Roberta Biscan reported that the town beach would not allow her son's aid to accompany him without paying a non-resident fee. Roberta was told by the recreation Department this was only a temporary basis. Dr. Dee Genetti said this is an issue we can address with the recreation Department and that it is a clear violation of the ADA.

Roberta Biscan also expressed her concern with the Recreation Department's policy of the use of floatation devices at Silver Lake. She informed the group that some individuals need floatation devices for a range of needs due to physical mobility issues.

VII. Next meeting dates

April 26, 2023
June 28, 2023
August 23, 2023
October 25, 2023
December 13, 2023

XI. Adjourn Meeting

Motion to adjourn made by Dr. Dee Genetti, seconded by Robert Oliveri, and voted upon and approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas F. Donahue
Recording Secretary