

## FAIRHAVEN COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

Meeting Minutes January 18, 2024

Held at Town Hall, 40 Center St., Fairhaven, MA. 02719

**Contact:** [cod@fairhaven-ma.gov](mailto:cod@fairhaven-ma.gov)

Present: Town Hall: Pamela Whynot (vice-chair), Eleanor Chew(secretary), Donna Maino Lavallo, Annemarie Chagnon, Glenn Gabbard, Cara Viveiros. Martha Reed(Staff Liaison), Keith Silvia (Select Board Liaison)

ZOOM: Ronnie Medina,

Absent: All seven members were present

Guests: Fairhaven Cable TV and Kelly Ferreira

**All votes were taken by roll call vote**

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Pamela Whynot, vice-chair, read the meeting call to order and the state guidelines and called the meeting to order.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Glenn made a motion to accept the minutes and Annemarie seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**III. TREASURER'S REPORT:** Glenn reported that we have approximately \$800.00 left in our budget.

### **IV. OLD BUSINESS:**

**A. Housing:** Eleanor said she called Janet Falone at Fairhaven Housing and she will put our mission statement and an announcement that we are looking for members in their January Newsletter.

**B. Annual Report:** Pam said Glenn sent suggested corrections. Glenn read his updates. Eleanor moved that we approve the report as amended and this be sent to the Town Administrator. Pam noted we should probably put this on the November agenda in the future.

**C. Inclusion in Neighborhood News:** Pam said Beth David will include our meetings in the paper's schedule every month if we submit them as they are not listed on the website early enough. Glenn asked if we could provide a summary of meetings with Donna agreeing this was a good idea to include what we did and our plans. Eleanor suggested we contact Beth to see if this was okay to do and Pam offered to contact Beth.

**D. Meetings with Department Heads:** Eleanor said they are setting up the last eight meetings and hoped to have them done by the end of January. Annemarie asked what these were for with Glenn saying it was to let people know what we do, to find out what they do and to see how we can work together. Eleanor said once the meetings were done she and Glenn would provide a summary to the members. She also said that many department head did not know we were around with Annemarie saying she found the same thing when she's mentioned

us to others. Donna said this was making good connections and it was a good leap forward and she would like to see more of a connection with the schools.

**E. Grant Update:** Martha said the state notified the town that they were postponing awards until mid-January and said she and Angie have been working on the RFP's so they are ready to go out. Pam thanked Martha for her work behind the scenes.

**F. ASL Classes:** Annemarie reported that she had identified a few things about the ASL Program After School and adult program. She reached out to a friend looking for a person to teach the kids. Martha has a person for the adults and the class size will be 10-12 people. This is a beginner's class and the total cost is \$750.00. Martha offered to have the COA cover \$375.00 of the cost with the rest being paid for by the COD. Donna said she spoke with the schools and they are excited to do this in Enrichments in five week sessions. She asked if we could do a survey at the end of the classes with the teachers, kids, parents and that ASL is a big help to people of different abilities. Pam asked Donna to bring forward the cost for the kids next month. Ronnie moved that the COD pay \$375.00 for the Adult ASL Class with Annemarie seconding it. The motion passed 6 yes and 1 no with Eleanor explaining why she voted no.

**G. Holiday Tree:** Cara and Pam gave a report on the holiday tree with Cara having ordered the ornaments and Annemarie reminding Cara about the colors.

**H. Social Media:** Glenn said we have over 200 followers and we are a member of many of the town's Face Book pages to get the word out.

**I. By-Laws:** It was decided to move this to after new business.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS:**

**A. Updating MA COD Website:** Pam reminded us that the new chair would need to update this. Eleanor said all calls should go to the Town Administrator's Office for them to forward.

**B. Digital Equity Access Plan:** Pam explained that the town is working with CTC to seek federal funding for digital equity. She received an email from CTC seeking our input. CTC posed three questions to us: First: What does the COD see as the biggest obstacles with access to internet and devices. Donna said she has spoken with a woman who was legally blind and said that speech to text is helpful. People need training on specific devices that are available. Pam said phones have that if you know how to use them. Annemarie responded that different programs do not always work and we need devices to work in support with the programs. Glenn said that our knowledge is limited as a group and we need to look at where people are. He said the schools are getting new resources. He said limited funds can be an issue. Pam said she thought CTC did a town wide survey. Martha said they wanted to include the COD in this discussion. Pam said someone needs to talk to people where they are at. Second: What existing programs are offered by the COD? Pam said we have no classes and this could be an issue. Eleanor said the library has devices people can check out on their library cards. Third:

With financing what would we like to do? Pam suggested that we would look for responses in different areas. Glenn said expand the information on devices out there. Martha suggested working with the library and Charlie Murphy to do an interview on his page on cable. Pam gave an example of someone she knew who had not used a computer but was able to pick it up quickly when shown how to use it, saying people need opportunities to learn. Donna said she learned so much from the classes at the COA about phones and computers.

**C. Sensory Area For Town Events:** Annemarie said she had this idea after Kid's Fest in October. She asked if it made sense to do a sensory area as people need space to regroup asking how we could make this happen. Eleanor said that the Belonging Committee does this asking if we could work with them? Pam suggested that Annemarie reach out to Jessica Fidalgo from the Belonging Committee to see if we could partner with them. Glenn said that a lot happens and suggested that we do a guide for groups of things to consider when setting up an event. Annemarie asked if we could do this to be more inclusive to all, including adults? Glenn asked how things get scheduled and Keith said to reach out to the TA. Eleanor explained that most events are done by the Tourism Director and the Fairhaven Improvement Association. Eleanor said they have a meeting with the Tourism Director and she and Glenn would pose that question to him.

**D. Huttleston Marketplace Kid's Days:** Eleanor said the Tourism Director reached out to her saying he wanted to do kid's activities the first Saturdays of June-September asking if we wanted to be involved. Donna expressed concern with scheduling and asked if we could reach out to other groups to be involved. Eleanor felt it was a good way to get us out there, with Donna expressing concern with the money spent for this. What do we know? Where do we get information from? Annemarie felt Donna had a valid point and asked if it prohibited us from getting people to come. Pam said this could be a resource for others. Glenn asked about the budget. We decided to table this and talk to Chris Richard. Pam said let's bring ideas and ways to implement this. Donna restated her desire to see outside groups come.

**E. Funds For Accessibility:** Ronnie shared there could be a grant that could be used for devices for the deaf and that he would talk to Bruce. Eleanor asked who Bruce was with Ronnie responding the Conservation Agent.

**F. Membership Planning For 2024:** Glenn said it it hard to get members asking how we could devise a plan for ongoing recruiting. How can we do outreach to those that aren't aware we are here? Can we ask someone we meet to come to a meeting and mentor them if they decide to join us? Pam reminded us that Jeff Dugan from MA COD talked about doing a Friends of COD. Annemarie asked if we could ask a high school student to join us as a non-member.

**G. Reorganization:** Pam began by thanking Marcus Ferro for his work in invigorating the COD, saying she was thankful for his service noting he has resigned for personal reasons. Eleanor nominated herself as chair with Glenn seconding this. Annemarie asked what would happen if Eleanor was chosen, asking what the three key positions were. Donna nominated

Pam wit Annemarie seconding this. A vote was taken for Eleanor first with the motion passing 4-3. Eleanor nominated Annemarie for Secretary with Annemarie declining the nomination. Donna nominated herself with Eleanor seconding this. This motion passed 6 to 1.

**By-Laws from Old Business:** It was decided to table this until the next meeting due to the time.

**VIII. Public Comment:** No public comment

**IX. Comments from Commission Members:** Pam spoke about the MA COD meeting in April. Eleanor spoke about the Hedge St. Walk Around, the ZOOM option and the MA COD training in February.

**X. New Meeting Date:** Eleanor moved that we meet Thursday, February 8, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at town hall with Annemarie seconding it. The motion passed unanimously.

**XI. Closing Comments/Adjournment:** Annemarie made a motion to adjourn with Glenn seconding it. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Eleanor Chew  
Secretary