

LANCASTER COMMISSION ON DISABILITY ANNUAL REPORT 2012

The Lancaster Commission on Disability (COD) was very active in 2012:

The commission undertook important initiatives, provided advice to town organizations, and carried out myriad tasks, all designed to support the goals of identifying problems and providing solutions for Lancaster residents with disabilities. The commission continues to strive to make the community more accessible to those who are impaired or have disabilities.

Highlights of the year included canvassing in three town neighborhoods to determine firsthand if residents with disabilities might have special needs in the event of emergency or disaster. Such information is held in strict confidence with Lancaster officials handling first response and emergency preparations such as fire and EMT. The information supplements data that has been gathered via a town questionnaire that was distributed over the past several years and is part of a database the COD is building.

With the help of several volunteers, the COD conducted a spring canvassing session on Bigelow Road, Whitcomb Drive and portions of Sterling Road, and a fall session was conducted in the Eagle Ridge development. The canvassing efforts have served to inform / educate and also provide awareness to residents on the role of the COD.

The COD has also indentified and contacted certain public establishments and businesses that needed to meet compliance per the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Massachusetts Office on Disability requirements. In addition, the COD has been developing a plan to expand outreach efforts to identify more extensively, businesses and public facilities in need of improvement and /or updates to meet the aforementioned compliance.

The COD has also monitored, worked with and advised town organizations on projects such as accessibility for the Lancaster Community Center (LCC), Thayer Field Recreation Campus Task Force, Pellechia Boat launch, Bartlett Pond and trails, among others.

The COD has also conducted discovery sessions with SHINE counselor Gretchen Pruden, Nashoba BOH Nurse, Tamara Bedard, and the Counsel on Aging, to determine ways the COD can interact and to learn and share helpful information with each other.

The COD also had an information table and disseminated literature and files of Life at the Lancaster Town Day Event on June 24. In 2012, two commission members resigned and one new member was added. The commission also nominated a new chair, to replace previous chair Lawrence Schlutz, who moved from Lancaster.

The Lancaster COD is a vibrant commission that ultimately enhances the lives of residents and visitors, especially those with disabilities, at almost no cost due to the collective efforts of dedicated volunteers who staff the commission. In a state where over half of the communities do not even have an organized disability commission, Lancaster is playing a progressive role in this area that the town can be proud of.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael S. McCue
Chairman, Lancaster COD