



ANDOVER COMMISSION ON DISABILITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Building an Accessible Andover – Commission on Disability's Support to the Town



**Haggett's Pond
Andover's First
Accessible Trail**



**Nason's Landing
Andover's first
Accessible Boat Launch**



**Ballardvale Playground
Accessibility Improvements**

The Andover Commission on Disability (ACOD) serves as an adviser to the Town on matters of disability affecting the community. The Commission's goal is to improve the lives of people with disabilities and ensure their inclusion in the social, economic and political life of the community.

- ACOD participated in several grant proposals, helping the town secure over \$4 million in grants, including the Essex Steet Corridor, Haggett's Pond Rail Trail, Ballardvale Playground, and Old Town Hall lift for access to the stage.
- ACOD advocated, advised, and provided Letters of Support for the following projects:
 - ◇ Accessibility improvements to Old Town Hall
 - ◇ Ballardvale Playground accessibility improvements
 - ◇ Chandler Road Accessible Community Garden
 - ◇ Doherty Middle School elevator project and accessible bathrooms
 - ◇ Haggett's Pond Rail Trail accessible parking, improved walking surface and boardwalk
 - ◇ Multigenerational Accessible Garden implemented at the Playstead

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Commission Activities: collaboration, communications, improved accessibility

ACOD’s monthly meetings follow the open meeting law, with minutes and videos available online or on request. The Commission also published a newsletter and developed more information graphics highlighting resources. Other important events included:

- Collaboration with the director and staff of the Mass Office on Disability (MOD)
- Commission communications enhancements – ACOD defined the role of communications and recruited a Town resident with communications skills.
- Regional commission and state meetings to improve Andover’s accessibility.



Haggett’s Pond Accessible Rail Trail Conservation Commission Rally

- Participation and advocacy at the Special Town Meeting on zoning impacting Haggett’s Pond.
- ADA Program Access: we advise and assist in ensuring that all of the Town programs, services, and activities, when viewed in their entirety, are accessible to people with disabilities. In the past, ACOD has worked with the town to implement accessible voting, assistive listening at Town Meeting and in the Town’s conference rooms, improved sidewalks and curb cuts, removal of physical barriers and other Program Access projects. This year our focus has been to increase Program Access in outside areas, specifically Haggett’s Pond Rail Trail, Andover’s first accessible trail, and Nason’s Landing, Andover’s first accessible kayak boat launch.

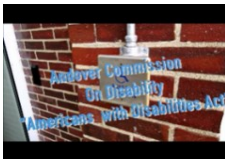
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Andover Community Accessibility – Commission on Disability Initiated Projects

ACOD projects aimed at the inclusion of people with disabilities.

Projects can be as small as adding an accessible bench to a Conservation nature trail, or as large as a Town-wide initiative, for example: Project Lifesaver, managed by the Police with 24-hour coverage and embedded into the 911 system. With Project Lifesaver, when a caregiver notifies 911 that the person is missing, a search and rescue team responds to the wanderer's area and starts searching with the mobile locator tracking system. Nationwide, there have been 4,401 rescues.



Accessible Andover resources available, a 12-part mini-series on Andover Cable TV
<https://acod.mhl.org/andover-commission-on-disability-videos/acod-disability-resources-available-on-video/>

The Commissioners have diverse backgrounds including employees of Merrimack College, UMass Boston, Department of Public Works, Youth Services, retired special education teacher, communications specialist, retired engineer, and advocate for passing the 766 law, business owner, manufacturing engineer, and a retired engineering manager. Our Staff Advisor and member is the Director of Office of Equity & Engagement.

Our liaisons include the town ADA Coordinator and Facilities Director, Council on Aging member and a Select Board member.



Community Outreach Examples: Andover Day and Farmers Market booths

Robb Center Caregivers Support Group participation

Robb Center Diabetes Support Group participation

Major upgrade of the ACOD website: <https://acod.mhl.org>

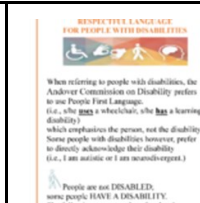
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ACOD Published Specialized Information:



Five Ways the Andover Commission on Disability Strengthens Andover



Respectful Language for People with Disabilities



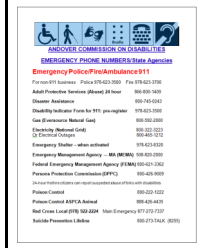
Implicit Bias Andover Commission on Disability



Caregivers Resources



Disability Awareness



Contacts— State Agencies and others



10 Things to know about ACOD

For further information or feedback please visit our web site:

<https://acod.mhl.org>

