

# Ability Awareness Committee

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Minutes of the Meeting on  
September 6, 2022

**Village of Homer Glen  
14240 W. 151<sup>st</sup> Street  
Community Room**

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 6:39 p.m. by Chairperson LaHa.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Roll Call; Establish Quorum**

Members present at 6:39 p.m. were Chairperson Nicole Laha, Member Christina Neitzke-Troiike, Member Karen Adamczyk, Member Angela McKenna, Member James Cronos, and Member Robert O'Connor.

Member absent was Member Heather Bleck.

**4. Approval of Amendments to the Agenda**

There were no amendments to the agenda.

**5. Approval of Minutes**

- a. Motion to approve minutes from the committee meeting.

Member Adamczyk noted that Deb Stevens did pickup of Special Needs Day prizes, not her. Member Neitzke-Troiike noted that her name was not spelled out in the minutes, that it was abbreviated "NT". Also requested that her title be changed to "Committee Member Neitzke-Troiike" rather than "Village Clerk Neitzke-Troiike" for the purposes of the Ability Awareness Committee. Member Neitzke-Troiike and Member LaHa noted that there was a lot of information missing from the previous minutes. Staff Liaison Medina stated that this was the only information that we were able to locate from previous staff liaison's folder. Chairperson LaHa explained that she would like her comments officially noted.

- b. Motion was made to table the approval of the minutes until the next meeting to give time to try to locate more information. Member Adamczyk made a motion to table the approval of the minutes until the next meeting. Second was made by Member Neitzke-Troiike. Motion passed unanimously.

**6. Public Comment**

None.

## 7. Reports and Communication

### a. Report from Chairperson LaHa:

- i. Chairperson LaHa would like to bring back round tables. She is getting a lot of requests for sign language course to happen again. She would like to reach out to Dawn and set up another class. She also wanted to thank Dawn for helping her sign at the Mrs. America pageant. Her goal is to get back on track with monthly or bi-monthly events.

### b. Report from Events Coordinator Medina:

- i. The Senior Lifestyle Expo is being held on Saturday, September 10<sup>th</sup> and the Village will have a booth and would like to offer the Ability Awareness Committee a time slot to work the booth to hand out information about the services they provide to the Seniors in the community. Member Neitzke-Troiike stated that when the committee was formed it was meant to serve as a liaison to the adults and children of the community with disabilities, and veterans and seniors were mentioned in the Committee Mission Statement, and we really need clarification as to what role they play in those areas now. Chairperson LaHa stated that she believes some are confusing special needs with disability and accessibility, and seniors and veterans do fall in that category. Statistics show that about 52% of our Homer Glen seniors have an accessibility concern. We serve any community member that has a disability or an accessibility concern. Chairperson LaHa asked if the committee was just being asked to share information about how they can help Seniors with disability or accessibility concerns, to which Event Coordinator Medina said yes.
- ii. Event Coordinator Medina also asked where the Medical Closet project sits. Is it being promoted? How can we do more to promote? Chairperson LaHa replied that the closet has been being promoted for about 6 months and we have been receiving donations. She stated that there is a protocol in place. Member Adamczyk mentioned that some of the confusion may be coming from there also being a Senior Committee at the Township. Chairperson LaHa stated that attempts had been made to work with the Township, but those attempts had not worked out, so she took on the project for the Village. She said we should definitely promote it again. There is a protocol that Stacy was supposed to send to front desk staff, we need to check on that.

### c. Reports from Member Neitzke-Troiike:

- i. Member Neitzke-Troiike stated that an ordinance was passed that prohibits Village events from being held off of village property. Will this affect our volunteering for Best Buddies Day. Chairperson LaHa said that this is not a Village event, this is The Ability Awareness Committee volunteering together for the Best Buddies event.
- ii. Member Neitzke-Troiike said that if the Senior Expo is being promoted as a Village event, the Ability Awareness Committee should have been contacted right away to participate.
- iii. Member Neitzke-Troiike said that on behalf of the entire committee she wanted to let Chairperson LaHa know that it was amazing to see her representing the committee and to see her sign. She made the committee so proud. Chairperson LaHa said that a big part of her interview was about what the committee does. She also stated that

she would like to take a group photo with the committee along with her sash to share. She said that this has been a great platform to share with other communities what we do, and now they want to attend our meetings to see what we do and how they can help.

- iv. Member Neitzke-Troiike asked if everyone received the HomerFest recap that she sent out. Numbers were broken down on number of adults and where everyone came from. This was done particularly because originally Special Needs Day was not going to be advertised to other towns, but a lot of our Homer Glen residents are young adults, and the ride issue became a bigger deal. Member Admaczyk worked hard that day to resolve the ride issue that day. It will be very important that someone from the committee attend Fest meetings as it gets closer to be involved in the planning. Chairperson LaHa would like the email that Member Adamczyk sent to the HomerFest Committee included in the minutes of this meeting when they are sent out. Chairperson LaHa believes that the Special Needs Day turned out “mediocre”, but the plans that were made for the day were phenomenal. There were things that were planned that didn’t happen. Member Adamczyk believes that a lot of things will be better handled next year, and we will have a great day. Chairperson LaHa suggested a contract from the Ability Awareness Committee to the carnival company with the expectations for the Special Needs Day next year.
  - v. Member Neitzke-Troiike stated that Trustee Pazmino agreed to donate \$2000 to order scent jars. To date the jars have not been received. Is there another event we can distribute them?
  - vi. Member Neitzke-Troiike wanted to apologize to Joey’s Red Hots and Papa Joe’s who were not recognized for their donation to Special Needs Day.
- d. Report from Member Adamczyk:
- i. We have roughly 700lbs. of plastic caps. Question is should we get more than one bench. 6’ bench with back is \$295 with 200lbs of plastic caps. 8’ bench with back is \$325 with 250lbs. of caps. We could probably get two benches. Chairperson LaHa would love to have a bench with the Committee name on them. Rainbow benches are additional \$75. Chairperson LaHa likes the idea of rainbow bench, she will bring this up at next parks meeting. Member Adamczyk wants it to be recorded that this project was her initiative, but a team effort. Chairperson LaHa agreed that she was on board with this project. Event Coordinator asked since the company is going to be closing in October, should we stop collecting caps until spring. Chairperson LaHa agreed that we should stop for now.
  - ii. Member Neitzke-Troiike asked about the checks for the winners of the pop tab challenge from the fest. She believes Maureen has not received the check. Chairperson LaHa was not aware that people had not picked up their checks. Member Neitzke-Troiike said that Tom picked up his, that the gift card winners had picked up, and then one gift card winner donated theirs back. Event Coordinator Medina will check on where the checks/gift cards are. Member Neitzke-Troiike stated that the 90 passes donated for Konow’s are also missing. To recap, 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner received a \$500 Chesdan’s gift card, and Homer Cares matched the gift card. The winning family donated the gift card back to the committee to use as they see fit. The 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner

received a \$750 gift card to Birchwood Gardens. They purchased a shade tree and donated the rest to another special needs family. The 1<sup>st</sup> place winner, Maureen, donated her winnings to a boy named Jax, and also was giving her \$1000 to another special needs family in Homer Glen. Chairperson LaHa will follow up with Stacy Patrianakos.

e. Report from Member O'Connor:

- i. Member O'Connor proposed to do a roundtable to discuss transitioning to adulthood planning for families with children with special needs. He met with someone at Will County Disability Resource Center, and she provided information on different programs and assistance they provide. She would like to meet with the committee. He also found out that the Resource Center hires a lot of people with disabilities. He provided pamphlets with information from them. He also looked into Ruben Law, who deals specifically with future planning for special needs families. He shared that they do have different presentations happening, and would be interested in a web seminar as well. Chairperson LaHa would like to hold our next roundtable and call it "Future Planning", and invite the Disability Resource Center as well as the ARC Resource Center including the legal team. She would like to do this sometime in October. Member Adamczyk mentioned that there is also a well-known law firm in Lockport that also deals specifically with Special Needs families. Chairperson LaHa asked Member O'Connor to check for a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday November for availability to set up the roundtable.

f. Report from Member McKenna:

- i. Member Neitzke-Troiike made a call to pop tab winner Maureen, and Maureen announced that she was going to be donating her \$1000 winnings to the McKenna family.

g. Report from Member Crones:

- i. Member Crones went to one of the volunteer meetings for HomerFest, and they expressed that they would need an additional Bassett certified volunteer for the beer tent, and he went on and completed that training for the committee.
- ii. Member Crones wanted to ask about the cigar bar and how the tips were handled as far as the charity who was working at that time.

h. Report from Member Bleck (via email read by Chairperson LaHa):

- i. There is a tentative date for 10/2 from 5-7 for the Best Buddies event at Konow's. Will this work? Member Neitzke-Troiike recommended selecting a date that is not so crowded. She recommended a Tuesday or Wednesday. Chairperson LaHa asked Member Neitzke-Troiike to connect with Member Bleck to coordinate.
- ii. Total raised at HomerFest – numbers kept changing. Member Neitzke-Troiike commended the volunteer group for doing an amazing job at the fest, including clean-up at the end of the night. She stated that Homer Cares raised \$1,232.20. She stated that we did raise enough to order the swing. Chairperson LaHa said that the swing has been ordered along with the playground equipment. Groundbreaking is set for mid-September. Member Neitzke-Troiike stated that the Ability Awareness Committee raised \$2,093 in cash, in addition to \$2,000 in

checks. She stated another update said that there was \$1,993 in cash plus the \$2,000 in checks.

#### 8. Old Business

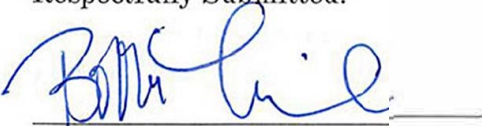
#### 9. New Business

- a. Member Neitzke-Troiike stated that she and Member Crones went to a golfouting with over 600 golfers. The organizer Terry Hancock, has a son, Bryan, who is autistic. Terry would like to learn more about our committee and find ways to partner. Terry's golf outing raised over \$1 million. Chairperson LaHa mentioned that Member Neitzke-Troiike should invite him to one of our meetings. Member Crones and Member Neitzke-Troiike would like for our committee to golf next year in this event.
- b. Member Neitzke-Troiike asked if we will continue pop tabs for next year. Chairperson LaHa thinks that we should continue.
- c. Member Crones wanted to clarify the committee's involvement with the Senior Expo. Will we be participating? Chairperson LaHa will not be in town, but would love for the committee to be involved if possible. She asked if anyone was available, but no one is free that day. She asked for Event Coordinator Medina to apologize to Sue Steilen, but due to the short notice, the committee would not be able to participate.
- d. Chairperson LaHa promised that she would work on designing the Ability Awareness Committee brochure to hand out.

#### 10. Adjournment

Member Adamczyk made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Second was made by Member Crones. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Bobbi Medina

Event Coordinator

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Karen R. Adameczyk** [REDACTED]  
Date: Wed, Aug 3, 2022 at 12:11 PM  
Subject: Homerfest Committee  
To: Karen Adameczyk [REDACTED]

As of today, August 3, I will be stepping down from the Homerfest committee. I will continue to volunteer and also work behind the scenes to make sure the Special Needs Carnival is successful. If necessary, I can attend meetings closer to the deadline and provide any input that may be helpful.

I would like to put into the record of the meeting some suggestions for next year, based upon this year's experience and conversations with the families who attended.

1. Many of the rides were not in working order. I realize that some of that is out of our control, but it is heartbreaking to see the kids begging to go on a ride that is not open.
2. There was a lot of confusion about the more advanced rides for the bigger kids. Either the rides opened late, were not working, or were just not available. The issue has been raised both last year and this year that many of our guests are now teenagers and/or adults who are able and want to enjoy the bigger rides. Lights and sounds are not the issue, as those are subdued.
3. The rides were split up into three areas (large rides, rides in the middle, and the kiddie rides in the grass). This made it difficult for families with children of various ages to stay relatively close together. They either had to split up or drag the other aged children and make them wait until that particular ride was finished, then "switch" areas. I was not invited this year when some of the committee members met with the carnival owners so did not have the opportunity to provide that insight. Hopefully that can be corrected for next year.
4. The small kiddie rides were in the grass, which meant parents with strollers had to push them uphill to get to the rides.
5. The Heritage Corridor tent was much farther away from the main tent this year. Many parents were not fully aware that there was face painting and gifts and games available. I did continuously walk around to remind them.
6. It would be helpful to have a sign posted near the main tent showcasing any activities inside, such as the Will County Sheriff with the dogs and Scent jars. I did grab a jar kit and walked around to show parents and encourage them to stop in the tent.
7. The area where people registered and picked up their tee shirts needs an awning or small tarp as an overhang. The "shelf" was in the sun and became extremely hot for both our volunteers and families. Another option would be to cover the shelf with some type of cloth or canvas to reduce the likelihood of anyone getting burned.
8. It would be helpful for more mats or flattened stone leading into the tent for better wheelchair access and those who were using canes.
9. Display a sign to point out the food vendors who donated food and water so it is more obvious. Sometimes one parent/guardian will be aware but forget to tell the other parent.

I would like to also express my appreciation for the donation of toys for the kids who played games. We were able to use all the toys by the end of the SN carnival so Deb Stevens was right on target with her order. Thank you to the Will County Sheriff for bringing the dogs and scent jars. Thank you to the very generous food vendors who donated food and water for the families, and again a huge shoutout to the Heritage Corridor for their generosity. Special thank-you to Sue, Debbie, and Bobbi for all their help behind the scenes and keeping me updated as families signed up.

Mostly I would like to thank the members of the Homerfest Committee for their hard work and dedication. I will continue to participate with the Special Needs carnival both as an individual and a member of the Ability Awareness Committee. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Karen Adamczyk