

Ability Awareness

Minutes of the Meeting on
January 6, 2026

**Village of Homer Glen
14240 W. 151st Street
Homer Glen, IL 60491
Board Room**

1. Call to Order.

Chair Neitzke-Troiike called the meeting to order at 5:59 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. Roll Call.

Present: Chair Christina Neitzke-Troiike, Vice- Chair Karen Adamczyk, Members: Angela McKenna, Bob O'Connor, Teresa Kocanda, Kitty Mitchell, Joyal Akkawi and Felicia David.

Absent: Member Jim Cronos

Also present: Staff Liaison Penny Richards

4. Amendments to the Agenda – None

5. Approval of Agenda

Member McKenna made the motion to approve, seconded by Member Mitchell. All in favor, none opposed.

6. Approval of Minutes

- December 2, 2025

Member David made the motion to approve, seconded by Member Akkawi. All in favor, none opposed.

7. Public Comment

Logan and Andrew O'Connor were present.

8. Reports and Communications

a) Report from Chair

Chair Neitzke-Troiike spoke in regards to adding new members to the committee. General consensus was to allow two additional members. There is currently a minimum number of 5 to make the committee but no maximum. Everyone agreed the maximum for the Ability Awareness Committee should be 11. There was also discussion on the possibility of creating sub-committees for the various events that AAC is involved in.

Chair Neitzke-Troiike mentioned that the resident that decorates his house for Christmas and collects donations for Shady Oaks Camp will no longer be doing so and is looking to sell off his decorations. She mentioned it would be nice if somehow AAC could purchase those decorations and continue collecting donations for Shady Oaks by setting up a display in Heritage Park. Those in attendance felt it might be too difficult to arrange a way for donations to be made and the Chair said her block in her neighborhood was also looking into continuing the tradition. She did mention the possibility of AAC helping with the annual spaghetti dinner fundraiser for Shady Oaks that is held at Tazza every year. Member David mentioned that that fundraiser had been recently done and we would have to wait until next year.

Chair Neitzke-Troike asked Member Mitchell if she would give a brief overview of all 2025 events AAC participated in at the next Village Board meeting giving some highlights that might encourage more people to get involved.

Lastly, Chair Neitzke-Troike informed the committee that Heritage Circle was being renamed Zemke Way in honor of Lou Zemke, Homer Glen resident and founder of V.F.W. Post 2011 at Marian Village. Mr. Zemke has been a driving force behind all veterans related events in Homer Glen and deserves the recognition for his service to community and country.

b) Report from Staff

Staff Liaison Richards reported that of the twenty available openings for the Sensory Santa event, seventeen were filled and approximately nine families actually came. Weather was more than likely the reason behind a lower-than-expected turnout but all things considered, for a first-time event, the overall opinion was that it went great.

The committee had asked for a list of member addresses and phone numbers which Staff Liaison Richards provided to everyone in attendance.

Staff Liaison Richards shared information on an applicant for the committee and said she would reach out to both potential candidates that had applied and invite them to attend our next meeting on February 3rd.

c) Budget Report

This month \$113.80 was spent at Jewel for cookies, candy canes and water for the Sensory Santa event and \$14.38 was spent to Amazon for decorations for the Stocking Stuffer station as well. Total spent to date is \$5385.62 and the balance of our budget is \$9614.38. Chair Neitzke-Troike indicated that we are now \$43.62 over the amount that AAC has actually brought in, creating a deficit in our funds and that we need to stick to what we raised instead of spending more.

d) Reports from Members

Member O'Connor asked for clarification as to whether committee members need to re-apply for the committee in March or just give a verbal indication as to whether they will be staying on the committee or leaving the committee altogether. Chair Neitzke-Troike directed Member O'Connor and all members to send Staff Liaison Richards an email indicating their decisions after the request to stay or go is issued.

Member Kocanda asked for an event calendar so members can plan in advance for events to participate in.

Member Mitchell suggested purchasing nametags for committee members. She felt it would be helpful to parents and community members to identify AAC members at public events. Staff Liaison Richards said she would look into getting them ordered.

9. Old Business

A recap of the Homer for the Holidays event was given. Member David mentioned a group that makes gingerbread houses with special needs adults and thought it might be something to consider for next year. Vice-Chair Adamczyk provided a copy of suggestions and critiques for the event as asked by Dan Waddick from the events department.

Chair Neitzke-Troiike would like to recognize the Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robbins on Bell Road by presenting the business with the first Inclusive Impact Award at the next village board meeting on January 14th. She told the committee of a situation that occurred with the Hadley School Special Education students whose field trip to an ice cream parlor was suddenly cancelled and how the Homer Glen Baskin Robbins stepped up and provided the students with ice cream and other goodies at the last minute so the students wouldn't be disappointed. The business went above and beyond what was asked of them at the last minute and deserves to be recognized for taking such good care of the students.

Chair Neitzke-Troiike also asked Staff Liaison Richards to look into a donation to the AAC that was supposed to be coming from the Dunkin on 159th Street.

The Mayor's Choice Award for the gnome/snowman decorating contest in the park was going to the Hadley School Special Education class and they will also be recognized at the board meeting while there.

Vice-Chair Adamczyk thanked Member David for wrapping all the boxes to decorate under the Christmas tree for the Santa event and thanked Member McKenna for the idea of a stocking stuffer station. For next year she suggested possibly including other holiday celebrations like Kwanzaa, Hannukah, etc.

Vice-Chair Adamczyk would like to contact Mailyn Gotlund about returning for ASL classes and have her attend the next meeting to discuss different ways of having the classes such as a longer attendance time or cutting the numbers of classes into two longer classes instead four 45-minute sessions.

10. New Business

There was no new business to discuss but Vice-Chair Adamczyk did bring up the van transportation topic before the meeting adjourned and Chair Neitzke-Troiike said they are waiting on grant funding for the van and are checking into the possible use of an EMA vehicle instead of purchasing a new one.

11. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Angela McKenna and seconded by Kitty Mitchell. All in favor, none opposed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.

Next meeting: Tuesday, February 3 at 6:00 p.m. in the Village Hall Board Room.

Respectfully Submitted:



Penny Richards
Ability Awareness Staff Liaison