



Robert K. McCarthy
Acting Mayor

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS
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MINUTES OF THE SALEM COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES MARCH 28, 2023

A meeting of the Salem Commission on Disabilities was held on March 28, 2023, at 4:30 p.m., via ZOOM, an online video conference call system in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present on call were: Chair Debra Lobsitz; Commissioners: Darren Black, Rebecca Christie, Ezekiel Holt, Maureen McKinnon, David Moisan, Kerry Neenan and Kate Zuraw; Lisa Cammarata, ADA Coordinator, HR Director, Alan Hanscom, SATv, Jeff Cohen, City Council Liaison and Acting Clerk Joanne Roomey (noted by last name in the minutes). Absent was Manda Spittle.

1) Introductions/welcome

Cammarata called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m. and she extended a welcome to everyone. Each commissioner and invited guest introduced themselves.

2) Approval of Minutes of February 2023 meeting

Moisan made a motion to approve the Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes of January 17, 2023. Seconded by Neenan. A roll call vote was taken, Mr. Black abstained, six members were in favor, the motion carried.

3) Guests

Joe Quintanilla, board member of Adaptive Sports New England, spoke about adaptable sport activities for youth and young adults who have visual or mobility impairments. They collaborate with adaptive-specific and mainstream sports programs, adding value through their focus on raising awareness, increasing participation and building capacity so that more youth and adults with visual or mobility disabilities can access sports closer to home.

Black is also a member of Adaptive Sports New England and he spoke about the new Beep Baseball Program, the Boston Strong. It is an amazing opportunity for individuals with a visual impairment to learn and play beep baseball. There are two cited volunteers and everyone who plays has to wear a blindfold to make it fair. Their team is a part of the National Beep Baseball Association and will travel and play in tournaments. This program is located at Tufts University on Sunday mornings with the practices and team being run by Head Coach Joe Quintanilla. The goals are to build resilience, confidence, positive force for visual impairment, growth and to network with others. Volunteers are welcome! For more information, you can click on this link: <https://adaptivesportsne.org/beep-baseball/>

Black will follow up with Quintanilla to see if the commission can organize a game to raise awareness and money. Ms. McKinnon suggested maybe the commission could match what they raise with a cap. Cammarata will look into whether or not we can use the commission's money to donate.

4) **New Business**

a. Construction update; Engineering Department

Cammarata got an email from Dave Knowlton, the city's engineer, outlining the different projects they are working on, the scope, start date and project duration. Knowlton will be happy to come to the next meeting to share more information if anyone has any questions.

b. MBTA Virtual Town Hall and **Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**; Darren Black

On March 10th Black joined the MCB and the MBTA Mobility Center to discuss the services offered by MCB's Orientation and Mobility Team and the MBTA Mobility Center. They discussed travel training by subways or bus routes, reduced fares, blind and senior access passes, and trip planning, as well as the technology available to riders. Black said there has been great productivity with the MBTA and should be more going forward now that we have a new director. For more information, you can contact the MCB at 800-392-6450.

5) **Old Business**

a. ADA Transition Plan: No new updates

b. Subcommittee reports and assignments:

ADA Updates and Transition Plan: No new updates

Project funding: No new updates

Social Media: Cammarata said that Spittle had an interest in taking over the Facebook account. She just needs to figure out how to remove it from her account and get it into Spittle's name. Spittle and Cammarata will work together to get this accomplished.

Pedestrian Safety: Councilor Cohen said they got the signal fixed at Riley Plaza across from the Post Office towards Walgreens. He also said it is difficult for vehicles to see pedestrians on Lafayette Street next to Prime Gas Station because cars and trucks are always parked there. Dave Kucharsky, from Traffic and Parking, Councilor Prosniewski, and Councilor Cohen have put up an ordinance so it will be a NO PARKING ZONE. Kucharsky also secured a grant to install two sets of combination signals and license plate readers. One of them will be installed at the Saltonstall School crosswalk, the most dangerous school crosswalk, and they did a rainbow crosswalk just for that reason.

SCOD representative to Salem Human Rights Coalitions/Kerry Neenan:

Neenan said at the last meeting there was a really good presentation on the Poverty Trap. Alice Merkel sent a letter to the editor of the Salem News emphasizing how she has been through that personally and she really enjoyed the presentation. There is a link on Alice Merkel's FB page to the presentation and to Veronica's comments. Councilor Cohen said Veronica is a member of the Salem Housing Authority Board, she resides at Rainbow Terrace and she is a great advocate for what she does. It really makes you think about how poverty affects people, not just paying rent or their bills, but health wise. She used to work for the city as well. Cammarata will follow up with Neenan.

c. Mack Park Food Farm accessibility and picnic tables; Rebecca Christie

Neenan commented that the accessibility updates at the food farm have been great and she has been working with Kerry Murphy to have some residential homes volunteer at the food farm. They are very excited to volunteer and she will be coordinating that.

d. Wheelchair Rental Program; SCOD role; update/follow-up, if applicable; Kerry Neenan

Neenan connected with Kate Fox and she is excited to talk about the idea of the Wheelchair Rental Program and is looking into liability insurance. Neenan referred Fox to Cammarata and invited her to next month's meeting. She is on board and happy to help.

Neenan said Northeast Arc at the Liberty Tree Mall, which is part of an artisan type market, is having an event on April 15th and 16th. On April 15th at 12:00 p.m. they are going to have a performance by Santon who is a blind autistic musician and plays musical instruments.

e. Canal St. pathway: a request of using funds to add entrance/exit indicators for the visually impaired; Meg Stott/Jeff Cohen, *follow-up, if needed*.

Councilor Cohen said the Canal Street development is still in process. He emailed Brendan Linard, who works in the Traffic and Parking Department, to see if there are any updates and Lenard said he will inform Councilor Cohen of any updates once he receives them.

f. Advisory Group Open Space and Recreation Plan; Tom Devine; Senior Planner; (or Lobsitz)

Christie participated in the Advisory Group Open Space and Recreation meeting. There was an online survey that was intended to be closed on March 22nd but they extended it to April 3rd. There are no new reports out. The last open space plan expired in 2022. Until there is a new plan in place, the city is not eligible to apply for certain types of grants. They want to gather more input on parks and open spaces from the community to help meet their goals for the next seven-year plan from 2023 to 2029. Saturday, April 1, 2023 is the first day for volunteers at Mack Park from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

g. Accessibility of trail at Forest River. Christie has a call out to Curtis Burke and as soon as she hears from him, she will let the commission know. Other than that, there are no new updates.

- h. ADA Symposium; May 21 -24, Kansas City; Zeke Holt/Lisa Cammarata/Deb Lobsitz

Cammarata asked if anyone is interested in going to Kansas City for the ADA Symposium. She said to think about it and they will revisit at the next meeting. Cammarata will look into seeing if it is offered virtually.

- i. Christie has signed up for the Community Access Monitor Training which will be held virtually on April 5th and April 6th. It trains you to survey buildings for accessibility. You will use your skills to advocate for compliance with various rules and regulations.

6) Announcements/Questions/General discussion/Ideas for future meetings

Gov. Maura Healey signed into law a FY23 supplemental budget package (which is reportedly becoming Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023) that includes an extension of certain COVID-19 relief measures including authority for public bodies, agencies, and commissions to hold meetings remotely until March 31, 2025.

The Commission agreed to continue holding the meetings remotely because of the flexibility and the great turnout they have had in the past.

6) Next meeting: April 18, 2023, via ZOOM

- 7) **Adjournment:** There being no further business to come before the Commission on Disabilities this evening, Moisan moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Spittle. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey
Acting Commission Clerk