



Robert K. McCarthy
Acting Mayor

COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

CITY OF SALEM, MASSACHUSETTS
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MINUTES OF THE SALEM COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES APRIL 25, 2023

A meeting of the Salem Commission on Disabilities was held on April 25, 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, Ezekiel Holt, Maureen McKinnon, David Moisan, Manda Spittle; Lisa Cammarata, ADA Coordinator, HR Director, Alan Hanscom, SATv, Jeff Cohen, City Council Liaison and Clerk Joanne Roomey (noted by last name in the minutes). Absent were Rebecca Christie, Kerry Neenan and Kate Zuraw.

1) Introductions/welcome

Lobsitz called the meeting to order at 4:40 p.m. and she extended a welcome to everyone. Each commissioner and invited guest introduced themselves.

2) Approval of Minutes of March 2023 meeting

This will be tabled until the next meeting.

3) Guests

There was a discussion with Kate Fox and Stacia Cooper from Destination Salem regarding the logistics of wheelchairs that will be available to the public. They said folks can request wheelchairs from Destination Salem Visitor Information Center located at 245 Derby Street in the South Harbor Garage. They are open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., seven days a week. They would be able to house two wheelchairs. Their main concern is the liability aspects.

McKinnon suggested getting transportation wheelchairs that are foldable and have big wheels. They usually accommodate most sizes of people with very little variables. She also suggested that folks leave a deposit of some sort for any damage to the wheelchairs. The commission thanked Kate and Stacia for taking this on. The commission agreed to purchase two wheelchairs to start, but first want to do some research to see how much they are going for.

Fox said that the PEM has five loaner chairs on site and it is a free service. She suggested taking a copy of folks' credit cards in case they do not bring them back. Destination Salem will reach out to other visitor centers to see what they do about the liability issues. The commission agreed to have this service for free. The commission and Destination Salem will follow up with Solicitor Rennard to draft a waiver for folks regarding liability issues. They will revisit this at the next commission meeting.

4) **New Business**

- a. Construction update; Engineering Department - None
- b. MBTA Virtual Town Hall and **Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**; Darren Black

Black reiterated the highlights of the travel training offered by the MBTA Mobility Center on how to navigate the MBTA and to assist folks on how to access services and resources. Referrals come from the MCB and can be delivered by phone, in person or online technology. For more information, you can contact the MCB at 800-392-6450. Lobsitz suggested creating a link on the Commission on Disabilities' home page as well to inform people.

- c. Reasonable accommodation language in job descriptions; Maureen McKinnon

McKinnon reviewed the reasonable accommodation language in job descriptions and said there is a lot of boiler plate language. Things have changed in the last five years. She gave examples of how people with disabilities can do everything, just in different ways. The job description language should be updated to accommodate hearing and visually impaired folks.

Holt said essential functions should be reworded because what is considered essential, really is not. Black said folks should focus on the job tasks, not how to perform the job tasks since there are different ways of achieving them. Some descriptions say driver's license required, but anyone can get where they are going without a license. Language is so important in the job description, folks are nervous enough on a job interview, it should be welcoming. Holt said maybe it should include DEI language regarding disabilities. Cammarata said she always tries to make folks comfortable and will review the descriptions and update them.

5) **Old Business**

- a. ADA Transition Plan:

Lobsitz received an email from Maura Bazaka she wants to do a presentation regarding the new technology center at the Community Life Center. CLC will provide training in assistant technology every Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The commission will ask her to come to next month's meeting.

Cammarata and Lobsitz participated in an educational webinar a week ago. They invited five different communities. They spoke about the ADA transition plan for the cities. There have been a lot of changes from 2019 up until now.

- b. Project funding: Cammarata ordered picnic tables for Mack Park. Once they are delivered, Cammarata will let the commission know and they can make a visit to Mack Park. The commission got the MOD grant for \$71,712 that they asked for. Material prices have gone up for the picnic tables to \$4,518.48.

Moisan made a motion to approve the funding to make up the \$4,518.48 difference. Seconded by Black. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

Pedestrian Safety

Moisan said a woman was struck by a car and killed while crossing Jefferson Ave and Wilson Street. The Salem Walking Safe Advocacy Group held a vigil at the same spot. Moisan spoke and said we are a civil rights group and a quality of life group. He walked the sidewalks to get there and had a very difficult time, especially at nighttime. It was like a roller coaster going up and down. The Police Department was there to organize traffic when they did a walkthrough the neighborhood. There is a meeting on May 20th at the Salem Common at the Gazebo and Moisan agreed to speak on behalf of the Safe Walking Advocacy Group.

- c. Canal St. pathway: a request of using funds to add entrance/exit indicators for the visually impaired; Meg Stott/Jeff Cohen - No updates
- d. Advisory Group Open Space and Recreation Plan; Tom Devine; Senior Planner; (or Lobsitz) – No updates
- e. ADA Symposium; May 21 -24, Kansas City; Zeke Holt/Lisa Cammarata/Deb Lobsitz

Holt is going to the ADA Symposium from May 21 to the 24th. He has registered for certain sessions and will let the commission know which sessions he attended. He also said they do have virtual conferences as well in May and July.

- f. Beep Baseball update; Darren Black

Black spoke about the Boston Strong Beep Baseball team. He is a coach and a player. He wants the commission to support the program in some way. Perhaps start an exhibition game that would include members of the commission, DPS, fire, police, or councilors. He wants to brainstorm to see how we can get folks to join or volunteer. Cammarata said that would be a great event and the commission could draw a lot of support. Black will get a check list together to start the process.

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

Lobsitz is having trouble logging into her salem.com account for her email. Cammarata will follow-up with IT to resolve this issue. Holt asked about any new notifications regarding variance requests. Lobsitz said she got one last month. She will check the website and keep the commission updated.

7) Next meeting: May 16, 2023 via ZOOM

8) Adjournment: There being no further business to come before the Commission on Disabilities this evening, Moisan moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Black. A roll call vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne M. Roomey
Commission Clerk

**Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 30A §18-25
and City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033**