

Salem Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2020

Meeting held via zoom platform

Commissioners present:

Debra Lobsitz, Chair
Kerry Neenan
Maureen McKinnon
David Moisan
Darren Black
Rebecca Christie
Zeke Holt
Kate Zuraw

Also present:

Lisa Cammarata, ADA Coordinator
Megan Ricciardi, City Council Liaison
Alan Hanscom, SATv
Dan Ricciarelli, Seger Architects
Julie Mooradian, Seger Architects

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:35PM. Each commissioner introduced him or herself. The Commission welcomed two new Commissioners, Ezekiel “Zeke’ Holt, and Kate Zuraw.

Old Business:

a. ADA Transition Plan Presentation by IHCD and PSHE Committee Meeting update/MOD grant:

Lisa Cammarata (Cammarata) stated this item will be on the agenda every month to keep this matter on everyone’s mind. Cammarata stated the City had not yet heard from MOD regarding the MOD grant submitted for accessibility upgrades at the Salem Willows.

Deb Lobsitz (Lobsitz) said she had met with Jenna Ide (Ide) the City’s Director of Capital Projects and learned about the Smart Sheet, an inhouse document that is tracking all projects associated with ADA compliance. Lobsitz said she would continue to report out on this.

b. Variance request from John Seger (Seger Architects) for 129 Lafayette Street, update and discussion; with invited guests including John Seger and Dan Ricciarelli:

Lobsitz reported she received notification from the MAAB asking Seger Architects price out the cost of a lift instead of a ramp to the building.

Dan Ricciarelli (Ricciarelli) explained both projects in development for housing, the school (built in 1921) and the rectory (built in 1917) and that the rectory is the building for which they are seeking the historical tax credits. He said the variance was necessary as cost for ramp would be substantial, affect the interior design and also the tax credits. He also stated it would affect the look and that accessibility was being addressed in the school building.

Lobsitz mentioned the lift and suggested that the cost for the lift would need to include maintenance costs, both exterior and interior.

A question was asked regarding the lift and location of it, and Ricciarelli said the vestibule of the rectory is historical and accessibility would require a lot of modification, and also that the lift is just not a good idea.

Darren Black (Black) said he visited the site with sighted friends, and that it seemed that the exterior exit towards the right and the back could be used. Black said he felt the rectory should be accessible.

Maureen McKinnon (McKinnon) said she had reviewed the plans and saw that out of 24 units, only two were accessible, located below grade, ½ underground, and that they were both one bedroom units, despite the project having one and two bedroom units. McKinnon said that market-wise, this was not a good distribution of units, citing families and gatherings.

Lobsitz said that accessibility is not just for the person renting the unit, rather for the person visiting a resident who may be disabled and require access. She said she has seen beautiful lifts constructed, even City Hall has an exterior elevator.

David Moisan (Moisan) said that while Salem is a historic town with historic bricks and mortar, that the people should not be forgotten.

McKinnon suggested that the two basement units in the rectory could have exterior access; Ricciarelli said that doing that did not make economic sense and would result in disruption to the pristine nature of the building. McKinnon said a lack of accessibility meant that people would not be able to attend parties, Thanksgiving dinners, and holidays.

Lobsitz said that the AAB asks for our input on such projects.

Kerry Neenan (Neenan) suggested that when projects are being planned that they try to put a face to the accessibility, and that sometimes a disability is temporary, ie, a person living on a third floor may have accident resulting in a temporary disability, and inaccessibility would be a problem, even if only temporary. Neenan said it's come to historical preservation vs. accessibility. Black said some people develop mobility issues as they age.

Julie Mooradian (Mooradian) said that they have been in a push pull with the developer looking at lifts and elevators.

Zeke Holt (Holt) said that ADA is the law, and that sometimes the thought is that it is too difficult to address accessibility, but it's not. He said that they cannot hide ADA behind the historical value.

Black asked about historical tax credits, and how they relate to accessibility.

The discussion continued regarding tax credits and the question was raised about the City's Historical Commission approving the project despite the accessibility issues. One Commissioner said that accessibility does not have to be ugly, and an elevator can look very nice in a clear space, as a central elevator in the rectory had been brought up.

Black was pleased the AAB asked the architect to cost out a lift.

Cammarata offered to talk to the Planning Director to find out about the Historical Commission's role in this project.

d. Subcommittees and Assignments

ADA Updates and Transition Plan / Debra Lobsitz, Darren Black, Maureen McKinnon; already discussed earlier in meeting.

Social Media / David Moisan; none.

Pedestrian Safety / David Moisan.; none

SCOD representative to No Place for Hate / Kerry Neenan (alternates: McKinnon and Christie); none

ALEC training update; Kerry Neenan; Neenan explained the ALEC program for the new Commissioners and said she would be in touch with Acting Captain King soon to provide this valuable training to our Police Officers. Cammarata said we could assist in funding this training.

New Business:

a. Salem Skipper Program; Deb Lobsitz; Lobsitz shared that the City has started a ride share program called the Salem Skipper, affordable and convenient for rides all around Salem.

b. Odd Meter Café; Lisa Cammarata; Cammarata reported she had been contacted by the owners of the Odd Meter Café, a new coffeeshop in downtown Salem in the old Dunkin' Donut's location on Washington Street. They are committed to accessibility and want our input to ensure they are in compliance. Holt asked to be included in this meeting with them. Cammarata said she would contact them and set it up.

Announcements/General Discussion and ideas for future meetings; if needed.

Lobsitz had said earlier in the meeting she had received a variance request for 159 Derby Street. The matter was not discussed and will be on the January 2021 agenda.

There being no further business for the Commission to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30PM.

LBC