

Salem Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes

May 18, 2021

Meeting held via zoom platform.

Commissioners present:

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

Commissioners absent:

None

Also present:

City Council Liaison Meg Ricciardi
Lisa Cammarata, ADA Coordination Assistant
Alan Hanscom, SATv

Attendees:

Donna Jay
Dustin Luca
Steven Dibble
Steven Kapantais
Jeff Cohen
Kristy
Fafa Wolfson
Jessica Hebert

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30PM. Each commissioner introduced him or herself.

2) **Approval of minutes from April 20, 2021 meeting.**

Motion made by Debra Lobsitz (Lobsitz), seconded by Darren Black (Black) to hold off accepting the April minutes until the next meeting. All in favor, motion carried.

3) **Old Business:**

a. **ADA Transition Plan Presentation by IHCD and PSHE Committee Meeting Update**

Lisa Cammarata (Cammarata) recognized Alyssa Doherty (Doherty) and Jenna Ide (ide) relative to the SmartSheet that is being used to track the City's accessibility work. There was discussion on the SmartSheet being available to the public, and Cammarata said she believed that was in the works.

b. **Odd Meter Café:**

Zeke Holt (Holt) reported he and Cammarata went to visit OMC where they had a productive discussion with the owners regarding accessibility. These owners are interested in ensuring that OMC is accessible. They discussed menus, QR codes, the side door (timing issue with landlord) and the font on the

signs. Holt suggested the Commission present itself as a resource to the community. Black said he had stopped in the OMC and suggested that some people may not have a smartphone to access the QR codes. He suggested that people who need assistance can also ask for assistance with the menu. Also, he said his coffee was good.

g. Sub-Committee reports and assignments:

ADA Updates and Transition Plan:

Black reported that he had heard from Jim Bostick of the Salem Arts Council regarding the ramp project. He said they received a variance from the AAB, and they are set to go before the Historical Commission on 5/19/2021. Maureen McKinnon (McKinnon) asked about the variance and asked Black if the variance meant that there was no longer a landing at the top of the ramp. Black said he did not know.

Project Funding

Cammarata plans to call a meeting of this subcommittee within the next week. She explained that the Commission was asked to provide financial assistance to the Salem Little League for lift expenses.

Social Media

Group discussed the Commission's Facebook page, and Cammarata said she monitors it and posts to it.

Pedestrian Safety

None

No Place For Hate (NPFH); Commissioner Neenan with alternates Becky Christie (Christie) and Maureen McKinnon (McKinnon) serves as Commission representative to this board.

Jeff Cohen (Cohen) and Kerry Neenan (Neenan) talked about the value of the partnership with NPFH with the Commission. Cohen said NPFH is working on its mission statement, a new logo, and possible a new name for the group. He encouraged the group to watch the recorded panel discussion held at Salem State University.

f. ALEC training update

Neenan reported this training was a huge success at the Salem PD, and the Commissioners praised her for implementing this for the department. Discussion was had regarding this training for the Salem Fire Department and other first responders. Neenan also said that she had been contacted by the Salem News for a story about this training.

2) New Business:

a. People Centered Language Discussion

Lobsitz opened this discussion by reading a statement regarding words, "Words are Powerful Tools." Commissioners shared their personal experiences and thoughts regarding words that are/shouldn't be/should be used to describe/address/refer to persons with a disability.

It was stated this is a weighty topic, and terms that were acceptable before aren't now. References to a person being 'confined' to a wheelchair were suggested inappropriate, as well as taking the time to call a powered chair just that.

Commissioners stated that certain words affect how a person feels. Rebecca Christie (Christie) told the group about Katie's Law, and we suggested the Commission prepare a letter of support for it. Christie offered to send a draft to Lobsitz.

Neenan told the group of her experiences with her daughter who has Down's Syndrome and her pregnancy. Neenan is a member of Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress, and she offers support to families. Her perspective is making it known that she sees her daughter (as well as should others) as Maeve, as a person first.

Moisan shared his family members had disabilities, and his mother used a wheelchair. He said he is autistic, and a disability should not shape or define a person.

Kate Zuraw (Zuraw) suggested that people think about language, and that we need to change the way people think along with their mentality towards disabilities.

Holt said he was grateful for the Commissioners' sharing personal stories.

Lobsitz who worked previously for the Mass Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing explained the difference between **Deaf** and **deaf**. The lower case **d** refers to an audiological condition, where the upper case **D** refers to a person identifying with the deaf culture.

Steven Dibble (Dibble) said he was a prior City Council liaison to the Commission, he said he sat through a year's worth of meetings. He asked Lobsitz and Neenan for the resources they mentioned in their comments. He wants to share it with the chess club and coaches. They will connect at a later date. Neenan offered to assist as she is a co-chair on CPAC.

Steve Kapantais (Kapantais) thanked the group for discussing person centered language.

b. Homebound Vaccine Program

McKinnon talked about the Homebound Vaccine Program, and that Boston was offering it, and Cataldo was involved locally.

c. Safety Net Program

McKinnon suggested we promote this Program, as it can assist people to live in their homes longer. The device is similar to a FitBit, and it will send out a signal when a person is lost or forgets where they are. There are grants available, and we will put the information about the Program on our website.

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

Resumption of in-person meetings update

Cammarata told the group that given the changes coming down from the CDC and the state, it's possible that meetings may be held in person within the next few months. She said she'd let the Commissioners know once she had the information.

Cammarata read aloud an email from former Commissioner Andrew LaPointe regarding audible crossing signals and his appreciation to the City for addressing them.

There being no further business before the Commission, Christie made a motion, seconded by Black, to adjourn the meeting at 6:20PM

LBC