

Salem Commission on Disabilities Meeting Minutes
5/17/2022; Meeting held via zoom platform.

Commissioners present:

Debra Lobsitz, Chair
Darren Black
David Moisan
Zeke Holt
Kerry Neenan
Rebecca Christie
Lisa Cammarata
Alan Hanscom, SATv
Megan Riccardi, City Council Liaison
Jeff Cohen, Councillor, Ward 5
Alice Merkl, Councillor at Large
Ty Hapworth
Daniel LaRoe

1) Introductions/welcome/guests

The Chair, Debra Lobsitz (Lobsitz) called the meeting to order at 4:30PM, and she extended a welcome to all. Each commissioner introduced him or herself.

2) In the interest of efficiency, motion made by Black and seconded by Christie to move agenda items. Old Business was addressed first.

Old Business B, 3d, “Canal St. pathway: a request of using funds to add entrance/ exit indicators for the visually impaired; Meg Riccardi, follow-up”

There was no new information on this matter, as Councillor Riccardi has requested information regarding the entrance/exit of the path. She will provide as she receives it.

Old Business B, #3c, “Planning Department collaboration with SCOD update; Daniel LaRoe” (LaRoe).

LaRoe told the group he is working on the playground resurfacing project, and he has spoken to Ray Jodoin in the City’s DPS department. This project is funded by CDBG monies, and due to that, the project must be in a certain area (low to moderate income) of the City. Other parks were either not feasible or in the right location. Project location will be the Mary Jane Lee Park, and the cost is expected to be close to 54K; LaRoe is in contact with Park Superintendent Trish O’Brien and General Foreperson Katie Nieman for on call architects and the RFP. LaRoe will be in touch as the project moves forward.

Old Business B, #3f, “Sidewalk ordinance update/joint meeting with Governmental Services; Councilor Ty Hapworth” (Hapworth).

Hapworth told the group he wants to make sure the SCOD is happy with the proposed ordinance. He acknowledged that sidewalks are for getting around, and accessibility is important. He suggested a joint meeting with the GSA where the SCOD would be invited to participate and discuss their concerns with the proposed ordinance.

Kerry Neenan (Neenan) said brick maintenance is costly. It was brought up that a map of the areas the ordinance affected would be helpful. Darren Black (Black) noted his sight challenge, and said there are dangerous sidewalks already, and especially on Essex Street between Webb and Beckett streets. Hapworth said there are other kinds of bricks out there. David Moisan (Moisan) mentioned Essex Street, Chestnut Street, and Federal Street where there are bricks. He also said that he is concerned with pedestrian safety. Hapworth suggested that the joint meeting would be helpful, and that Salem is a place where we don’t want to accept pedestrian fatalities (referencing recent press release by Chief of Police.) Hapworth invited the group to attend the joint meeting on June 8, 2022, and it would be virtual. Deb Lobsitz (Lobsitz) stressed that sidewalks are a part of public space and access to them is important. She said the vibration that happens for a person in

a wheelchair especially with the irregularity of brickwork. She said the ADA does not mandate sidewalk material and nor should the City of Salem.

Discussion and comments referenced again vibration, cement, asphalt, well-maintained bricks and doing that within a budget. Hapworth referenced the bricks in front of the library. It was agreed that whatever happens, maintenance of the surface is important.

Councillor Jeff Cohen (Cohen) stated that access = equity and bricks are not easy to navigate. All agreed that maintenance makes all the difference.

Old Business B, #3g, "Advisory Group Open Space and Recreation Plan; Tom Devine; Senior Planner; or Cammarata/Lobsitz."

Lobsitz read aloud an email from Tom Devine regarding the Open Space Advisory Group, and the planning department's request for an SCOD representative. Lobsitz is interested in this role. Cohen said the City has a contract with MAPC. Neenan is interested in the plans for parks and improvements and has reached out to Park Superintendent Patricia O'Brien.

Old Business B, #3e, "Variance Request, Old Town Hall; Julie Barry, Planner, Arts and Culture, City of Salem."

Julie Barry (Barry) was unavailable for the meeting; however, Cammarata reported that she met with Barry and the architect for the project earlier that day, and revisions to the plans for accessibility are underway. Cammarata said they would be back to the SCOD in June.

3) Old Business:

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

No significant updates were reported; Cammarata said this item will be on the agenda every month for discussion.

b. Sub-Committee reports and assignments:

ADA Updates and Transition Plan:

None.

Project Funding

Cammarata and Lobsitz reported the subcommittee met and discussed funding usage. Reported out the contribution to the Salem Little League, and the Annual Membership BBQ for the Disability Resource Center. Vote was unanimous for the Little League. All were in favor of a sponsorship but one to the Disability Resource Center. Discussion indicated it was a good networking opportunity, yet if there was no interest in going to the function, we would not sponsor an ad in the book.

Social Media

There was no report made.

Pedestrian Safety

Group felt that discussion on sidewalks was sufficient.

No Place For Hate (NPFH); Commissioner Kerry Neenan (Neenan) with alternates Becky Christie (Christie) and Maureen McKinnon (McKinnon) serves as Commission representative to this board. Neenan reported the group has a new name and logo, she mentioned the Pride Flag would be raised in June, and the parade is June 25th.

4) New Business

a. Construction Update; Jay Carroll, Roadway Project Manager

Jay Carroll was unable to join the meeting.

b. Update on funding in handicap violations account; Lisa Cammarata

Cammarata reported there was no change from the prior month.

5) Announcements/Questions/General discussion/Ideas for future meetings:

Cammarata asked the group if members would be interested in assisting with reviewing accessibility in the downtown area with regards to outdoor dining. Many are interested in this project.

There being no further business before the Commission the meeting was adjourned at 6:20PM.

LBC