

Salem Commission on Disabilities

July 16th, 2013

Introduction

The Salem Commission on Disabilities met on July 16th, 2013. Present were Andrew J. LaPointe, John Jodoin, David Moisan, David Martel, Jim Nowlan, Jean Harrison, Jennifer Barz-Snell, David Tracht, and Bill Legault, councilor and liaison.

Guest: Kathleen Salas, Spaulding Rehab Center

Kathleen Salas: I'm a physical therapist here at Spaulding Rehab. My specialty is working with neurological clients. Spaulding has been running an Adaptive Sports program for a number of years. The program has really taken off, so that we now have a program running five days a week for six months a year.

Here's an overview of the program. We have three strong programs—one on the Cape, one in Boston, and one in the Salem/Peabody area. We have people calling with PTSD, cognitive disabilities or sensory disabilities.

You do not need to be a Spaulding patient to be in the program. And we don't need athletes. We just want people to be active no matter what their condition.

People need to be moving, whether they're athletes or not.

For example, look at this rock wall at the Lynch-VanOtterloo YMCA. It's two-and-a-half stories. We like to say we can get anyone on this wall! It might take three ropes, but we can do it.

Who can participate? We have several nonverbal communicators in our program. They need to be able to sit for 20-30 minutes. We can accommodate people with oxygen tanks. We can serve most people with disabilities if their doctors approve.

You don't need to have been an athlete to participate. We want to think of this more as an adaptive recreation program rather than an adaptive sports program.

We perform equipment modifications, and we teach cognitively disabled and autistic patients; it's a matter of teaching style and attention that a normal program cannot do.

Most of our programs are grant-funded; we do have a nominal charge for some programs. We want as many people as possible to be able to participate.

Kathleen Salas can be reached at ksalas@partners.org for any questions about the Spaulding Adaptive Sports Center.

Guest: John Pelletier, "Mass In Motion" representative

John: What I can do is start to have a conversation about community health, with the parks dept. and other parties. We want to have opportunities, for example, adaptive sports. We would ask what parks would make sense to host these activities, where in Salem is there a constituency, and etc.

We are funded by Partners Health Care. We are one of several communities around the region. We've been working with a lot of different partners. We have five different projects for policy change. One of them should come out soon—an official city parks map, including both public and private facilities, and what specific facilities do they have.

One of the factors we will look at is accessibility: What is it like for children and others using the parks?

We want to improve the Farmer's Market and bring it to the Point. There's a farmer's market in Lynn that we would like to bring here.

We've applied to have the Bates School included in an accessibility assessment.

We will have tabletop garden beds for accessibility. It's very simple. A lot of things have already been done elsewhere in Massachusetts so we can easily adapt the ideas.

We have a lot of projects involving health issues and we will keep the Commission in the loop since you guys have the same goals.

There are a lot of tangential projects we can work on, and a lot of opportunities to implement them all.

Andy: We have been trying to work on pedestrian crossing and audible signals. People depend on these to go from one point to another.

John: We're doing an audit on Canal St. And we want to reactivate the city's Pedestrian Committee.

We are working on a pedestrian map of all the parks in Salem, and we'll put out a draft soon. We're very excited.

OLD BUSINESS:

Letter of support on Bullying: Commission to sign as a whole in support

The Commission has signed a letter of support for the Anti-bullying bill S. 604 before the state Senate.

Hearing Assist: Are we ready? Lisa Cammarata.

Lisa: The purchase is ready to go. I consulted with Chris Hartling. He recommended a package for us to purchase.

David Moisan: What about the fixed receiver I recommended for City Hall?

Lisa: He did give the OK to the fixed receiver you recommended for 93 Washington.

A motion was made to approve the purchase of hearing assistance equipment with a cost not exceeding \$2900. The motion was seconded by John Jodoin, and passed unanimously with a voice vote.

Salem Y Variance: Letter of support

Andy: We have the Salem Y variance. They have asked for a letter of support. Will we put together a letter?

Lisa: Yes.

Scholarship program: Lisa Cammarata

Lisa: The city of Salem seems to have a different take on the legal framework on the Scholarship. I talked with the Financial Director, and he was not at all comfortable with doing this. He thought it would bring down an audit letter on us if we did this. I should tell you that I do not understand the exact problem, but we are not comfortable with doing this at all.

Andy: My idea, and Beth Renard's idea, was to start a trust fund.

Lisa: It's a good idea. But I'm not sure we can do this with public funds. I don't want to criticize other communities, but I have done the diligence with this, with our finance directors, and we don't think we can do this.

David Tracht: But we need to spend the money.

Lisa: Put a small subcommittee to put together a wish list.

David Tracht: I don't understand it: Communities are doing this elsewhere in the state—but we can't do this?

Lisa: I agree. A lot of communities I talked to seemed to be doing this "under the radar". I am not comfortable with this.

Andy: Can we get a trust fund established?

Lisa: Yes.

John: Through the city? I'm not sure.

Lisa: That I'm not sure of.

NEW BUSINESS:

Salem Trolley: Access issue Jim Nowlan

Jim Nowlan: There's a concern about Salem Trolley and how their drivers are trained to use their chair lifts.

Bill: I spoke with someone from the Salem Trolley. We talked about the phone call. There are six trolleys, three have a lift. The trolley with the problem was the oldest vehicle. The lift would not operate it properly in automatic mode, so the lift worked in manual mode to offload the woman from the vehicle. The ground at the trolley stop was not level.

Jim: The people talking the woman's phone call may have needed training themselves. The website has a reference to collapsible wheelchairs; if that's true, I can't use the service. I'm not sure whether it is accessible.

Bill: I have given you her number. Please give her a call. I don't see any bad intent here.

Jim: I will call her and handle it.

The meeting adjourned at 5:51 PM. Next meeting is August 20th, 2013.