

Salem Commission on Disabilities

October 15, 2013

Introductions

The Salem Commission on Disabilities met on October 15th, 2013 at 4 PM at Salem Access Television. Present were Debra Lobsitz, Andy LaPointe, David Moisan, Jean Harrison, Jim Nowlan, Lisa Camaratta, David Martel, Jennifer Barz-Snell, Tom Muxie, Shelia Radziewicz and Jeff Gentry.

Guest speakers

Jeff Gentry and Sheila Radziewicz for the Accessible Icon Project

Debra: Let me introduce Jeff Gentry and Shelia Radziewicz:

Jeff Gentry: Hello. I'm actually from the North Shore area, in Beverly in fact. I have numerous great friends and colleagues who live in the condos on Essex St. and use power chairs and the like to get around. We love watching people come around Halloween—I just saw a man with a chair get off a kneeling motor coach and I'm very gratified that Salem is so welcoming to people with disabilities.

The focus on the Accessible Icon Project is to make the world a warmer, more accessible world.

Shelia: I got the opportunity to see the groundwork for the Accessible icon with the Triangle group. It's very important to make a difference but also to spark a conversation. I want to discuss what a disability means to them in general terms, and what it means to them personally.

I've had several conversations with people on FB on what disability means. Some people say, it's a symbol, it's been there forever. But it's easy to take it for granted and forget about the symbol. It's very important to start talking about the new icon, about how it looks more "active." The traditional symbol is kind of stiff, it doesn't portray movement.

Myself, I've grown up with a very supportive family, but I wasn't comfortable with my own disability at first, when I was growing up. We didn't have any of the support that we have today.

When we start to talk about the icon, then we come to talk about the person, about the disability. People with disabilities are the fastest growing minority.

The icon will start conversation.

Steven: We think it's time to consider a new logo that reflects the modern reality of people with disabilities. 18% of the US have a disability and the number is growing all the time. Massachusetts is a wonderful state for people with disabilities. We wonder why do we have to portray our disabled population as being more machine, more square, than human.

The old 1968 icon says "push me".

Debra: The head on the old icon droops down, it implies passivity, defeat.

Stephen: The old icon didn't originally have a head.

What do you see when you see the new icon?

Bill: I read determination, and movement—like a marathon racer.

Stephen: One of my friends tells me that the icon reminds us that the chair is part of the person; the person is not the chair.

David Martel: Very much like the Boston Marathon. I showed this to my parents and that's what they thought right away.

Stephen: It's impossible in a logo to portray all the possible ways in which the disabled move around. We want to put forth the general idea of motion. The original designer had a son with a disability and wanted to convey a feeling much different than that which the traditional disability logo portrays.

This was originally going to be a one-shot process, but the city of Malden liked the project and wanted to incorporate the logo. Powerful things can happen when a few people get together to be involved.

We think there's a strong business case in Salem for using the new symbol. 18% of visitors in Salem have a disability.

David Martel: Yes, Salem is well aware of this.

Stephen: The disabled community is a very large, unrealized market that most people don't realize exists.

Icons are more important than words. Open your Android or iPhone sometime—there are no words on the opening screen; only icons.

Good Morning America, NPR and New England Cable News did stories on the logo.

The employment engagement rate for people with disabilities: 20.7%. Only one out of five disabled people are employed! Think of the lost opportunities!

Stephen: Partnership with us just means this: You take our logo, which is available on our web site, and implement it. It could be just another way to talk about what you already do with accessible restaurants.

David Martel: We share the information with Spaulding Rehab.

Andy: Within the websites, are there any audible or descriptive details that people with visual impairments can use?

Stephen: Not right at the moment, but the original website was rushed up, and we are planning to rewrite the website with descriptions.

Stephen: Thank you for considering a partnership with Triangle.

Debra: What is the website?

Stephen: www.accessibleicon.org

Andy: What is the website for Ablevision?

Stephen: <http://www.youtube.com/ablevision>

Bill: We are opening a new parking lot at the old Universal Steel, and I want to talk to the DPW about using this logo.

Stephen: This logo is perfectly good to use in a private lot. But you can't use it in a public street yet because it is not yet approved by the federal Department of Transportation.

Andy: What level of funding do we need?

Stephen: Very little. A lot of our partners get volunteer labor, and only replace logos when the old logos wear out. We're OK with that, but we think when people compare the old with the new logos, they will use the new logo. The only cost is the stencil, though there are some additional costs if you incorporate the logos in things like bathroom signs. Most people can use the PDF from our website.

Lisa: We can start using this right away? No licenses or local approvals other than public streets?

Stephen: Yes. The ADA only says you need to incorporate the functional equivalent of the accessible symbol; we don't use the term "handicapped" intentionally. It's OK. Some cities are very comfortable deploying it, and others go through the council level first. Every town's different.

Lisa: We can't put it on a public street, correct?

Stephen: Correct. But every municipality has done things differently.

Debra: We would love to work with the MBTA to get the symbols in their new parking garage.

Stephen: It isn't just advocacy—it's business! Of course we would like this.

David Moisan: What license do you have on the logo?

Stephen: Legally it is copyrighted and the property of Triangle, but it is freely licensed for use.

David Moisan: This is an issue with SATV; we use web assets all the time and we want to use your logo, but we need firm permission to use it before we proceed.

Stephen: It is licensed under Creative Commons and you can alter it if need be.

David Moisan: I don't know what SATV will use with the logo. Our parking lot is not owned, but leased, so I'm not sure. The logo could be used for accessible activities and events surrounding SATV and its telecasts. I am the liaison to SATV for the Commission.

Bill: What about a video?

David Moisan: My workload does not allow me to do a regular show, but I would be willing to do a one-time video production like I do whenever the Mayor has done a proclamation on the ADA in the past. This would be a very short video—I cannot commit to a full-time TV production.

Shelia: I suggest having people with disabilities involved with producing the logo.

David Martel: Steve Dibble suggested this, too.

David Moisan: I feel very strongly that we should be inclusive, but I've also been hurt by people who tell me I'm not "really disabled"; I stayed on for another three years because this commission was inclusive and didn't do the "oh,

you're not as disabled as other people." I have heard the phrase "special interest group" too much and too often. I hammer on the idea that our constituents are not "other people", they are our friends and neighbors. I beat on this concept as hard and as often as I can!

Shelia: Perhaps if you can't commit to the video, perhaps AbleVision could help?

David Martel: The city's historical properties have done a great job making their properties accessible, such as the Witch House.

Old Business

Debra: Due to time constraints, we have had to defer our old business to November. A motion was made and seconded to defer old business to November.

New Business:

City's Announcement of their new FM Assistive Listening System

Lisa Cammarata: I want to read the city's announcement into the minutes.

[City of Salem, Announcement of Assistive Listening System:]

Assistive Listening System Now Available for Public Meetings in Salem

Commission on Disabilities leads effort to secure permanent and portable systems

SALEM, MA – The City of Salem's Commission on Disabilities has purchased two FM assistive listening systems for use by residents and employees with hearing loss.

One system is permanently installed for use in the City Council chamber at Salem City Hall, 93 Washington Street, and the second is a system of portable devices that can be used in the public hearing and conference rooms at City Hall Annex, 120 Washington Street.

Receivers are worn by people who have hearing loss and create a direct link with the speaker to improve the understandability of what is being said in meetings, public hearings, and small group discussions in City facilities. The receivers can be used with headphones alone or induction loops that are compatible with hearing aids equipped with telecoils. The receivers also have a volume control that is controlled by the wearer.

Those interested in utilizing these devices at 93 Washington Street may contact the City Clerk Cheryl LaPointe at 978-619-5610 or clapointe@salem.com. To arrange for use of the portable system at 120 Washington Street, contact the City's ADA Coordinator Lisa Cammarata at 978-619-5630 or lcammarata@salem.com.

Commission on Disability Co-Chairs Andrew LaPointe and Debra Lobsitz, member David Martel, and Salem Cable Access TV staff members David Moisan and Sal Russo were all instrumental in researching assistive listening systems and with installation of the devices.

"I'd like to thank the Commission members and volunteers who helped get this done," said Salem Mayor Kimberley Driscoll." Thanks also to the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for their assistance in identifying the needs of our residents with hearing loss. The installation and availability of this technology is one more

step that we are taking to open up City government and make it more accessible and responsive to everyone in our community.”

The purchase of these systems was made possible by the City’s recent adoption of sections of the Massachusetts General Laws that authorize purchases made for the benefit of persons with disabilities from funds collected through handicap violation fines.

Plans for notifications about FM system? City web page, City Hall door, SATV, other?

Lisa: We sent a news release that we just read into the minutes, to WBZ, Salem Gazette, the Patch and other places.

Andy: It has been in the Globe, and Bill is going to put this in the Patch.

Debra: Is it on the City of Salem website? I haven’t seen it.

Lisa: I will work on it. Here’s a listing I have compiled of all the boards and commissions that meet regularly. Most of them meet at 120 Washington. Others at Broad St., our meetings are here, and others are at the Library and the Collins Middle School.

It’s good to keep the mobile system at 120 Washington, because that’s where it’ll be mostly used, but I want to reach out to the meeting facilitators to get their input. I’ve written a draft notice of an FM system request.

Debra: The information and reservation requirements should be prominently posted on the city’s website. You also should put in signage indicating FM listening systems, which we received with the systems.

Andy: It needs to be organized; who is requesting the equipment.

Debra: People walk away with the equipment, usually by accident. If you have someone in charge of the equipment for a meeting, you don’t need to be there, unless you want to be the main contact.

Lisa: Cheryl is handling the fixed FM system at City Hall, and I am handling the portable system.

Bill: For example, if David wants to go to the Historical Commission, he should let them know 24 hours in advance that he needs a receiver. He’ll work with them.

David Moisan: Contact Jim Kearney of the Alliance of Salem Neighborhood Associations for advice.

Debra: Any hosting entity is responsible for providing accessible communications. The city isn’t obligated to assist, unless the city wants to encourage them to get a system, help them with their system, etc.

Also, Lisa’s draft request should include specific contact information on access.

Other:

Next meeting November 19, 2013