

# Salem Commission on Disabilities

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*November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

## **Introductions**

The Salem Commission on Disabilities met on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Present were Debra Lobsitz, John Jodoin, David Tracht, Bill Legault, David Moisan, Lisa Camaratta, Jim Nowlan and guest Jeff Dougan.

## **Guest speaker: Jeff Dougan**

Debra: Jeff Dougan is the Assistant Director of the Mass Office on Disabilities.

Jeff: So, we've been doing a lot of training throughout the Commonwealth, and we've just received a grant from the state to give out go-packs, backpacks with emergency items.

We don't just present the packs and let it go. This is just one part of a complete emergency plan for people with disabilities. We call it a "File of Life", a fridge magnet with information that first responders can use to help you. It can be a vial, or a folder, but either way it helps them understand what medical conditions you have.

There are 200 page books and 16-page books. We ask people to start somewhere. The first thing someone needs to do is think very carefully about their needs. What about medical equipment? We're not comfortable with the advice people give to provide insurance and credit card numbers. You should have phone numbers—you'll start there anyway.

We customize it by city, and Salem does participate in the Vial of Life.

John Jodoin: Yes, we have done this with the Salem Police and the Council on Aging.

Jeff: You must keep it up to date. Many pharmacists will print out lists for you. In Scituate, we have a Code Red system that Salem has, too. It's a reverse 911 system, that phones and emails.

John: Remember that the "Reverse 911" system is not connected in any way to the 911 system. If you have a disability, you really need to file a 911 indicator form. It is limited in what information it can hold.

Jeff: I have been through 911 training and it is not easy.

[This is on the city's website at [www.salem.com](http://www.salem.com).]

Jeff: Now, on to the go-kit. Let me stand for this. We customized this kit specifically for our requirements, let's go through the contents:

- Bandages and band-aids.

- Pocket tissues. That can be used for toilet paper, and for minor cuts that the band-aids cannot deal with..
- Ponchos. These are for the weather, and also for visibility
- Emergency blankets, these are foil like the ones used at the Boston Marathon
- Lightstick with a lanyard that you can put around your neck, or spin in a circle for signaling.
- Handwarmers. There are a few. These work anywhere on your bodies, not only hands.
- A biohazard bag, for clean up.
- Emergency water pouch. You need to use it and refill it every six months.
- Bottled water has a lifespan of a year or so.
- Emergency drinking water. This is treated to last for five years. If you have a medical condition that dehydrates you, you need to have more of these.
- Emergency food rations. These are not gluten-free, so people who can't consume gluten need to get some other food. SPAM, and tuna-fish have been suggested. Single-serve pouches of food are best because one contaminated package won't affect the whole kit.
- Can opener. This is more important than you think.
- Personal hygiene items and trash bags.
- Battery operated radio. Test and change batteries in the radio every six months.
- Windup flashlight. This also comes with a radio—and a siren. Ours also has a cellphone charger.
- This is just a core list. You need to add more things as needed, perhaps a deck of cards or a book.

Debra: Are you doing any more sessions?

Jeff: We are winding down our current grant. We apply to FEMA every December.

Jeff: Also, consider your service animals and pets.

## Old Business:

### Discussion topics for next meeting

Debra: We are going to alternate between having speakers and having regular business meetings, in order to keep our meeting time under control. I received an email from a [Somerville] and they wanted to discuss 3 Webster ST. to talk about variances. They will be at the December meeting.

Jim: The City Engineer is talking about crosswalks and aligning them with curb cuts, and I'm wondering what is going on.

Lisa: The Engineer has a list and it is ready to go. I would suggest he come in January during our presentation meeting.

Jim: They are concentrating on downtown. And Highland Ave.

Bill: Consider planning a spring session to install and paint the new accessible icons.

Lisa: Spend a bit of time next month to plan it.

## **New Business:**

### **Illegal use of the Disability Placard**

Jeff: The MassDOT has been reminding municipalities about the illegal use of disability placards. The Commissions are starting to be engaged with the MassDOT, which would not have happened a few years ago. Remember that there is an ID on each placard and this ID can be looked up to determine the placard's owner. Covering the ID or photo is illegal to begin with.

### **Letter to Mayor on MBTA Station**

David Moisan: A few months ago, the City constructed a new pathway from North Salem to the train station. A lot of neighborhood people in North Salem agitated for a new pathway, because the access to the station is so poor.

People don't realize that when the overpass was constructed, it split the city in quarters! North Salem is effectively split from the rest of the city. The Salem Depot area now was originally a B&M Railroad maintainance area and not public use. When the old railroad bridge burned, they eventually put the temporary station at the spot, and then the permanent location. This was done as a quick-fix 30 years ago and it's been inadequate ever since.

The path to the station starts from the HMA Carwash, and goes down by the North River and then through the train track, the Danvers Branch. The MBTA took over and owns this track, in fact they own all the track from Salem out to Rockport and Newburyport.

It is not accessible to wheelchairs at the moment, though it is now lighted.

Right now, wheelchair users have to go to the North Street Overpass, over to the viaduct, in front of the station and in.

Dave Martel: There is or was a homeless town that was active. I'm concerned about people going there.

Bill: I have spoken with the mayor and the pathway will be made accessible.

David Moisan: I heard from Dominick after I sent a letter, but I was confused by his response. He talked about two platforms, but I was only referring to one track. I hope he means the railroad tracks proper and not tactile strips.

On your second point, I was taking pictures at night and I did notice some youths.

David Martel

John Jodoin: It is still an active track; Eastman Gelatine is the only customer left.

Bill: The lights are very bright and discourage loiterers.

David Moisan: You will see these LED lights more and more in the next 20 years since they use less energy and they direct the light exactly where it's needed.

Lisa: Is this a letter we sent?

David Moisan: I sent the letter on my personal initiative, identifying my affiliation. It's not sent on our behalf since that would have needed to be signed off by all of us.

Debra and I were talking about this next point before the meeting. There are passageways that are covered by scaffolds on the site, but the passages are too small for rush hour.

Debra: The path cannot accommodate rush hour traffic at all. They cannot accommodate more than one wheelchair.

David Moisan: These are the kinds of things I wanted to look for during construction. The MBTA has installed decking on their train tracks elsewhere in the system. I don't care how they resolve this or whose vendor they use, but it must be fixed. A lot of people have asked over and over about commuter rail service to Peabody when Eastman Gelatin closes, which is more when than if.

I'm concerned that the city is building the path and creating a positive obligation of the city's that will affect the use of the station in the future.

## **Other**

Next meeting: December 17, 2013.