

**MINUTES  
LAWTON ACCESS BOARD  
NEW CITY HALL  
CITY ATTORNEY'S CONFERENCE ROOM  
212 SW 9<sup>th</sup> STREET  
JANUARY 31, 2017**

Mike Jones called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m. in the City Attorney's Conference Room. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted on the City Hall notice board as required by law.

**ROLL CALL:**

**PRESENT:** Joseph Harper; Don Kesler, Jr.; Mike Jones; Kay Love.

**ABSENT:** Sharon Fanning.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Keith Neitzke, Parks and Recreation Department; Rusty Whisenhunt, Public Works; Denise Ezell, City Clerk's Office.

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APPROVE MINUTES from November 29, 2016 meeting

**Motion by Kesler, Second by Harper,** to approve the minutes of November 29, 2016.  
**Aye:** Harper; Kesler; Jones, Love. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

Jones states we have several visitors with us so let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. I'm Mike Jones the ADA (American Disability Act) Coordinator and Chair of the board.

Kesler stated Don Kesler member of the board.

Harper stated Joseph Harper member of the board.

Love stated Kay Love member of the board.

Hanna stated Jack Hanna Parks and Recreation Director.

Neitzke stated Keith Neitzke Superintendent of Parks and Grounds.

Hadley stated Bart Hadley Assistant City Manager.

Whisenhunt stated Rusty Whisenhunt Development and Construction Manager.

Spell stated Sean Spell Operation Director for Lawton Area Transit.

Ezell stated Denise Ezell City Clerk's Office City of Lawton.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

1. New Business

B. Introduction of Allie Haddican of KSWO Channel 7 News. Ms. Haddican is beginning a study which focuses on the everyday challenges faced by members of our disabled community and would like to speak to the board about her study and the possibility of interviewing some of our board members.

Jones stated this is Allie Haddican from KSWO.

Haddican stated I would like to do a special report about the accessibility in Lawton with focus on sidewalks and parks. I want to show what it is like for someone with a mobile disability to get around Lawton, what is needed and why we have this board. I would love to go along with someone on the bus system, traveling down sidewalks, and going to the parks. I want to show the difficulties and the push to make things better. Not everyone thinks about these things because they are not faced with them.

Jones stated we would love to help in any way we can.

Harper stated if you are not physically challenged you don't realize what it entails.

Haddican stated this isn't something new but the public just isn't aware of it. I would love to interview anyone and everyone that is willing.

Jones stated you will want to talk to all the members to see who would allow you to spend some time with them. Unless you have been in that position you really have no idea the challenges out there. Sean Spell is with LATS (Lawton Area Transit Systems) and he would be happy to work with you and I'll provide anything I can. When do you anticipate starting the report?

Haddican stated as soon as possible. I would like to run this at the end of the month.

Hadley stated I don't know if this is the time to talk about this but there was an item on the most recent Council meeting to place a handicap accessible walkway across the interstate at Gore Blvd. The item was tabled and I'm hearing a lot of pushback. I was certain it was going to pass but instead they tabled it. Council is questioning their original views. I was curious as to how important this was for the committee. What are your views? Do you feel this is worthy of supporting or not.

Kesler stated the article in the Lawton Constitution stated the reason for the new sidewalk on east Gore was for casino access. They totally missed the boat.

Love stated I agree.

Kesler stated it needs to be redacted and redone with a new article with the correct information. The reason for the sidewalk was to get the people from the VA Center access to restaurants, stores and in addition to the casino.

Hadley stated we have no control over the newspaper and shouldn't have any input on the editorials. I believe the editorial is helping to push this view. To do the bridge the City of Lawton has to put in \$600,000 towards the \$1.3 million dollar project. ODOT (Oklahoma Department of Transportation) is furnishing the other \$700,000.

Love asked "How much is the casinos contributing".

Hadley stated nothing. We have the option to turn down the project and use the \$600,000 for another similar project. If we do we will lose the \$700,000. I believe the view that this is an access to the casino is what is driving the new issues. I'm very fortunate to be able body and it is scary for me to walk across that bridge over the interstate. It is virtually impassable for someone with a handicap. We only have 3 ways to access the east side of town. On the north end we have Rogers Lane, Lee Blvd. on the south and Gore in the middle.

Jones stated good afternoon. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Rocco stated my name is Rocco and I apologize for being late. I and Ms. Love have been involved with several different things. Councilmember's have encouraged me to come see what this Board is all about.

Jones stated welcome and we are glad you are here. We welcome your thoughts on any of our discussions.

Rocco stated I recently went to Austin and we think of it as being this progressive city that would have sidewalks everywhere. I was in the middle of the university and was trying to get to LBJ Library. There were places I had to get into the street because there were no sidewalks. If we had \$900 million dollars for sidewalks we would still have areas in need. This is a very complicated issue and it is going to take time.

Jones stated it is. I don't believe there is any town that is 100% accessible.

Rocco stated it is good that we are starting to address the issue. As Jay Burk said we have to start somewhere.

Jones stated absolutely.

A. Introduction of Ashley Green, Program Coordinator for the TSET (Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust) Healthy Living Program in Comanche County. Ms. Green represents a coalition of groups in our area whose primary focus is to create an active and healthy community for all. She feels that our current efforts directly relate to work that is currently underway in her organization and others for active living and transportation strategies. Her organization along with 20 community leaders conducted a Physical Activity Resources Audit in 2014 and she would like to share the last results with our group.

Jones stated Ashley Green is the Program Coordinator for the Healthy Living Program in Comanche County.

Green stated I apologize for being late as well. I'm Ashley Green and I'm with the Comanche County Health Department. I work with the TSET Healthy Living Program. We focus on health/ wellness and tobacco sensation/ reduction across the state. My office is here in Comanche County and I work on city governments and community organizations. There is a separate part of the grant that focuses on schools and businesses that is out of Comanche County Memorial Hospital. There are 2 sides and they work collaborative together. I want to talk about the activity living and transportation. There are different strategies whether it is activity focused, policy based or non-policy based. The city can implement policy based things as well. Lawton is pretty progressive. We do have a complete street policy that dedicated funds go towards to increase access. We need to make sure those plans are carried out and bring in other expertise where we can. I'm working with 2 other counties to do a workshop with the national complete street coalition. This will be held in Chickasha and I'll be inviting different community leaders to help find some cost effective ways where they can implement policies and local changes. I have reviewed the City of Lawton's complete street policy and it has gone to our powers that be to further evaluate. The one piece that is missing is the verbiage that actually says "access to all including those with disabilities". It says "access to all" but it doesn't say disabilities. This could hinder some funding because the wording is not directly there. I would advocate you update those policies so the city can be in better compliance and show more support to all users no matter mobility levels. I gave Jones a report that was done in 2014 regarding the parks. There is a more recent one that was completed by the CDC but we don't have the results. That report has more indicators for accessibility. Our report is called Physical Activity Resource Audit. This is where we evaluate all the parks located within the city to include recreational activity and transit stops. According to the OSU (Oklahoma State University) 2014 report 73% of our parks are not ADA compliant. They did find that 23% of our city trails were accessible and this number has increased due to the new walking trails the city has added since 2014. I'm here to find out how I can help and how we can support each other with initiatives and funding. I also co-facilitate the Fit Kids of Southwest Oklahoma Coalition. This is one of the largest coalitions in Southwest Oklahoma. There are about 60 organizations under that umbrella to include the City of Lawton. Their focus is to promote an activity and healthy community for all. They focus on a lot of different things but childhood obesity is a big focus. They look for ways the community can work together to share resources to help quality of life for Comanche County and Fort Sill. I'm here to help and learn as well.

Jones asked "Is the complete streets a community designation".

Green stated it is an ordinance that was passed in 2011. Any new developing construction, resurfacing, repaving of sidewalks and city streets will include ADA compliant sidewalks.

Whisenhunt stated the code she is referring to addresses new street construction. When there is new construction accessibility will be addressed with sidewalks, curb ramps and traffic lights. The code says "it will be accessible" and it needs a little more definition to qualify for some grants. It needs the magic words.

Love asked "Does it need to say accessible to those with disabilities".

Green stated yes.

Whisenhunt stated it needs to address why type of physical challenges.

Love asked “When you say the traffic lights being accessible are they going to have....

Whisenhunt stated they will be audible, have pedestrian poles, counts down, curb ramps and sidewalks. If you have been to downtown Oklahoma City when you punch the button it tells you what street you are crossing, which direction you are going, and counts down before crossing and during crossing. I believe Green has been working with Richard and Charlotte on adding some key words to the code.

Jones stated it sounds as if we are working on getting the issue resolved. Is there anything else we can do to aid you and your efforts?

Green stated if we go before Council I would appreciate your support. I would like to come back and learn more ways I can help.

Jones stated we will place you on the email list and you can decide if there is something on the agenda you would like to be here for. Feel free to join us at any time.

Green stated thank you.

C. Review status of ongoing projects.

Jones stated in Priority 1 the legal descriptions for the needed parcels have been written and the acquisitions are underway. There are some details and possible impediments to the construction of that sidewalk under review. There is a power line that is in the way that will have to be dealt with.

Whisenhunt stated the power line is in the right-of-way so we have to acquire additional right-of-way.

Harper asked “Can they put the lines underground”.

Whisenhunt stated this is a main feed that goes to Goodyear.

Harper asked “Can you go around the pole”.

Whisenhunt stated yes.

Jones stated we are asking for 8’ of right-of-way. We are looking at the obstacles that are there to make sure we can correct those. That will determine how much right-of-way we will need.

Harper asked “Where is this”.

Jones stated in front of DHS on Lee Blvd. The contract has been awarded on the east Gore sidewalks. The City Manager has directed a Notice to Proceed be issued by the end of February and for construction to begin in March.

Whisenhunt stated the construction schedule is 60 days for the south side and 60 days for the north side. Once this is complete there will be full access to all the restaurants, banks, and convenience stores.

Jones asked “Are there any questions or comments”.

Kesler stated the street reconstruction is almost finished on 35<sup>th</sup> Street. There are 2 little sections that have been left out. One is from the intersection of 34<sup>th</sup>/35<sup>th</sup> Street going north to Cache Road and the other is the intersection of Arlington and 35<sup>th</sup> Street going north to Ferris. I would like to see us give these a high priority to get them done.

Whisenhunt stated there is accessible sidewalk on 35<sup>th</sup> from Arlington to Ferris on the west side. With the project going on now there will be accessibility from Ferris to the center of the school and then it changes sides and goes up 34<sup>th</sup> to just south of Oak. There is a gap going from 34<sup>th</sup> where it ties into 35<sup>th</sup> to Cache Road. There is a new development being proposed for that corner and that will take care of sidewalks for about half of the distance.

Kesler stated the 35<sup>th</sup> Street project is almost complete.

Whisenhunt stated there will be sidewalks from Arlington to Gore.

Kesler stated there is a little spot from Gore to Ferris and Arlington to Ferris that the sidewalk is missing.

Whisenhunt stated with the street project there was sidewalk put in. I’ll need to see if some was removed and hasn’t been put back. You should have sidewalk all the way from Gore to Ferris. It is short from south of Oak where 35<sup>th</sup> ties into 34<sup>th</sup> to Cache Road. Half of that will be done by a private developer when redeveloping that corner.

Kesler stated okay.

Whisenhunt stated ODOT is planning on bidding the SE 45<sup>th</sup> Street project in March. The utilities have been relocated. This project has a 10’ bike path/walkway. This will run from South of Lee Blvd. to Bell. Construction should start early summer. There will be a little over a mile of sidewalks.

Jones stated this is a heavily used area with lots of joggers and the school.

Whisenhunt stated from 67<sup>th</sup> to 82<sup>nd</sup> on Gore the design is ongoing. This includes 6’ sidewalks on both sides.

Hadley asked “Did you talk about 52<sup>nd</sup> Street”.

Whisenhunt stated from the railroad track to just north of the fire station on 52<sup>nd</sup> Street it will be reconstructed to a 3 lane with sidewalks.

Kesler stated according to the paper there are those that want 5 lanes instead of 3.

Whisenhunt stated the right-of-way has been acquired for 5 lanes but the funds are not available. It will be built so you can add the other 2 lanes.

Hadley stated it makes more sense to finish 52<sup>nd</sup> Street from Lee Blvd. to the railroad tracks. That is 2 lanes and once you cross the track you don’t want to go to 5 lanes.

Whisenhunt stated the design is complete on the 27<sup>th</sup> Street realignment. The street will come across and go back to 29<sup>th</sup> Street and this ties back into Ferris and Homestead. 31<sup>st</sup> Street will go away to get rid of the offset in the intersection.

Kesler stated there was an article in the Daily Oklahoman where the Chamber of Commerce did a study about what the priorities are when moving to a city. Sidewalks were the third most important thing.

Harper asked “What were 1 and 2”.

Kesler stated one was emergency services.

Jones stated and the other was schools.

## 2. Round table comments/discussion

Jones stated I think we need to discuss the absence of Ms. Fanning. She hasn’t attended in quite some time and we have tried to reach out to her with no success. City code allows you to miss 3 meeting and I think we have been gracious on this. There is a point where it becomes the person’s responsibility to contact us. I think we need to move forward with dismissing Ms. Fanning and entertain applications for replacement.

Kesler stated Ray Polk was interested in serving. I’ll see if he is still interested.

Harper stated Vivian Wheeler might be interested.

Jones asked “Ms Love do you have any thoughts on this. Are you in favor of moving forward”?

Love stated yes. I’ve tried to make contact but I don’t have an activity phone number.

Jones stated let Wheeler and Polk know that we have 1 vacancy that will need to be filled. At the next meeting I'll let you know the procedure for filling that position. Since we have multiple people interested in serving we need to discuss how we want to go about filling the position.

Kesler stated we could increase the size of the board to accommodate multiple people.

Jones stated we will be checking out all those factors.

Rocco stated I would like to see us start a continual sidewalk fund where groups and private citizens could contribute. This is not a simple fix and is long term. I will be addressing Council at their next meeting and formally presenting an idea.

Jones stated excellent.

Love stated on the pedestrian bridge maybe we can get businesses in that area involved. They will benefit from the increased traffic.

Hadley stated I agree and include the casinos. I don't know if this committee wants to support the bridge. Did you support the sidewalks?

Jones stated yes. We used some of our funds.

Hadley stated I'm not referring to financial support for the bridge. Would you want to support it from the handicapped accessibility aspect?

Rocco stated Jay Burk told me he had sold 100 bricks for the sidewalk. The Veterans Center is willing to sell bricks also. With the selling of bricks the cost to the city could go down.

Hadley asked "Is this something that needs to be on the agenda".

Ezell stated the Committee could give the Chair the authority to address Council with a letter of support.

Jones asked "Does the Committee have a problem with me writing a letter".

Harper stated no.

Kesler stated no.

Love stated not as long as it will be disability accessible.

Jones stated I'll get with Hadley and draft a letter.

Whisenhunt stated we had \$58,000 donated for the eastside sidewalk so there has been community buy in. At this time we are designing the sidewalks on Sheridan Road. This is

difficult because of the narrow right-of-way. We will need additional easements and we hope the businesses donate those easements.

Harper asked “What is the status of the new buses”.

Spell stated they are in the process of being built. We hope to have them by the first week of June. Once we have them registered, licensed and ODOT inspects them they will be ready to go.

Love stated that is wonderful.

Jones stated good news.

Harper stated it will be great to get the wait time to 30 minutes.

Spell stated that comes with the changing of the routes and that is down the road. We are working on 30 minutes headways on the new routes. Three of the routes will have 40 minute headway. This is a long process. We want to make certain we are covering the community and we are looking at doing a command response. If there is a certain area we don’t cover you can call and a bus will pick you up to take you to either the bus route or a transfer center. We are looking at a lot of changes to help cover more of the community.

Harper stated sounds great.

Jones stated thanks to everyone for being here today.

### 3. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

**Motion** by Kesler, **Second** by Harper, to adjourn. **Aye:** Kesler; Jones; Harper. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**