

**MINUTES
LAWTON ACCESS BOARD
CITY HALL
CITY ATTORNEY'S CONFERENCE ROOM
212 SW 9th STREET
MARCH 26, 2019**

Mike Jones called the meeting to order at 2:40 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: Bonacci, Rocco (entered late); Jones, Mike; Love, Kay; Kesler, Don.

ABSENT: Polk, Ray.

OTHERS PRESENT: Keith Neitzke, Parks and Recreation; Denise Ezell, City Clerk's Office; Kim McConnell, Lawton Constitution; Amanda Nunez, Children United; Andre Wilson; Tom Love.

APPROVE MINUTES from February 5, 2019 meeting

Motion by Kesler, **Second** by Love, to approve the minutes of February 5, 2019. **Aye:** Jones; Kesler; Love. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Old Business

None

2. New Business

A. Receive presentation from representatives of Children United of Southwest Oklahoma regarding the proposed inclusive playground project.

Jones stated I believe we have all heard about the Children United project. There is a lot of excitement about this project. This is a super positive for the community. Amanda Nunez is with us today to tell us about the project.

Nunez stated Joe Chesko is the visionary behind the project. He attended the Moon Light Walk Against Drugs last year and saw a child at the playground in a wheelchair unable to play. The child was laughing and enjoying watching everyone play but was stuck in the mulch. Chesko didn't feel this was right. At that point he felt there was a need to do something for children of all mobility ranges. He began searching and found there are wheelchair swings and merry-go-rounds. We started with 2 swings and a merry-go-round. We contacted Heartland Play and Park Structures and they help to create the rendering you see here. It is an all inclusive playground. The surfacing is a rubber surface and anyone in any type of mobility device will be able to easily access the playground. The equipment has been handpicked for developmental delay and all types of disabilities. There will be a ramp that leads to the large structure and it is

wide enough for a wheelchair. Kids that have never gone up on a large structure will be able to do so and look down on the playground. The slides are big enough that if someone needs assistance someone can ride with them. There will be 4 wheelchair swings. One is an oval swing for people who have no mobility and high back swings with a harness for children who need extra support. This equipment is for all children. We want this to be a family park. It will be located to the west of the existing park in Elmer Thomas Park. We will open the west fence to allow access to both parks. This is an inclusive park. We will give access to everyone to go back and forth. To date we have raised \$74,320 and some of those are pledges. Veterans United Foundation just gave \$15,600 and the Kiowa's gave \$10,000. We have had great support from the local civic groups. We have a Crowd Rise account which is like a Go Fund Me Account. This account has raised \$370. We will be hosting a funding raising which will be the Lawton version of Dancing With The Stars. It will be held on April 13th at the Apache Casino Hotel. Our 7 couples are Tara Deavers from BancFirst and Albert Rivas from City National Bank, Ben Randall from Classic Chevrolet and Jennifer Ellis from Cosmetic Specialty Lab, William Culler and Nelson Marrero from William Nelson, Monte Brown from KSWO and Sherry Conwell from Sherry's Dance Studio, Mitchell Stafford from Keller Williams and Shalia Redelk from Native Hippie, Chuck Weber and Pam Marion from Remax and Jay Burk from Lawton City Council and Tiffany Vrska from the City of Lawton. Tickets are \$50 and this includes a sit down dinner and we will have silent auction items. We have a special guest judge from the Miss Amazing pageant along with Mayor Book and Amanda Richie. We are excited to put this project out there. We want to raise awareness to the word "inclusive". The playground at Fort Sill is not inclusive. LPS has 2700 children enrolled in our schools with some type of disability and there are 1300 families enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program at Fort Sill. This is a large number of kids that will have the opportunity to utilize the playground and have some fun.

Love T stated currently LPS has no equipment for special needs children to play on. They don't get to go to recess. With this equipment their parents or attendants can take them to play. This is very inclusive because it is something kids can't do at school.

Nunez stated the equipment is low to the ground so those in a wheelchairs will be able to reach and play everything. The reason for choosing this location is because it is inclusive. Elmer Thomas Park has become the center for most of Lawton's events. Moonlight Walk Against Drugs, Freedom Festival and International Festival are all held in the park. You have the splash pad across the road which is accessible to handicap children. It fits so well at this location.

Neitzke stated I believe it is important to stress inclusive. Even though there is an accessible route to the playgrounds if you have a 2 or 3 tier piece of equipment the parent might not be able to access the child if necessary. There is a big difference between accessibility and inclusive.

Nunez stated we had some negative comments because people were saying we had accessible playgrounds. Those all have missing components to make them inclusive. Our mission is to promote positive play for people with all developmental ranges.

Neitzke stated we need to address the approach from the parking lot. It doesn't meet the requirements.

Nunez stated Hanna has visited with several people about that issue. We have a construction company willing to donate their time to do the ground work. We will pair them with Hanna and the playground company to make certain that isn't an issue.

Wilson asked "What is the difference between accessibility and inclusive?"

Nunez stated accessibility is where a small area is allowed for disabilities and not the entire playground. Inclusive is where everything is built for children with disabilities.

Neitzke stated and it can be used by the entire community.

Nunez stated yes. In the packet you will see we have different levels of sponsorships. If you give \$2500 or more you are an equipment sponsor. It gives you some information about the equipment and reasons and benefits of the equipment. There are spinning seats, high back swings with harnesses, a saucer and a board with Braille. Children with autism like vibrations and musical sounds and we will have that. All the equipment is low enough to the ground so you can go straight from the surface to the structure.

Love stated it's hard to teach a blind child the concept of up and down. I believe the playground is an ideal way to help understand the concept.

Love T asked "Are you going to be giving recognition to the different groups?"

Nunez stated yes.

Love T asked "Who is sponsoring the cost of the ground work?"

Nunez stated we are not allowed to announce the name of the company at this time.

Love T asked "Will the surfacing be soft?"

Neitzke stated it is a rubber surfacing called Pour & Play.

Nunez stated it can be customized with difference colors and designs.

Love T asked "Is it suitable for this area. The summers can get up to 115 degrees?"

Nunez stated yes. The company we are working with takes all of these things into consideration and they are working with Hanna. I have a packet of information regarding the surface if you would like to see it.

Bonacci stated this is a great project and a great opportunity for the community to come together for something that is needed.

Jones stated it is going to be a centerpiece that the community can be proud of. We have figures that shows there are about 13,000 people within Lawton with various disabilities. What have you found?

Nunez stated the Lawton Public Schools website stated 2700 and Brenda Spencer Ragland stated 1300 on Fort Sill.

Love stated this will benefit adults also. This is exciting and wonderful.

Nunez stated that is a bonus for the playground. For the Dancing With The Stars event the max capacity is 350 people. We have 130 tickets left. We also have t-shirts we will be selling.

Love T asked "What is your completion date?"

Nunez stated within the next 3 years. We have a grant writer that is identifying grants and we will continue to do fund raiser. Masonic Lodge is hosting a fishing tournament in June, Tipton's Jewelry wants to host a shopping spree, Girl Scouts wants to do a series of service projects, Harley Davidson is hosting a Poker Run and the Dancing With The Stars will be an annual event.

Love T asked "How much have you raised already?"

Nunez stated \$74,320.

Kesler stated once the City sees which apparatuses is the most popular we need to place those in other parks around the city.

Love stated they need to get rid of all the pea gravel.

Neitzke stated to convert from pea gravel to wood fibers will cost around \$160,000.

Nunez stated we ask that you share the information on Facebook as much as possible. Once we have completed this project we would like to help other communities with a similar project.

Neitzke stated this will take the playground from a community park to a regional park.

Love T asked "Could the city place some pavilions beside the park?"

Neitzke stated we do have some tables and grills that need to be updated.

Nunez stated Mountain Ambucs wants to build a sidewalk wide enough for 2 AmTryke. This would allow them to move their bike races from the mall to the park.

Neitzke stated parking is another issue. It isn't safe when you don't have designated parking.

Nunez stated we would love to see someone take on the bathrooms as a project. At this time children that are in adult diapers have to be laid on the ground. We would like to see some larger changing tables. As the project grows there are additional factors starting to come out. Thankfully we have civic groups wanting to jump on board.

Neitzke stated I think when people see the need they will start to step up.

Love asked "What about security?"

Neitzke stated security is always an issue.

Jones stated thanks for being with us today.

2. Andre Wilson wishes to address the group to speak on the difficulties encountered with his disability and his desire to reach out to others with similar types of disabilities.

Jones stated this is Andre Wilson and he is here to address some concerns that he has.

Wilson stated my name is Andre Wilson and thanks for allowing me to share my concerns. Most of my friends and family are x-military. Several have traumatic brain injuries. Most of us don't have the proper education when it comes to Americans With Disabilities Act. I myself have this injury from a car accident. I would like to bring more awareness to the community about this disability. I approached the Comanche County Courthouse and found they were not in compliance with the ADA and they don't have an ADA Coordinator. When people think of disability they go off perception. If you don't appear to have a disability then people don't believe that you do. You can't understand something you can't see. I want to be the spokesperson for this disability. I'm here today to see what I can learn from the committee.

Love asked "Have you looked online to see if there is any training that might be available for this type of injury?"

Wilson stated I have searched the ADA website. Some of the things they have available we don't have. That is the reason I'm trying to get involved with local government to see what we can do to make these things available.

Jones stated ADA was created in 1991 under President Bush. The City of Lawton has only been active the past 5 years. We have come a long ways. I don't know anything about the County.

Wilson stated I'm dealing with them on another level. We are working on solving that.

Jones stated I hope to provide this group some networking and we have seen a little of that today. That is the reason I invited Wilson to be here with us today. We have about 13,000

people within our community with different disabilities. This is an area of interest that is still growing and expanding. I think that it was a benefit to hear about the playground and the issues Wilson has. We hope this group can be of help to you.

Wilson stated I appreciate you inviting me here today and hope that we can work together.

Bonacci stated I will say as a whole especially elected officials, have an interest in helping all people with disabilities. The current Mayor has a granddaughter with Down Syndrome and lost his hearing at one time. We have come a long ways. We have taken small steps that have made a huge difference.

Love stated I commend you for coming today and talking with us.

Wilson stated thank you for having me.

Jones stated we appreciate your input. These meetings are open to the public so feel free at any time to join us.

3. Comments/Discussion

4. Adjournment

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

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