

**MINUTES
LAWTON ACCESS BOARD
NEW CITY HALL
CITY ATTORNEY'S CONFERENCE ROOM
212 SW 9th STREET
SEPTEMBER 27, 2016**

Mike Jones called the meeting to order at 1:30 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.; Kay Love; Mike Jones.

ABSENT: Sharon Fanning.

OTHERS PRESENT: Keith Neitzke, Parks and Recreation Department; Sean Spell, LATS; Pat Downing, Citizen; Denise Ezell, City Clerk's Office.

APPROVE MINUTES from July 26, 2016 meeting

Motion by Kesler, Second by Harper, to approve the minutes of July 26, 2016 meeting.
Aye: Harper; Kesler; Love; Jones. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. New Business

C. Listen to suggestions from a citizen about identifying/providing additional locations for walking and exercise.

Kesler stated in Monday's newspaper there was an article about Pat Downing and her participation in the Spirit of Survival. In this article Downing identifies some problem areas when she runs. She stated other than Elmer Thomas Park there is not another running/walking path and she tripped and fell on the sidewalks she uses. Had she been hurt the City would have been liable. Tell us what you think we can do to make things better.

Downing stated my biggest wish is to have a running path. I fell in Elmer Thomas Park and on the sidewalks on Flower Mound. The concrete used on the sidewalks is hard on the joints, they are uneven, there will be openings around the water/sewer, or the sidewalk will just stop. I have noticed there are a lot of runners that run in the street.

Harper stated that is dangerous too.

Downing stated it is. Last Saturday one of the runners training for the Spirit of Survival was almost hit. My emphasis is on a running path. I hear the City is working on a bike path and I don't know why we can't share. I also run on 82nd Street but you have to watch because there are lips and you can drag on them and stumble.

Jones stated the bike path is for runners and bikers to share. They are reconstructing SE 45th Street and there will be a 10' bike path. It was made that width to accommodate pedestrians/walkers/runners as well as biker. It is labeled bike path but it is for everyone and so is Elmer Thomas Park.

Downing stated the problem with Elmer Thomas is if you are doing a long distance you just go round and round. It is also easier to quit before you're finished because your car is right there.

Jones stated Lawton doesn't have the best soil and trees do not grow down like they should. They will find the path of least resistance and their roots are shallow. This is why you get the bumps in the sidewalks. We have a contractor that has a machine that will go along the existing sidewalks and grind them down to make them level. This cost compared to building a new sidewalk is much more affordable. You will see those improvements but in the meantime we would like for you to let us know where you see these problem areas so we can add them to the list of projects.

Kesler stated bike paths aren't the solution. On 31st Street from Gore to Ferris is an identified bike path and it is in the street. A car will not get out of the way for a runner.

Neitzke stated portions of the bike path are actually the street.

Kesler stated the bike path they just finished on Fort Sill Boulevard is very nice. It goes from Cache Road north to Rogers Lane.

Downing asked is it a part of the road.

Neitzke stated no.

Kesler stated it is a separate lane with a curb so cars can't get into it.

Neitzke stated it actually connects to Elmer Thomas Park.

Kesler stated we could ask our Councilmember to identify a primary and alternate area within their Ward that could be a running path. We could work with Council on some areas.

Jones stated long term there is a concept for what has been named Central Park where the old city hall was. That park would connect a lot of these bike paths and the new public safety building. Long range plans do include connecting all these segments of bike paths and sidewalks. The City went through a period where there wasn't an emphasis on sidewalks. Now it is mandatory when building a new home/business that sidewalks are built. Eventually the plan is to fill in the blank areas. In some number of years all the sidewalks will connect. It may seem a little section doesn't make sense or is disjointed but at some point they will come together.

Kesler stated maybe at the next meeting we can create some standards for sidewalks.

Jones stated we can do that. Ms Downing we would love for you to be involved to any length that you would like to.

Downing stated I'll get back with Kesler about the sidewalks I have noticed that needs repaired.

Jones stated we will add those to the list.

Downing stated thank you for inviting me and allowing me to share my wish.

Jones stated thank you for being here and best of luck in the race.

A. Receive and review annual accessibility improvement report to city council prior to submittal to council.

Jones stated as you know as part of the settlement agreement we are required to submit a compliance report to City Council every year by October to show them what was done in the past fiscal year. This report will go before Council in the next couple of weeks.

Harper asked does this report cover from July 1st to June 30th.

Jones stated yes for the 15-16 year. The terms of the agreement require that we show cost in the amount of no less than \$250,000 per year having been spent. We did beat that amount. We show total cost for that time period of \$1.196 million. We actually spent about \$946,000 more than required.

Harper asked is that where our tax dollars are going.

Jones stated part of it is. That shows a lot of work and you can see in the following attached pages how the money was spent. Half of the \$250,000 is required to have been City funded and again we beat that figure by a lot. Those figures are up from last year. Going back to the City funded amount we spent \$716,000 and the previous year we spent about \$362,000. The overall figures are up also. This year is was \$1.196 million and last year it was \$880,000. There was about a 36% increase. I'm proud of those numbers and I hope you are also.

Harper asked do you expect this to stay the same or increase each year.

Jones stated it is hard to know exactly but I think with the emphasis that we will be seeing with new projects it will continue to increase. The other good thing about it is we are attacking this problem from every conceivable angle. We have small projects like the new bus landing at Smith and 20th all the way up to the new public safety building. The goal for that building is universal design which goes above just an accessible building. In other words every place in that building will be accessible to every disabled person the same way it is to me. That is also the goal for the Central Park.

Harper stated it is beyond me how a city that is 100 years old doesn't have sidewalk. Within the last 50 years I would have thought it would be a requirement.

Neitzke stated there are sidewalks in some of the older neighborhoods but they have been covered with dirt. They would be out of compliance today because they are not wide enough.

Harper stated the bus stop on Smith needs to be maintained. The bushes need to be trimmed and the grass is starting to grow over the sidewalk.

Jones asked is there any questions or comments about the report. I'll be submitting this report to Council.

Harper stated this is fantastic.

Jones stated I think so. If you recall we are allowed to roll over any excess from last year into this report and I'm glad to say that we didn't need to do that. I just want to say thanks to everyone to include LATS. I think that the things we will be accomplishing here are going to help LATS also.

Spell stated this committee will definitely be a part of the upcoming route changes. We will be changing some of the routes. We need to be careful when we are putting new pads down due to the changes. Within the next 3 to 5 years the routes will be changing. Due to the route study we have started looking at most of the routes and they have already been approved. All the routes will be changing except the Yellow East route. They will be covering the same amount of area and residence it will just be going a different way. What we are trying to do is cut down our headway. Our current headway time is an hour and we will be cutting that to 30 minutes. To be able to do that we have to change the routes.

Harper asked don't you have to have a second bus to do that.

Spell stated no sir. It is hard to explain without the maps but we are making it work. Some maybe 40 minutes but most will be 30.

Harper stated that is a great improvement.

Neitzke stated it is a matter of efficiency.

Jones stated we will keep that in mind as we move forward on any future plans.

Spell stated we will keep you posted because your effort will be very important as well. We will be hosting town hall meetings because we are changing routes that have been here for almost 15 years without change. We will have to retrain the population. It will be a little painful in the beginning but we will get through it.

Jones stated that is great and we will look forward to those changes.

Love stated I would like to say that I was visiting with some folks from Oklahoma City today and they made the comment on how they envied our bus system. There are so many areas within Oklahoma City that there isn't any kind of transit system.

Spell stated we are currently running 10 routes and that will be shortened to 9. We also are looking to add what is called a demand response route. If you are in an area that we don't cover you would call the office stating where you need a ride from and to and a bus would go directly to the individual because we don't provide the service for that area.

Jones stated are you on the agenda to at tonight's Council meeting about new buses.

Spell stated yes. The first set of 3 should be on station by May. These buses are built from the frame up so it takes roughly a year to 18 months to have a bus built. Everything is built to our specs and is ADA compliant. It goes before Council tonight for 4 new buses.

Jones stated that is fantastic. How many of the Kansas City buses are there in service.

Spell stated 5. We are very thankful we got these buses and they lasted as long as they did. Once the new fleet comes in we will start phasing those buses out. We will not be purchasing any more buses with lift. They will have ramps instead. If you are overweight the lift will not lift your chair. This is part of the problems we have been dealing with. The chairs are almost like cars now days.

Harper stated my chair weighs 267 pounds and I weigh another 257 so you are talking a little over 500 pounds and my isn't a heavy duty chair.

Jones stated congrats on getting the new buses. I would echo what Love said because I have heard lots of good things.

Spell stated we have both good and bad and we take it in stride. We try to do better the best that we can. I don't make excuses for anyone we just deal with what is thrown at us and keep moving forward. That is the key to keep moving forward. We will have some difficulties.

Motion by Jones, Second by Kesler, to accept the annual accessibility improvement report. **Aye:** Kesler; Love; Jones; Harper. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

B. Consider improvements to some city parks that are lacking in accessibility.

Jones stated Kesler saw an article about the City closing some parks. One of the reasons listed for the closing was a lack of accessibility. That is not necessarily referring to a lack of wheelchair accessibility. There are parks that can't be accessed by anyone that wants to use them.

Neitzke stated some are isolated with limited access. Turtle Creek is a good example. Because it is so steep I have a hard time getting to it. You have to go down into the creek and

come back out on the other side. These parks are not necessarily an ADA issue. To make this accessible we would have to re-grade everything. It is deplorable.

Jones stated I saw one that is entirely behind houses and there was 1 small 8' access. Kesler had concerns about these parks closing. If they were closing for ADA reasons we would want the opportunity to address the issue so we could decide whether the park could be made accessible. I have started looking at some of the parks that don't have accessible paths. The first one that came to mind was the MacArthur Park addition that we received a call about. I'm putting together a report that will determine how much it would cost to make them accessible.

Neitzke asked to provide an accessible route to the features in the park.

Jones stated yes. The park next to LCT has some nice features with a main entrance and a sidewalk that goes to the kiddie pool. This is where the sidewalk ends and doesn't connect to any other features in the park. There is a pavilion, picnic tables, grill, and a playground with no hard surface. I have a suggested remedy and an approximate cost of what it will take to fix it. Once the report is complete I'll bring it to our next meeting.

Kesler stated some of the parks that the City is trying to give back nobody wants them. What do you do then?

Neitzke stated there are about 6 different scenarios and we are working through them.

Kesler asked can you turn the parks into something else.

Neitzke stated we can sell the ones we own and we have identified 5 of those. We are looking at park usage and alternate uses or repurposing the properties. We have approximately 84 sites.

Harper stated that is a lot of parks for a small city.

Neitzke stated 1 park has 5 separate parcels. Only 1 parcel has playground equipment, benches and single shot basketball court. You could place a house on 2 of the parcels. We would like to maintain the area with the playground equipment and divest ourselves of the 2 larger lots. At this time they are a liability to the city.

Love stated we could turn them into community gardens.

Neitzke stated that is a possibility but we have other properties we could use for that. We have selected 23 sites for repurposing provided Council decides to move forward.

Harper stated most individual are going to use major parks.

Neitzke stated people have gotten away from neighborhood parks. Parents take them to major playground as opposed to letting their children walk to the neighborhood playground due to the bad elements. The parks with the highest vandalism are those in neighborhoods. These

are the most difficult to do something with. These properties would have to go to auction and who is going to purchase land to build a home that is surrounded by other homes. It is a mess that we will work through. The most important thing is this board brought awareness to the situation.

Harper stated the average person doesn't think about disabilities. We have to squeak because the squeaky wheel gets the grease. We have to let people know we are here.

Jones stated at the ADA conferences I have attended one of the main interest is universal design. Our public safety building will probably be the first in Lawton. This is going to be really cool. This is something the public doesn't know much about yet. Universal design takes away the distinction and everybody is the same as far as gaining access to any part of a building.

Harper stated fantastic. Where was this 50 years ago?

Jones stated in a lot of areas we have come a long ways in 50 years. It is true there are a lot of missing sidewalks and maybe there wasn't a lot of forward thinking back then but we have what we have and I like where we are going right now.

Harper stated we have a great start and we just need to make people aware that something needs to be done.

Love stated they estimate that 56 million people are disabled. The population is grown and people are being recognized.

Harper stated you also have the elderly.

Jones stated I'm glad to see us making strides collectively. Thanks to everyone for being here.

2. Comments/Discussion

3. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

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