

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

Mike Jones called the meeting to order at 2:30 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: Bonacci, Rocco; Jones, Mike; Love, Kay; Polk, Ray.

ABSENT: Kesler, Don.

OTHERS PRESENT: Sean Fortenbaugh, Councilmember; Keith Neitzke, Parks and Recreation.

APPROVE MINUTES from June 4, 2019 meeting

Motion by Polk, **Second** by Bonacci, to approve the minutes of June 4, 2019. **Aye:** Polk; Bonacci; Love; Jones. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Old Business

A. Discuss recent developments regarding the request from Lawton Heights United Methodist Church to fund construction of sidewalks adjacent to their proposed bus stop bench and shelter project.

Jones stated we had a request from Lawton Heights United Methodist Church to help with funding a bus stop and sidewalk. They have decided to fully fund the project themselves so they have withdrawn their request.

2. New Business

A. Receive and review the annual meeting notice for 2020 and take action if necessary to approve or deny.

Motion by Bonacci, **Second** by Love, to approve the yearly meeting notice for 2020. **Aye:** Polk; Bonacci; Love; Jones. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

B. Receive information on proposed sidewalk project to serve Ridgecrest Elementary School and take action if necessary to approve or deny request for funding to construct additional sidewalk not covered by the city's settlement with A&E Construction.

C. Review the current sidewalk project priority list previously established by the Board and discuss possible changes in projects and their ranking. Take action, if necessary, to approve or deny any proposed changes.

Jones stated one of the things the Board is charged with is looking at our priorities from time to time and adjusting the current projects, considering new projects, moving projects to a higher priority and moving others to a lower priority. I'll pass this map around. You may have heard about the Ridgecrest Elementary School project. The City had a lawsuit against one of their contractors and as part of his settlement he is required to build so many square yards of sidewalks and wheelchair ramps. A study was done to determine where best we could use those funds and it was determined the neighborhood of Ridgecrest Elementary School. It will tie into some existing sidewalks on 43rd and Santa Fe and will continue west all the way up to the school. This is a school that doesn't have a lot of sidewalks leading up to it from the surrounding neighborhood. With a full enrollment and a lot of kids walking to school this is a good fit. We talked about additional funds may be needed for this project. In that case I'll bring it to the Board and let you know that X number of dollars are needed to finish the project. There is a sidewalk next to the school that is in terrible shape and the slope makes it had to walk on the sidewalk. We want to replace that length of sidewalk and add wheelchair ramps that lead up to it.

Bonacci asked "Do we know how many special needs kids go to Ridgecrest".

Jones stated I do not. I could check with LPS but I don't know if they track that sort of data.

Bonacci stated I'm going to play devils advocate. Don't get me wrong any sidewalk is an improvement but I can point out areas in this town that desperately need ramps. Like the one at the Courthouse. They did an outstanding job on that ramp. To me there are other places like that in town that are just a nightmare for those in a wheelchair. Based on what Council did with the marijuana tax I'm interested in hearing how much money will go into that. This is important and I want to see this happen but I'm looking at this from someone who is in a wheelchair. Now we will have money coming in for sidewalks on a regular basis.

Jones stated I think Councilman Fortenbaugh will echo this but we have a Council, Mayor and City Manager who all are committed to seeing this situation as it relates to sidewalks improve. Councilman Fortenbaugh, I guess this is a good time to touch on this. I was told the tax could amount to \$20,000 a month.

Fortenbaugh stated at this time it is around \$50,000 and keeps going up as more and more get their medical card. We did set the funds aside from the general fund so that it wouldn't get lost.

Neitzke stated it is dedicated to sidewalk repair and construction.

Fortenbaugh stated that is correct. It is based on the priorities that we have now and that might change. We have also earmarked \$7,000,000 in the CIP and if that passes in February there

will be additional funds. I agree with Rocco. I think you guys should focus more on things that will benefit those on scooters in the middle of the street instead of this.

Jones stated Ridgecrest wasn't one of our priorities. That came from a different group and they took in account the Safe Routes To School data.

Neitzke asked is there money available through Safe Routes to School to help support this project. They use to help fund these types of project.

Jones stated I don't know.

Love stated as a parent whose children walked in the street to school, I whole heartily feel that sidewalks around schools take priority. It doesn't matter if we have wheelchair ramps for the rest of us if we are not protecting our children. They are the future and if we don't protect them who will.

Jones stated you are absolutely right.

Love stated there isn't that much money and again we have to prioritize.

Polk stated I agree whole heartily with Kay. If there is one (1) child at that school that is wheelchair bound that is enough.

Love stated I agree.

Love T asked is there a priority list of the different schools and areas needing sidewalks. I would think the schools along the busy thoroughfares would get sidewalks first verse those that are not as busy. Especially the main thoroughfares. Those are high traffic areas. There are sidewalks on 53rd Street and they are putting them on Gore next to the school but kids walk from a mile away have to walk along Gore Boulevard.

Jones stated you are referring to arterial streets and that is where the money will be focused. It will start on the arterials and then branch towards the schools and LATS stops. It will start with arterials where the speed limits are the highest with the most traffic. As far as priority for the schools that will come from the study that was done on the Safe Routes To School. I don't remember the listing of those but they are listed. Each school is shown in the study. We are bouncing around a little but Rocco brings up a good point about the wheelchairs ramp down by the Courthouse. The Courthouse did express a desire to improve walkability and accessibility around the Courthouse but that project was done by the City without any involvement from the County. One of the projects I want to talk to you about and maybe proposed it as a priority is to do the rest of the intersections around C Avenue from 2nd to 9th Street. Then around the Courthouse and on the north side of the Post Office. On this map you see Central Mall, the Post Office, the Courthouse, the County Courthouse and the jail. The intersection that Rocco was referring to is on this corner. That leaves three (3) other ramps needed in just this one (1) intersection. What I would like to do at some point is to establish some new priorities and this is one (1) that I would like to have us do. Just those intersections.

Neitzke asked “Are the circled intersections the ones needs to be addressed”.

Jones stated yes.

Neitzke stated so you have 39 ramps that need to be addressed.

Jones stated yes. There might be one (1) or two (2) others that have been done.

Neitzke asked “Do you know the cost of the ramp that the board funded”.

Jones stated no. This particular ramp was funded by the Streets Department and I don’t recall seeing a value for that.

Bonacci stated that ramp came about because a gentleman flipped over backwards due to the slope being like this. I called Mike and the next thing I knew they were working on the ramp. They did a good job.

Jones stated they did. Cliff is our Street Superintendent and he has a really good crew.

Bonacci stated there are a lot people from the Lawtonian and the tower who have physical disabilities that live in those areas that do not have cars and have to go to the Post Office and down C Avenue. I think this project would be much more beneficial for people with physical disabilities. Putting sidewalks around schools is important it is just a matter of prioritizing.

Jones stated exactly. Like we have said for a long time this problem is a big one. The lack of accessibility in this town is big and we have to attack it from all different fronts. Eventually we will get there. I’m pretty proud of the projects that we have made and are making. I’m waiting on information from LPS as to whether they will help with the Ridgecrest Projects. They haven’t got back with me yet. Once I have an amount, I’ll let you know what we need to add if anything. I would like to ask the Board to consider moving this next project to your number two (2) priority. It is the sidewalk along Lee Boulevard on the south side from 11th to 17th Street. Councilwoman Johnson says the business owners from 11th to 15th are going to fund that portion of the project. All we would have to do is from 15th to 17th Street. I have the layout on that project done and here is how it will look. It will go from McDonalds and include Stripes, Burger King...

Love T stated that will go all the way down to Braums.

Jones stated the sidewalk will be located on the south side and will cross at the intersections with sidewalks and ramps.

Neitzke stated it will create access to Braums.

Jones stated yes. We will have access to Goodwill, Braums, the smoke shop, daycare center and several businesses in the area.

Neitzke stated there is also a dollar store and Discount Foods.

Jones stated correct and the Social Security Administration is at the corner of 17th. There will be access to a lot of areas that currently there is not. This is what I would like the Board to consider today.

Neitzke stated you have quite a few people that use that area. I have seen two (2) people hit. One (1) was in a wheelchair and the other was handicap and they were crossing the street to get to the grocery store.

Polk stated a lot of them cross there and it is dangerous.

Jones stated I think the business owners recognize that and that is why they want to help. We are looking at 15th to 17th and the corners. This is a really good project.

Bonacci stated I think it is great the business owners want to be a part.

Jones stated me too. This shows there is a lot of momentum in the community for sidewalks and accessibility.

Love stated maybe we need to talk with the business on Sheridan to see if they will help.

Bonacci stated I have talked with people from other towns and one (1) is interested in coming to talk with you and Council about what you did with the marijuana sales tax. He believes it is brilliant. He lives in Norman and they are supposed to be more progressive than we are.

Jones stated I think it is great. We have a big problem and it could take a very long time to remedy it.

Bonacci stated we are definitely headed in the right direction. I couldn't be more proud.

Jones stated I agree. We have had some changes on the Board over the past couple of years and it seems to me with us having some funds that haven't been available before I think it is time we look at the priorities and decide if those are still what we want to maintain or do we want to look at doing other projects in other areas. For example, on Ferris Avenue between 11th and 2nd Street. Every time I go by that area you see kids that walk from Old Town North to Lawton High School. We have all the different events and there are hundreds of people walking along Ferris. They go through the grass until they get to Elmer Thomas Park bike path. I would like for you to consider taking a new sidewalk from this gap on the north side to the school. I figure it is somewhere around 2500 feet. If we do that length of sidewalk it would connect from the bike path to 11th Street. There would be hard surface from 2nd to 11th Street.

Bonacci stated this would be a sidewalk directly to Lawton High School. This makes more sense and once again I want to see Ridgcrest but this is back to a very high traffic area. This really makes a lot of sense to me.

Jones stated this is a good one to consider. We would actually go just a little further and make the whole intersections accessible and have a ramp on all four (4) corners.

Love asked how close will that be to the Children's United Playground.

Neitzke stated it is on the opposite side of the park. It would close a loop on both sides and connect to the internal bike path which will take your right to the playground. This would allow a direct and safe access.

Jones stated this would be a wide sidewalk. It will be more like an 8' bike path.

Love asked is Ridgecrest Drive the main thoroughfare to that neighborhood.

Jones stated yes.

Love asked "Is that the street the school runs on".

Jones stated yes.

Love stated those cars are not watching the children, their speed and is pretty dangerous.

Jones stated that is a good point. When I was out taking the measurements there were probably six (6) or eight (8) people tell me that same thing. All of them had positive feedback about the new sidewalk.

Love asked "Will the sidewalk go east and west".

Jones stated yes.

Love stated back when I could see if I was facing east early in the morning the sun would hit just right and I wasn't able to see children walking in the street.

Fortenbaugh stated I would like to mention that the City's long-range plan is to turn Ferris into a five (5) lane road from Fort Sill Boulevard to 2nd Street. I think sidewalks there is a great idea. You are going to need them. This is a long-range plan probably twenty (20) years down the road.

Love T asked "Who is in charge of the park".

Love stated Jack.

Love T stated there is no access from the parking lot to an event.

Neitzke stated lack of accessibility is one (1) of the things that was identified in all the parks.

Love T stated the path is wheelchair accessible but getting from the parking lot to the event there isn't a way for a wheelchair to get on the curb.

Neitzke stated there are not enough curb cuts. When it was designed they didn't take that into consideration. During large events we try to dedicate all the paved surfaces to handicap parking. Right now, the eastern most row is marked for handicap and nothing else. Normally we don't need that many but anytime we have an event we dedicate the paved surface to handicap parking. Once you go into the event the entire area is not necessarily user friendly. We don't have enough space for large events to accommodate all the handicap parking and we realize that. Until we can pave more surface it is not actually considered accessible.

Love T stated I'm happy you have what you have I would just like to be able to attend more events. We have to go the long way around to get the wheelchair to the event.

Neitzke stated it might be helpful if this Board could go out to the specific sites to see their priorities. This way they would see what is needed. Like we did with the LATS tour.

Jones stated I would be for that. Also, when you come across area and locations of concern I would like to know where they are.

Love T stated you guys are busy enough.

Neitzke stated to know the needs will would help to set the priorities.

Jones stated we have shown that we can be pretty responsive in a timely fashion as Rocco mentioned earlier. The City Manager has been great about allowing Cliff and I to take care of those issues.

Love T stated that is a step forward. The parks parking lot is really a main issue.

Bonacci stated an area that I would point out is the intersection of Cache and Sheridan. You have a ramp by Stripes to get onto Cache Road but you can't get up on the other side.

Fortenbaugh stated if we gave a priority list to the City Manager when Cliff has time, he could go look at it and maybe knock it out. It isn't that hard to put in the curb cuts. I have to run but I do appreciate all the conservation.

Love T stated who is responsible for the sidewalk when it goes over the drive to a business. In front of the medical facility on 38th Street I witnessed a lady in a wheelchair fall out of the chair and flipped the wheelchair. There is a 2" rise from the sidewalk to the driveway. I pulled over and blocked her and there were police officers near by that came to help. She couldn't get the front of her wheelchair over the curb.

Jones stated the businesses in town are responsible for maintaining the sidewalks in front of their business. There was a couple of sections at the First National Bank located at Ferris and Sheridan that had buckled from the heat and cold. They were probably 6" up in the air. I'm

working with them to get them repaired. They didn't realize there was an issue. It maybe the same here. Another question is if we repair that section is, she then able to get down from the sidewalk.

Love T stated there is a sidewalk and it goes to a bus stop. That was where she was going.

Jones asked "Is this just to the west of 38th Street".

Love T stated yes. In front of the medical facility.

Jones stated okay.

Polk stated west of the intersection.

Jones stated I'll go look at it to see if it is like the sidewalk at the bank.

Love T stated my real questions is who do I go to. Is the officer responsible for calling someone? What do you do in this type of situation?

Jones stated I don't have a problem with you bringing it to my attention. I don't believe the police would be the first contact.

Love T stated the only reason I asked is because they were there.

Jones stated I don't mind you bringing it to my attention and I will see what I can do. We have a lot more to get into on the priorities. I would really like for you to consider what you think might be a priority going forward. If you haven't been downtown around the Courthouse go take a look at some of those intersections. You will see the one we just repaired sticks out like a sore thumb verses the other ones. I would also ask that you take a look at Ferris. Currently our second priority is Sheridan Road from Gore to Ferris. It is in the design state and will still be a high priority. As the money comes in, I think there will be a desire to see things get done quicker. Sheridan Road will take longer due to the right-of-way involved but will still be ongoing. I don't believe those should hinder us from being able to jump on easier projects.

Motion by Jones, Second by Polk, to insert the Southwest Lee Boulevard sidewalk with the Access Boards responsibility being from 15th to 17th Street and making this the Boards current second priority with all other priorities moving down one spot.

Bonacci asked "What is our number one priority".

Jones stated it was on Lee Boulevard in front of DHS. That project is complete.

Bonacci stated okay. There are many people who have disabilities that live in that area that don't have cars. I'm all for it.

Love asked what is the status of the sidewalk at Walmart on 38th and Lee.

Jones stated they paid the City funds in lieu of putting in a sidewalk. I don't know where we are on that one but I'll find out and report at the next meeting.

Aye: Polk; Bonacci; Love; Jones. **Nay:** None. **Motion Passed.**

Jones stated the next two (2) that I would ask you to consider is the intersections downtown around C, D and E Avenue to continue what we started at the Courthouse and Ferris from 11th to Elmer Thomas Park. I think those are both fantastic projects. These will get our name out there and that the Access Board is making things happen. They are good visible projects that will benefit a lot of people. I'm proud of this. If there is nothing else, we will adjourn.

3. Comments/Discussion

4. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

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