

ADA Advisory Council Minutes

July 13, 2022

Attendance:

Advisory Council Members Present: Steve Schoenberg, Joe Cheray, Robert Nugent, Kim Dietrich, Nicholas Trammell and Anthony Fadale

Absent: Marilyn Lind

City Staff Present: David Bevens, Assistant to ADA Coordinator

Welcome & Introductions

Additions and Approval of the Agenda and Minutes – Approved

Public Comments, Public Outreach

New business

Old Business

1. Reset – Brief discussion about what we want to accomplish next.

Steve asked what the Advisory Council wants to continue working to get a full-time ADA Coordinator position approved by the City's Governing Body (GB) and get a coordinator hired. Kim said she would be interested in continuing the effort. Steve asked if the presentation by Evan, Lawrence full-time ADA Coordinator was helpful. All agreed it was.

Bob said everything the City organization does for itself and citizens needs to go through the filter of ADA, that there needs

to be some way everything goes through the filter. He said he doesn't believe there is enough understanding about ADA at the City staff and GB level. The ADA Advisory Council's job is to say why the ADA is so important. Then the City's GB would be willing to create a coordinating group and/or an ADA coordinator position.

Bob also said that those with disabilities are also covered under the Civil Rights Act. Yet that is rarely brought up in discussions about rights for those with a disability.

Anthony, tagging on to Bob's comments, said there has to be a story told. In the past, the Advisory Council focused on the construction new sidewalks, and accessible ramps and restrooms. Today, the AC has focused on emergency management, communications elements, and transportation. The GB has to see that it is broader than what it was when it started.

Anthony gave an example: Several years ago, they wanted to adjust Anthony's position at his state employment, which would be required to get a minor raise. It was presented up the chain to the top. The Central Office denied the request. He asked why. The response was his position wasn't diversified enough. They thought ADA was one thing and that was it. He said that there are different dynamics under the ADA umbrella today than 32 years ago. The City needs to look at programs, services and activities it runs. "Not that we don't have to look at infrastructure but also the other elements."

Steve agreed, saying we can't just stick with three things – sidewalks, ramps and restrooms. The ADA covers so many things. For example: When the deaf going to the doctor's office or a

court situation, there should be someone qualified to interpret. At the same time, some deaf have other disabilities – physical and mental disabilities. He agreed with Bob and Anthony that the focused has been on ramps and sidewalks and there needs to be more attention on the people themselves.

Bob said everything we do in ADA affects the elderly and the general population. This is not just about disabilities but also age, “Grandma needs a ramp. We need to show what else ADA encompasses.”

Anthony said, “Maybe the council is looking at it, ‘Hey I thought our program is good and solid?’ It isn’t suggesting what the city has that people aren’t doing a good job. We are looking for integrative ways to develop this community. The way the law is, it is going to require more detail. We need to let them know of the other factors so they can see that we need to address them. There is a lot of detail in the operations as Evan was able to share. If we can show that then we might be able to get buy-in.”

Joe said she didn’t think the Parking Survey was a criticism of the city but taking the temperature of where we are regarding accessibility in the City.

Kim said the GB doesn’t have time or knowledge to delve into the details of the ADA. She thinks we need to decide how we are going to move forward.

Steve said the group had made very good points. He agreed that the Parking Survey was a way to look where we have shortcomings and where we can approve.

He suggested the AC draft a letter to the Council and list out in depth our argument and then work with them.

Anthony said if we get the department heads on board, they can have their departmental discussions, they can discuss, “How do we want to integrate ADA into our service functions.” The department heads may say, we need a coordinator, we need to do this. They will see what they have to do and then will need help doing it.

Bob said for department directors to get on board, first the City Manager must be on board and give direction to the department directors.

Anthony asked if it would be a good idea for the City Attorney to come talk to the group, that it would be helpful for the AC to work with her and the City Communication’s Director in telling our story to the CM. A proper proposal could ultimately be put forward to the GB.

Bob cautioned the group to describe what it wants to accomplish and not prescribe a series of actions to the GB.

Bob offered to accompany David in speaking with the City Attorney. All agreed and Bob and David were to set a time with the CA.

In conclusion to the discussion, Bob stated that Topeka Metro has fully integrate ADA in every process of what we do, that it took 20 years to become fully integrated, that they have completely transitioned over to buses that are completely accessible. “It is a long process.”

The discussion shifted into discussing training.

Susan McClacherty, an involved citizens who lives in the Valley Park Neighborhood, asked if there was any ADA information and available training.

It was mentioned that the national ADA symposium is held every year. Regional training as well. Fall and spring. This coming May it will be in Kansas City, Missouri. The training would be benefit to anyone who goes.

Registration fee - \$400. Lower rates on hotels. Agencies can take classes in the subject matter they are employed in, such as HR or IT. It would be helpful for agency staff to do training pertinent to their expertise.

Anthony said the University of Missouri has a certification program to become an ADA Coordinator. There is a base course that one has to take.

It was suggested that HR and Legal be approached about doing ADA training for City employees.

It was also suggested that department directors be polled to see how they are integrating the ADA in their current processes. The AC wants to be helpful to the City.

Anthony stated that there is a technical primer from the DOJ for Title II: State and Local Governments. Various concepts are talked about there. It was mentioned by Susan that it might be a good primer for City staff to review.

2. Committee Updates

a. Emergency Management:

Steve said at the State level, training modules regarding the deaf consumer group is in the process of being upgraded.

b. LE Training Review: Will proceed in August.

c. ADA Promotions: No Update

3. ADA Webpage content: No update

4. Access ramp to rental properties provided through HUD funds via the City of Topeka: No update

ADA compliance complaints:

Susan said there are still issues with scooters being places where it blocks accessibility. Apparently the company has hired new people to move them around. Joe said that Oklahoma City has a similar issue with scooters lying around “Helter Skelter”.

Non-ADA Business: None

Meeting adjourned.

Scheduled the next meeting for Aug. 10, 2022

Adjourn