

**Mayor's Council on Disability Issues (CODI)  
February 11, 2015**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Lemak called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Allan, Austin, Bass, Booher, Brookshire, Dockery, Getino, Gose, Hector, Hunter, Johnson, Jones, Lemak, Moore, North, Payne and Secret

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Adams, Lee and Newman

**CITY STAFF:** Stephanie Cook

**GUESTS:** Ellen Zavisca, PTP, Senior Transportation Planner, Knoxville Regional TPO and Peter Ahrens, Director of Building Inspections, City of Knoxville

**ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:**

**December minutes:** A motion to approve the December 10<sup>th</sup> minutes was made by Brookshire and seconded by Dockery—motion carried.

**Review of agenda:** The agenda was accepted as written.

**Introduction of Ms. Ellen Zavisca:** Secret introduced Ms. Zavisca, who explained some of her responsibilities with the TPO as keeping track of the needs of pedestrians and working to improve conditions for everyone. Currently, most trips in Knoxville are done by vehicle. Regarding pedestrians, conditions are not great; there have been 31 fatalities in a period of eight years, with an average of 10 crashes per month. There are several plans to improve conditions for pedestrians, including the recent City Complete Streets ordinance. A number of CODI members shared some of their experiences as a pedestrian; Booher stated that she has had a number of incidents involving a vehicle nearly hitting her as a pedestrian with a visual disability—in fact, she was hit in November of 2014 by a young driver who failed to yield to her in the crosswalk. The question was brought up about a “white cane law”, which needs further exploration. Moore stated that the traffic signals used to help pedestrians are often a hindrance to pedestrians with visual impairments, as they tend to stop all traffic, and this prevents a person from listening to determine when it is safe to cross the road. Hector stated that sometimes the buttons to push for a pedestrian crossing light are hard to reach from a wheelchair. All were encouraged to let the TPO and Cook know when a problem is found, so it can be explored and remedied.

**Introduction of Mr. Peter Ahrens:** Cook introduced Mr. Ahrens, who shared his history in the construction and building inspections industry prior to moving to Knoxville. He stated that part of his job is to see that the adopted building codes are adhered to and that accessibility is properly provided in new construction and renovations. He gave a few examples on which he and Cook have collaborated to ensure the most accessibility is provided in a facility and shared that he is a member of the City's ADA Facility Survey being conducted to assess the accessibility of several public facilities. A number of CODI members related some issues that they have faced with accessibility such as a problem using the steps in the Civic Auditorium and not receiving any

assistance from ushers at the event. Another problem was related to a members' housing—allegedly, there is a location where there were two ramps to provide access to common areas and each ramp was removed for renovation, but have not been replaced in eight months. Mr. Ahrens shared that eight months is too long of a time to not provide accessibility needed and said that complaints of this nature could be sent to 311, which will then direct them to his department. Allan stated that, prior to filing a housing complaint, a good idea would be to request a reasonable accommodation of the owner.

Concerning a lack of assistance provided by staff at a City facility, Cook stated that those kinds of things can be addressed through her office if she is made aware and that if training is needed, it can be provided. More discussion surrounded the notion that, due to the possibility of staff being injured or held liable for offering help to customers, it is sometimes prohibited by a company's management. To this end, Secret mentioned that there is a "Good Samaritan" law that, once passed, would remove liability from a person performing a good deed or rendering aid in situations like this.

**Transportation Committee:** Secret gave the report and said that the initiative to look at design and location of accessible parking downtown has gotten stalled, but will hopefully resume soon. The goal is to assess the various parking lots and garages to see if an appropriate number of spaces are provided. Pedestrian safety continues to be of the utmost importance—how can CODI impact pedestrian safety? Ideas were generated such as: work to educate KPD and others about the "white cane law" and encourage the issuance of citations beyond "failure to yield" when pedestrians are injured/nearly injured; CODI members could "staff" the top four most dangerous intersections in Knoxville to raise awareness about the need to watch for and yield to pedestrians; invite Jon Livengood (City Engineering,) to a future meeting to share ideas and write letters to the editor.

A meeting was held in January with Secret and Cook, along with the Business Support Liaison and a representative from the Law department to consider transportation services such as Uber. Local regulations concerning Uber and other like services are still developing, but the City will consider accessibility as they move forward.

**CODI Anniversary Celebration and ADA Legacy Bus Tour:** The committee has been hard at work on the details to get the ADA Legacy Bus parked on Market Street, across from Krutch Park, raise awareness about the event, raise funds, and spread the word. There is a need for a Fundraising Chair on the committee. Nobody volunteered to Chair, so all of the committee will continue to be involved in this aspect. Cook will follow up with Regions Bank and Payne will connect with Home Federal Bank.

Other updates/plans: get a banner and provide Sharpie markers for people to sign in show of support for the work that CODI does; video record members' experiences from their tenure on CODI (or KACH); provide a "then and now" presentation about CODI and the changes that have occurred in Knoxville, then give everyone a chance to mingle and visit. Consider transportation options—possibly, will need to explore requesting later trolley service and allowing people to park in the Coliseum garage(s). Secret said that CAC Transit may be able to help, should other resources be needed.

**City of Knoxville Report on “Disability”:** While providing a report of some kind to the Mayor and City Council as well as the public about the changes in the City since the codification of CODI and the passage of the ADA over the last 30 years is a great goal, it will likely not happen. Cook cannot compile the information and draft this report without assistance.

**CODI Special project, per Mayor’s request:** After the great success of the new transportation communication device known as Project ERIC, Dr. Rupy Sawhney at UTK has approached the Mayor about endeavoring to make Knoxville the “Most Disability Friendly City.” The idea is to collect information (similar to that during the Project ERIC process,) about where access is lacking or can be improved and what the current needs are; compile the information, analyze the data and then propose solutions in order to help people with disabilities be more independent.

**March 11<sup>th</sup> Taping:** The topic is “Adaptive Recreation”. Austin and Hunter are leading the planning for this taping and invite anyone else interested in joining them to do so. The focus is not so much on the types of adaptations that have been made for people with disabilities to participate in recreational activities, but more on the “opportunities in recreation for people with disabilities”.

#### **NEW BUSINESS--None**

#### **Announcements:**

- Cook stated that there is a pledge for individuals and a proclamation for governments on [www.adalegacy.com](http://www.adalegacy.com) where affirmation of commitment to the ADA can be declared and encouraged all members to sign on. Mayor Rogero has signed a proclamation for the City of Knoxville.
- Gose stated that March 26 and 27 are when the annual disability awareness events will occur on campus. This year, Ms. Victoria Maxwell, a Canadian actress, will be the keynote speaker and all are encouraged to attend.
- Payne shared that Patrick Bowen is the new Executive Director at ETTAC. All are encouraged to reach out to him with a message of welcome.
- Getino asked about attending festivals to help spread the word about the ADA and CODI celebrations in May—we need materials to share and people willing to go to these events.

#### **Public Forum:** None

Being no further business, Lemak adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Coral Getino, Secretary and Stephanie Cook, City Liaison