

Contact: Andrew Lawson
Phone: (620) 441-4415
Fax: (620) 441-0869
alawson@arkansascityks.gov

City Manager's Office
City of Arkansas City
118 W. Central Ave.
Arkansas City, KS 67005



News Release

Equal Opportunity & Accessibility Advisory Board has 1st meeting

Board set to meet monthly in 2017 at 4 p.m. on first Thursday of each month

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (December 21, 2016) — The Arkansas City Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board met Dec. 15 at City Hall for the first time as a combined board.

The board was formed from the remnants of the Accessibility Advisory Board, which had not met in several years, and the Human Relations Commission, which decided in February to suspend its activities.

The board is tasked with dealing with matters of opportunity and accessibility, including age, color, disability, language proficiency, national origin, race, religion, sex and other federally protected classes.

Members were selected for their objectivity, ability and broad community interest. They represent diverse segments of the public. Three have experienced some sort of disability. Several members of the new board served for years on either the Accessibility Advisory Board or Human Relations Commission.

The Dec. 15 meeting consisted of introductions and a general overview of the purpose of the new board, as well a review of both its bylaws in Municipal Code and general provisions for all City boards.

The board then decided to meet at 4 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month in 2017.

Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson explained that the board will need to select a chair and vice chair, as well as designate a secretary, at its first regular meeting in 2017, which will be on Jan. 5.

He talked about the need for the board to review and suggest changes to the City's Title VI plan, which it must maintain and follow in order to remain eligible to receive federal and state grant dollars.

Neighborhood Services Superintendent Richard Brown, who will serve as one of the board's principal staff advisors, passed out copies of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) code books.

For immediate release

more

He and Lawson explained that the City's ADA Transition Plan has not been updated in many years and the board will need to assist with that process. The plan governs not just public facilities, but also serves as a guide to assist local business and property owners with improving their ADA compliance.

About the Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board

The Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board was created June 7 by the City Commission.

The Accessibility Advisory Board and Human Relations Commission were combined to avoid the duplication of efforts, since both boards had related and occasionally overlapping goals and functions.

It also was a way to solve some of the problems that existed pertaining to staffing both boards fully.

The board can have between five and seven members. Currently, there are five — Bob Baker, JoAnn Bierle, James Fry, Josh Hawkins and Tammy Lanman-Henderson.

All terms are for three years each, but the term lengths are different for the first three years in order to stagger them appropriately. Baker will serve until Jan. 1, 2018; Bierle and Hawkins until Jan. 1, 2019; and Fry and Lanman-Henderson until Jan. 1, 2020. Fry and Hawkins were not able to attend Dec. 15.

The board's duties are:

- To help preserve and further the good name of the city by fostering and promoting amicable relations among individual citizens and various groups of citizens in the city and environs;
- To help ensure that each citizen, regardless of race, religion, color, age, sex, disability, language proficiency or national origin, has an opportunity to develop to his or her abilities;
- To analyze community involvement and communications, accessibility, education, economic opportunity, recreation, racial inequality, and concerns of the youth;
- To present such community problems to the appropriate elected or appointed officials, or the appropriate civic groups, businesses or union representatives, for examination;
- To act as a clearinghouse for community concerns as outlined in this division;
- To enlist resources of individuals and groups toward improvement of intergroup relations;
- To encourage community support and understanding by the general public of the board's concerns and, where appropriate, support legislation designed to reduce or eliminate discriminatory practices and group or individual prejudices;
- To evaluate projects and activities, both public and private, and to advise on accessibility;
- To provide technical assistance to the city on matters related to the disabled population;
- To review city plans for construction projects with potential accessibility issues;

more

- To serve as an advocate for citizens with disabilities;
- To review federal and state regulations and guidelines on accessibility, and to report its findings to the appropriate city department, division or body;
- To review and revise the city's American with Disabilities Act Transition Plan as needed and make recommendations for its implementation.

###