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News Release

Equal Opportunity & Accessibility Advisory Board picks officers

Former Human Relations Commission chair elected chair of newest board

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (January 6, 2017) — The Arkansas City Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board met Thursday afternoon to select its officers for 2017 and hear a legal presentation.

Tammy Lanman-Henderson, who previously served as chair of the Human Relations Commission for three years, was selected unanimously as chair for the new board that inherited the HRC's mission.

The Equal Opportunity Board was formed from the remnants of the Accessibility Advisory Board, which had not met in several years, and the HRC, which decided last February to suspend its activities.

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

James Fry, who previously served on the Accessibility Advisory Board for many years, was elected vice chair in a unanimous motion. Public Information Officer Andrew Lawson was tabbed as secretary.

Board members Bob Baker and Josh Hawkins were unable to attend, but JoAnn Bierle was present.

After the officer selections, City Attorney Tamara Niles gave a brief overview of the Kansas Open Meetings Act and Kansas Open Records Act to the board. She also talked about the role of the chair.

City Manager Nick Hernandez addressed the board about how he'd like to see it develop into a clearinghouse for any issues of discrimination or unfairness. He urged board members to keep their ears open and report any issues they hear about to City staff so they can be addressed or corrected.

There also was some more discussion about working toward revisions of the City's American with Disabilities Act Transition Plan and Title VI Plan. This will be an ongoing process in 2017.

Lanman-Henderson requested that the board members come up with some workable goals for each of the first three tasks listed in its bylaws and bring them to the next meeting for some strategic planning.

For immediate release

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The board's next meeting will be at 4 p.m. Feb. 2 in the city manager's office at City Hall.

About the Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board

The Equal Opportunity and Accessibility Advisory Board was created last June by the City Commission when the Accessibility Advisory Board and Human Relations Commission were combined to avoid duplication of efforts, since both 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 from five to seven members. 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.

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 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;
- 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.

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