

# Americans with Disability Advisory Council Minutes

**Date:** Tuesday, March 2, 2021

**Time:** 5:30 p.m.

**Location:** Zoom

## Council Members Present:

Matthew Loehman, Chair  
Travis Davis, Vice-Chair  
Sean King  
Kaatje van der Gaarden  
Daniel Strones

## City Staff Present:

Adam Leuschel, Assistant City Attorney  
Jordan Vargas, ADA Coordinator  
Crystal Velarde, Minute Taker  
Michelle Melendez, Director of Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI)

## Members of the Public

Manuel Baca  
Karen Cushnyr  
Nat Dean

### **I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm with Chair Loehman, Vice Chair Davis and members King, Strones and van der Gaarden.

### **II. Approval of Agenda**

Member King moved to approve the agenda, and Vice Chair Davis seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by other council members.

### **III. Approval of February 2, 2021, Minutes**

Item was tabled but will be reviewed at April meeting with tonight's minutes.

### **IV. Introductions**

All who were present introduced themselves.

### **V. Public Comment**

Members shared their concerns regarding the lack of ADA Council members and lack of City support in processing applications for memberships. Another concern was there were no minutes posted for 2021 that could be found on the city website.

### **VI. Discussion with the Office of Equity and Inclusion, Director Michelle Melendez**

Chair Loehman shared the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is twice as high as it is for the general population. In 2019 the national labor participation rate for individuals with disabilities was under 20%. Which would mean less than a fifth of adults with disabilities had a job. Additionally, the city has a long unaddressed list of projects to make the city fully ADA compliant. Chair Loehman inquired what Ms. Melendez's plans were to make Albuquerque more equitable inclusive for individuals with disabilities, and if the ADA Advisory Council could assist in any way?

Ms. Melendez explained the history of her office the Office of Equity and Inclusion (OEI). OEI has set their mission to focus largely on internal matters and getting the City in order. They plan to inspire and equip City government to make racial equity

and social justice the norm. That is why OEI focuses on who the City hires, does business with, invests capital dollars in and provides services to.

Ms. Melendez went on to discuss the trainings her office has provided to City employees. She has also brought in the Southwest ADA Center to assist in training the City's HR Department. OEI more recently is offering scholarships to City employees to become ADA Certified. OEI has further pushed for all City departments to obtain language access contracts. These contracts include providing translation and interpretation in languages other than English, as well as ASL. Ms. Melendez also informed the Council about the City's Closed Captioning Ordinance. This ordinance requires any business within Albuquerque to provide closed captioning on any and all TV's the business has on. Another project Ms. Melendez is working on is creating a supported employment program. She will be working with HR, Ms. Vargas, Ms. Cowan, and the City's Economic Development department. They are in the beginning stages but hope to open up City jobs for more applicants from diverse backgrounds, including the disabled community. There is no current target date for this project but data is currently being collected to produce an analysis. Based on the analysis the City can develop an affirmative action plan and set goals. It was requested any information regarding the City's plans for a more inclusive Albuquerque be placed on the City website. Therefore, making the information more accessible for the public. Member van der Gaarden, also volunteered to assist in editing any text prior to adding it to the website. The Council was also informed the Municipal Development Department (DMD) has information on their website to show what projects the City is working on. DMD also has a transition report from 2019, if anyone would like to read it.

#### **VII. Discussion on ADA Advisory Council Recruitment**

Chair Loehman went over the current members terms and number of vacancies on the board. He expressed his concern for the lack of applicants and current openings. If this continues it will make it hard for the Council to make quorum and continue their work with the City. Chair Loehman asked all Council members as well as members of the public to encourage others to apply for the Council. He also reminded the Council the Mayor would like them to refer projects to his office. This is one of the many reasons why this Council is important and needs to continue to maintain membership.

Former Member Cushnyr recommended Chair Loehman reach out to the mayor's office as well as Councilor Peña, as she was the one who supported this Council in the beginning.

#### **VIII. New Business and Announcements from Members**

Ms. Vargas shared the following link: <https://www.cabq.gov/americans-with-disabilities-act-advisory-council/documents/cabq-2-6-5-1-americans-with-disabilities-act-advisory-council-updated.pdf>. This link is for the Supported Employment Ordinance.

Member van der Gaarden would like to follow up with DMD regarding projects they are working on and where their funds are going.

Chair Loehman requested members help provide agenda items for future meetings.

**IX. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 pm.

**Next regularly scheduled ADA Advisory Council Meeting will be Tuesday, April 6, 2021.**

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Matthew Loehman, Chair

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Date