

Americans with Disability Advisory Council (ADAAC) Minutes

Date: Tuesday, June 6, 2023

Time: 5:30 p.m.

Location: Zoom

Council Members Present:

Manuel Baca, Chair
Roger Robb, Vice Chair
Olivia Fadul
Kerry Houlihan
Rand Lara Porter-Park

Council Members Not Present:

All members were present

City Staff Present:

Leigh Brunner, ADAAC Attorney
John Craig, Director of General Services
Amanda Trujillo, Executive Assistant

Members of the Public:

Miriam Rand
Rebecca De Santis, ASL Interpreter
Shannon Garrison, ASL Interpreter
Kathy Ferguson, Guest Speaker
Laray Sears, Guest Speaker
Nat

I. Call to Order

- a. The meeting was called to order at 5:48 p.m. by Chair Baca.

II. Approval of the Agenda

- a. Chair Baca moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Chair Robb. Other council members unanimously approved the motion.

III. Approval of Minutes from May 2, 2023 Meeting

- a. Co-Chair Robb moved to approve the May 2, 2023 minutes. The motion was seconded by Chair Baca. Other council members unanimously approved the motion.

IV. Introductions

- a. All board members, guests and City employees who were present introduced themselves.

V. Public Comments

- a. No public comments

VI. Presentation from Kathy Ferguson

- a. Kathy introduced herself and explained how she helped one of our board members, Kerry Houlihan with an issue she was having with her medical bills and that's how they met. Kerry then asked Kathy to speak at the ADAAC meeting, so that other people know there's help out there for people in similar situations.
- b. Kathy stated that Medical Debt Resolutions is a national company that works across the US. She works with patients that have concerns with their medical bills.

- c. She looks to see what the clients are paying for. And asked if anyone has ever received a crazy medical bill. She said it frustrating for patients, they want to know what they are paying for.
- d. Kathy evaluates itemized bills from the health care providers, health care facilities and health insurance companies and investigates everything on the bill. She looks for accuracy in great detail.
- e. Kathy stated that she has over thirty (30) years of experience as a medical billing investigator. She has always worked for companies and saw that patients are paying too much money. She saw this over and over again so, she wanted to work with and protect the patients and all consumers that were concerned with their medical bills. She reduces the cost by working with providers, facilities for all the over charges and mistakes that have been made.
- f. Kathy said that she had recently read an article that said patient bills of up to eighty-eight billion dollars in America are in collections. Medical Debt Resolutions goal is to reduce this amount to twelve thousand dollars.
- g. She then talked about one of her clients going into an emergency room with stomach pain. The doctors diagnosed him with Gallbladder issues, the surgeon went in and removed only a piece of the Gallbladder. The following day the patient was still in a lot of pain, so the doctor removed the whole Gallbladder. The patient's explanation of benefits read that there were coding mistakes and the hospital should not bill the patient. The corrections were not made and the hospital billed the patient twenty-eight thousand dollars. The patient contacted the hospital and insurance company and they would not listen. She got involved, spoke to a nurse and figured out the medical records were not written out correctly by the doctor. The patients true balance was eight hundred dollars. With the help of Kathy, the patient ended up with a zero balance and removed from the credit report.
- h. Kathy stated that there are so many different circumstances like, the patients name is spelled wrong, date of birth is wrong. She's also seen nurse practitioners bill medical doctor codes and then the patient gets billed because the insurance will not pay. There are mistakes all over the map.
- i. She tells everyone to be familiar with your health plan and question your bill. She works for the patient and fights for the patient and it makes a difference.
- j. Chair Baca says this is good and people need be aware that you are there for them. Kathy stated yes, most of its referrals but now she has a good digital marketer.
- k. Chair Baca said that he has worked in health care management for years and he can't say how many times the biller made mistakes.
- l. Miriam asked if there is a statute of limitations. Kathy said no there is not. They just need to dig up the records and look at them and make the corrections. The hospital has 180 day to bill the insurance. She's also seen problems with the billing software. There are many codes that have changes and they are not keeping up with the changes.
- m. Miriam asked Kathy what her fees are. She said she offers a free fifteen-minute consultation. If she thinks she can help you she will then charge you a three-hundred-and-fifty-dollar fee for a one consultation. After that the charges depend on the number of providers, how many charges and what the patient responsibility is. Kerry stated that she can attest to her professionalism and that Kathy can save you thousands of dollars.
- n. Chair Baca asked if Kathy could leave her contact information, so she can email it to everyone. Kerry also stated that it is on the Disability Resource List.
- o. Kathy and Chair Baca gave a few more examples where the hospitals had made mistakes and have had to fight to get it corrected.

VII. Presentation form Laray Sears (Bringing awareness to Autism)

- a. Ms. Sears started off her presentation by saying she is a mother of a seventeen-year-old who is on the autism spectrum disorder.
- b. She explained how they watched his behaviors which helped them figure out his diagnosis like, being a late crawler and walker, sitting still for long periods of time, things must be in a certain order with no one touching them, he was a late talker but did learn his alphabet quickly. He also had seizures after he received vaccines Ms. Sears does believe it's related to the Autism diagnosis. He was finally diagnosed at three years old.
- c. She had a hard time getting approved for the DD Waiver because of how she described his disability, so she does want to bring awareness to that. She gave some examples of how she described his ability's and how they were misinterpreted. Because of that her son was on the waiting list between twelve and thirteen years. It was very frustrating because he missed out on so many services. She suggests when someone is applying for the DD Waiver that they ask for help.
- d. Her son has high functioning Autism and can do most things if he is shown how and given a check list. If you leave him in his room he will stay there all day except for getting something to eat or drink. From her experience, structure and routine is big for some one that is on the Autism Spectrum disorder. They are very structured in the classroom. Interrupting a schedule or routine can be very traumatic for individuals with Autism.
- e. Ms. Sears said her son inspired her to teach Special Education. She has a heart for children with disabilities.
- f. She is still overwhelmed when trying to get services. Her son just graduated and is transitioning. Students are allowed to stay in high school up to twenty-one years old but she decided to take him out of school and the program. She feels that he is ready for the "real world". But with that she has even more questions. And without the DD waiver he is again limited to services. Now she is waiting for Medicaid and that process has been a challenge as well. She reminds everyone to know your rights and fight to get what you need for you and your family. There are a lot of resources out there you just have to dig for them and ask people who have been through it.
- g. Chair Baca stated that he knew what she was talking about because he had two sons with ADHD and it was very difficult to get help. There were many people who were not helpful. He finally had to yell to get someone to help him. Ms. Sears said that is sad that parents have to yell to try and get help for their kids.
- h. Ms. Fadul told Ms. Sears that she appreciates her story. She feels sorry for the emotional distress that comes with having a child with a disability. But encouraged her to continue to fight for the disability community. She also gave the example of the "Mother of Disability" Judy Heumann that helped so many people with disabilities.
- i. Ms. Sears said that she wished people would understand how her sons brain was wired so they can understand when he acts differently, or has melt downs.
- j. Chair Baca said that this Council will make sure that people with disabilities, including individuals with Autism have access to the services they need. They will push the City and talk to APS about that particular issue.

VIII. Discuss previous projects that were started and not finished as well as new project ideas

- a. Chair Baca said he went through meetings that were held in 2021 and 2022 and found several different issues. Top of the list was talking to APS, Speech, Physical and Occupational Therapists to ensure that students are getting what they need and that they are looking out for the students better than people expect because that's an important issue. Like he had mentioned earlier his children had a hard time at APS and when he moved to Maryland their school system was very well put together. He thinks APS could benefit from meeting with them, so he's going to try and put that together. Ms Fadul said starting a

dialogue would be good so, we can understand both sides and then we can see some change.

- b. Chair Baca said that Chief Medina asked that some of the members of ADAAC go to meetings with the Officers and speak to them with the issues people with disabilities encounter with APD. Especially people who are hard of hearing. If APD pulls them over how do they communicate? Or, someone on the Autism spectrum who just happens to be by themselves and is having a meltdown. That's something that APD needs to deal with in a certain way. He thinks the ADAAC needs to set up that meeting as well. He will call Chief Medina to see what it will take to make that happen.
- c. Another issue was MDC (Metropolitan Detention Center). The facility has issues with accessibility and people getting what they needed. He thinks the ADAAC should reach out to the County to get things done. Chair Baca stated that he will reach out to the County Commission to see if they have anything like we have here, maybe an ADA Coordinator.
- d. There was a presentation from the Governor a while back and she mentioned that she would like the ADAAC to meet with Policy makers and members of the community to see what is needed to make livable communities. Make a list numbered most important to the least and send it to her office. He will contact the Governors office and see if one of her staff can attend one of the ADAAC meetings.
- e. Co-Chair Robb suggested that the ADAAC follows up on every project, Chair Baca agrees. Ms. Fadul would like to see Hearing Loops at the Bio Park. Mr. Craig will see who he can talk to about that to make sure it happens. Kerri does have a guest speaker from NM System technology program for September's meeting. Chair Baca will put them on the Agenda for September.
- f. Ms. Fadul invited everyone to the Hearing Loss of America meeting on June 17, 2023 at 10:00 AM. She put the link in the Chat for everyone. Co-Chair Robb wanted to address Nat's question about deaf culture center. PAH Hiland living apartments. There are people that are working with the Albuquerque greater housing project right now and are starting to disseminate information and get applications for people who would like to be living in that apartment complex. You can go through the application process now. He thinks people should start being able to move in after the summer is over but don't take his word because he is not privied to all the information. Co-Chair Robb say if you (Nat) email him he can provide more information. He will put his email in the chat. He also heard that the City was going to have movie nights throughout the summer and wanted to know if there would be Closed Captioning. If they do have Closed Captioning he would like it advertised so if someone with hearing loss wants to attend the can. Mr. Craig will check into it. Ms. Fadul reminded everyone that July was Disability month. She will get it posted. Chair Baca said the ADAAC will go on a hiatus through the summer and will be back in September

IX. New Business and Announcements from Members

- a. No new business

X. Public Comment

- a. No public comment.

XI. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Next regularly scheduled ADA Advisory Council Meeting will be Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Manuel Baca, Chair

Date