

Mayoral candidates were hosted by the Mayor's Council on Disability Issues on Wednesday, August 2, 2023 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. in the Main Assembly Room of the City County Building.

Certified American Sign Language Interpreters and CART Captioning provided effective communication for this forum.

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**Barber:** Good evening. Welcome to the 2023 Mayor's Council on Disability Issues Mayoral Forum! Please remember to silence your cell phones and remain quiet for the duration of the event. You are welcome to enter and leave as you need, and restroom are just outside the doors to the left. We will be allotting 60 seconds per candidate to introduce themselves, and will be giving each candidate 90 seconds to answer each of the questions. Questions will be answered in "Round Robin" style. In order to keep everything running smoothly, once each candidate reaches 60 seconds, a yellow card will be raised to alert them to the time, at 90 seconds a red card will be raised. For introductions, tonight we have mayoral candidates Constance Every, and you have sixty seconds if you would like to introduce yourself.

**Every:** Yes, thank you so much disability office for having us here tonight. Disability is a major concern when you look around the city of Knoxville. There's a lot of infrastructure that is not sidewalk friendly, particularly for our wheelchair members that are motorized. Some of the accessibility of the doorways are not actually handicapped accessible doors, whether they are actually not automatic or wide enough. And then, of course, when I looked at some of the questions. Yes, the things like the playgrounds and some of the other public accessibility resources that should be readily available for anyone to use is not actually proficient. And more importantly, compliances. We have factors around compliances that we're not seeing enforced. And, more importantly, we're not seeing real stride toward that from the current administration to actually check those compliances. Title VI Office is a necessity. It covers a lot of different things, but it's main primary force is to be a watchdog to ensure things like the enforcement of the ADA compliances and other codes. So with that been said, I'm looking forward to have this conversation with you all tonight. Disability is a personal thing for my own self. I'm a disabled combat veteran one hundred percent. I served the country in Afghanistan, two tours. So I fully understand the in the visibility or the invisibility of scars that people may not see due to mental health and other issues. I appreciate your time tonight.

**Barber:** Thank you. Next up we have R.C. Lawhorn. I'd also like to remind all of the candidates that we do have interpreters. And so, as slowly as you can speak, I know we only gave you 60 seconds.

**Lawhorn:** My name is RC Lawhorn and I'm a general contractor. I have a degree in electronic engineering. I happen to work for Tennova hospitals and their behavioral health, mental health, and I currently work for the State of Tennessee converting a lot of their cabins and stuff for wheelchair accessibility, things like that. So I have a lot of knowledge in this area as far as the requirements and all that of it. I have a good understanding of what we can do to better help people with the electronics part of it. So I'm kind of looking forward to the night's conversation as it goes forward and try to come up with some good ideas that is going to benefit the community.

**Barber:** Thank you. Next up Jeff Tallman.

**Tallman:** Yeah. My name is Jeff Tallman and I'm a civic minded person in the community.

**Barber:** If you could use your microphone.

**Tallman:** My microphone, okay. I live in the fourth and Gill neighborhood. I've been a business leader and civic leader in Knoxville for the past thirty plus years. Love our city, and I appreciate you holding this forum. I just became aware of it about 15 min ago, so a hustle down here. So you know, it's a pleasure to be here. It's interesting, my mother taught special needs and gifted kids for her entire professional career, so I've been keenly aware of the opportunities to help all of our citizens achieve their maximum potential. My campaign co-chair is Becky Massey, who for a decade served as Sertoma Center executive director. So this is a critical discussion. It's interesting, as we expect people to live longer, I think we're going to be collectively redefining what disability means in terms of how we deal with our physical frailty, but still have plenty of capacity to contribute to our world. So thank you for hosting this.

**Barber:** And last, we have current city of Knoxville, Mayor, Indya Kincannon.

**Kincannon:** Thank you for having this forum. Thank you, John Barber, for sharing my Mayor's Council on Disability Issues. Just reviewing all of your bios, what incredibly experienced and well equipped members of our community to help advise me on these issues. My name is Indya Kincannon. I've been serving as the Mayor of Knoxville the last three and a half years. It's been my honor and pleasure to serve, and as I go around talking to people in our community, all across the community, young people, older people, everybody in between of all different abilities, the things that I hear people most concerned about are housing and public safety. So I want to just share a little bit. In my first term. I've helped build 2,000 new homes for lowest income families. We've dedicated fifty million dollars, and dedicated local funding towards more affordable housing, which leverages millions of others in the private sector to develop those housing apartments and homes for people. And we've helped about four thousand homes for low income and disabled families being supported by tax incentives. I'm really proud of those efforts. On top of that public safety. I've adopted body cameras, I've hired a new police

chief, I've helped in a new Public Safety complex at the former St. Mary's Hospital. We've re-imagined KAT. We're getting a lot of things done. I'm really proud of our progress. I'm grateful for the input of CODI, and look forward to continuing to make progress in the second term.

**Barber:** Thank you, Madam Mayor, and as Mayor Kincannon said, my name is John Barber. I'm the current chair of the Mayor's Council on Disability issues, also called CODI. Beside me is Karen Lowe, our vice chair, and Nancy Welch, our secretary. CODI liaison and Disability Services office assistant, Misha Dziubak is making sure everything runs smoothly for us tonight and City ADA Coordinator, Stephanie Cook will be giving closing remarks at the end. She is also going to be the one with the flags. We also have disability related information at the back of the room, so please make sure to stop by there after the forum. By way of beginning tonight, I would just like to say that most people aren't born with disabilities, but as we age, we tend to develop disabilities which can be temporary or permanent, and can change over time. In fact, people with disabilities and seniors make up almost half of the population of the United States. The Americans with Disabilities Act was signed into law in 1990, and has just reached its 33<sup>rd</sup> anniversary, yet there is still a long way to go to ensure accessibility for, and inclusion of, people with disabilities. So here is our first question for tonight. The way we'll do this is, I'll ask the question, and then we'll go right to left, and we'll start with Constance Every, and we'll work our way that way. So here's your first question for tonight. There are various types of disabilities, including developmental, hearing, intellectual, invisible, mental health, mobility, physical, and visual disabilities, amongst others. Active leadership by persons with disabilities is necessary to ensure that any decisions made are made with these voices being present to identify how those decisions may impact our community. Please describe your experience with individuals with disabilities, and tell us how you will engage with, and help to increase the engagement of individuals with disabilities.

**Every:** Too easy. I'm a person with disabilities, so obviously, I'm a part of the disabled community here. But when I see this question, I think about people like Lady Tiara Wilson, who is a longtime friend of mine, who is bound to a wheelchair, who lived in public housing, who needed necessary accommodations, who led, unfortunately, to a grudgeless process of dealing with public housing, KCDC, that would actually end up leading to a blessing, when she was able to claim home ownership for herself and her children. However, when I look at the process, and I look at the board of KCDC, when I look at some of the housing folks and other individuals involved in that process, I realized Lady Tiara Wilson should have been sitting on those boards to direct us on the needs and necessities of disabled members in public housing. We have other issues and concerns that by those experience of Lady Tiara Wilson, living through her world, seeing that things like stairwells are very difficult and are challenging. And so therefore, when we're actually building housing in the accommodations of our accessibility members, we need to make sure we're including them in things like the infrastructure, the blueprints, the actual layout of what these things should look like for our communities that are actually been represented by their voices. So to me, this is very common sense matter. The people with the disabilities need to lead the conversation. They are in charge of conversation. But, more importantly, we provide the access and resources to need for their basis of service, of what they give us, the information, and their concerns are appropriately uplifted.

**Barber:** Thank you. Mayor Kincannon.

**Kincannon:** Yes, thank you. I appreciate the question, how will I engage with an increasing engagement of individuals with disabilities in leadership and advisory roles. So obviously, my main go-to is this council, and I've had the opportunity to meet with you all more in recent years. My first couple of years as Mayor was greatly impacted by COVID, and that threw us all for a loop, and I know we're able to meet by Zoom and so forth and that helped, but I really appreciate the opportunity to meet in person when possible. It's nice to have the flexibility to do both. So I also interact with people across the community all the time, whether it's people in wheelchairs trying to just navigate our streets and I have conversations with them as I move around our city and talk to them about their opportunities, any obstacles facing them, I interact with my own family members, my in-laws have moved to Knoxville. My mom lives here, and she's confined to a wheelchair, and my in-laws also have some mobility and other issues, as we often encounter as we age. So I have experienced some relationships and so forth along those lines. I'm really proud of our progress on our universal design. Whether it's how we design our parks, like Sharps Ridge and such, Suttree Landing, the boat launch that's accessible for all, and I'm also glad, I think that people with disabilities need to have representation on other boards, too. Not just the Council on Disability. So I know Joel Simmons has been on the KTA board, thank you for that. And Mary Thom Adams is also who leads SPARK is on my Mayor's Makers Council as well. So those are some of the ways I want to continue to be engaged.

**Barber:** Thank you, Madam Mayor. Mr. Lawhorn.

**Lawhorn:** Yeah. I have a brother that's disabled. It's Spina Bifida or something like that when he was young, and he's not in a wheelchair yet, but he's very close. And one of the biggest problems that I see is we do a lot of work, as Mayor Kincannon has on parks and things like that to get people accessibility to it. But where we miss out is a lot of times, it's peoples age. They don't have the right accessibility to their own home. They need ramps built to where they can get in and out of their home. So I see a lot more need of trying to find a way to help people convert their houses to be accessible, depending on what their disability is. That's the one part that's getting missed, and a lot of people don't have the ability or the money to build ramps to get wheelchairs in their house. So I think we need to put more time and more money and effort into making sure that people's homes are accessible as well as parks and other things. We need to do a lot with the transit. I know the trolley system is something where they can, You know, it doesn't cost anything for them to travel. We need more accessibility to them being able to travel. It's not as easy for someone with a disability to just get up and go like the rest of us. So we need to work on keeping a good variety of ways for them to be able to get around.

**Barber:** Thank you. Mr. Tallman.

**Tallman:** For the past twenty-two years I've specialized in structure and financing for the renovation of our most difficult housing in the city of Knoxville and one of the things I've been able to do through that, is to help people modify over the course of their renovations, the exact thing that R.C. described, to make their bathrooms more accessible, to make their kitchens more accessible. So I'm proud to have had a modest role in that. I applaud the leadership for having established this council. It's very interesting and I will plead ignorance, there's varieties of disability, that I'll plead ignorance, that I don't know everything about everything, you know need your guidance. I do have close friends that have an autistic son, and it's remarkable to see his gifts, and how he's been able to emerge and contribute and be a gift to the community, so it's something. Generally, my philosophy, and where I want to see Knoxville go, is unlocking our human capacity, our human capital. So I, appreciate the leadership here. And I look forward to having further conversations along these lines.

**Barber:** Okay, thank you. At this time Nancy Welch is going to come up to ask our next question.

**Welch:** Thank you. John. Question number two. Knoxville's Disability Services Office, DSO, serves over 300 residents and visitors with disabilities each year, and is comprised of one full-time and one part-time employee. This office is responsible for providing information, addressing ADA complaints, guiding the city's ADA compliance efforts, and implementation of the ADA Transition Plan. Providing City employee and constituent accommodation requests, as well as reviewing procedures, programs, and policies for compliance. CODI has long supported the expansion of this office in order to provide additional support and services to individuals with disabilities, who live and visit Knoxville. With specific examples, how would you ensure that our city makes more headway in supporting persons with disabilities?

**Welch:** Miss Constance, I'll go to you first.

**Every:** Alright. Unfortunately, like many of the offices in the City's departments, they are all under staffed. So that's the first biggest issue we have to address immediately. We have to fully staff, full time, the employment for the disability services, because I know that this is one source of data. However, by personal experiences, I'm confident to say that there are probably plenty of over 300 residents and visitors coming in out of Knoxville at any given time that have disability needs. So to be realistic, we need to be realistic about the demand we're placing on the staff, and we need to help them with that, not burden them with that. So that would be the first step. And obviously we need to pay. We need to pay better. \$15 an hour has been expired, we need to start looking towards more, the \$23-\$25 hour range for our City employees. But the key piece here, how we make headway with persons of disability, and expansion of services, is obviously fully staff, we fully pay. They can reach more people, they can expand more services, they have the ability to apply for more grants, they have the ability to do more climate surveys and outreach to gain more data from our community and need and what these needs look like, so that we could continue to fund the dollars we need to expand. So really talk about budgeting at this point as well. So we have to increase the funding of whatever we're spending in the

disability services so that we can make sure that we're officially meeting the needs of everyone that is reaching out to our disability offices through the city's resources. Thank you.

**Welch:** Thank you. Mr. Tallman, I'll go to you next.

**Tallman:** Yeah. I think one of the key things in my mind about the question is, as we age, we've got an aging population, and human life expectancy is getting longer, so we're looking at a time in the future, where we might expect people to be able to live to 120 and retire at 80. So you have 40 years to try to figure out what retirement looks like. I'm somewhat jesting in that, but the challenge really is that longevity is going to present real challenges for us, and I think we definitely have to have the resources. We want people to be as productive, we want people to be as self-sufficient as possible, and I think the resources need to be commensurate with the moment.

**Welch:** Thank you. Mr. Lawhorn, I'll go to you next

**Lawhorn:** You were talking about two people being appointed to a board there. If they're not, they need to be people with disabilities their self. They would better understand what's going on. The thing is, unless you've been disabled, and I'm blessed that I'm not, you don't understand what someone goes through. So I think one of the key factors that we need to do is to make sure that the aging population, they have ways to get it to the doctors, to get around. If any of us don't have a car, we want to go somewhere we can call an Uber up and simply go. We need to keep the trolley systems running, they're free for the disabled. We need to increase them. As a matter of fact, on my website RCLawhorn.com, I'm going to start a petition to keep them. We need to come up with a system like Uber that will work for people that are disabled. If we need to fund it through the city, then fund it. I see that being a better way to spend money than to hire more people to discuss it, because that way people that are disabled have a way to get to the doctor. If you're in a wheelchair or other handicaps, it's a lot harder for you to simply call an Uber and get in. We need accessible vans with wheelchair access, and stuff to get people rides, and I feel like that the money would be better spent on the people than on positions within the City. We just need to hire more positions within the City with disabled people.

**Welch:** Mayor Kincannon.

**Kincannon:** Thank you. Our Disability Services team is small but mighty. And I want to just publicly thank Misha and Stephanie for the amazing work that they do, and also publicly recognize Stephanie for doing this work for many years and just receiving a lifetime achievement award from the disAbility Resource Center and sharing your unknown talents in the singing world, too. So Stephanie's done a great job for the City for many, many years, and as I said, they do serve a lot of people and do a lot. And one of the things that I think is really important is the power of partnerships and coordination, because the work of

accessibility isn't just the job of the ADA office, it should be something that everybody's thinking about, whether it's the engineering department, KAT transit, people as we build affordable housing. Affordability, as you all know, includes accessibility. So this is something that I think Stephanie and Misha have done a great job. It needs to expand and be something that happens. It's part of the culture of the City governance, not just the job of two people. I'm also proud that we now have an HR Department and in a second term I'm planning to have Stephanie work with the HR to have more accessibility training through our HR Department for all City employees.

**Welch:** Thank you. That is the end of our second, everybody's answered for question two. We'll move on to question three, and I will also be asking that question. The city of Knoxville has aging and outdated recreational facilities and parks spaces that are included in a 2015 ADA study to identify what needs to be done to make these areas inclusive and able to promote healthy lifestyles for people of all ages and abilities. While the city has renovated a number of facilities, more funding is needed to complete these renovations to the remaining facilities from the study and ADA transition plan. What is your plan to help ensure that accessibility and ADA compliance is a known requirement when it comes to providing internal and external resources and funding for these projects? I'll start with Mr. Lawhorn.

**Lawhorn:** I think the best thing we could do would be to put together a board of people. It has all of the disabilities. We need to start with their opinion. It seems to me most of the decisions are being made with people that don't have the disabilities, so I would put together a board of people that has to include some of all disabilities to let them have an input on what needs to be done. They know better than we do the needs, their needs, and the needs of the disabled people. So I think we would start there and then, based on their recommendations, start changing parks, transportation, different things to meet the needs. But until we talk to the actual people that have the problems, we're not going to really understand what they go through. So I think we begin with the people, with the actual disabilities, and we could further help them by understanding better what they go through day to day.

**Welch:** Thank you. Next is Constance.

**Every:** All right. Yeah. So the first thing I'm thinking is Title VI office, because that's a Federal oversight, and its number one responsibilities to ensure that policy compliance and other factors are followed. The other piece is that it brings additional funding to address, obviously what some of this is talking about, what I've already brought up before, the budget. We need more funding going towards the ADA office, plain and simple. And the other factor that we have to talk about is things like you said before, I think about the Ashley Nicole Park. It was really a dope, amazing thing when it first brought in, but it is definitely due for upgrades. We now know there are other types of equipment that our special needs children can have access to such as merry go rounds, seesaws, some of these types of equipment have been advanced to include all children. We need to upgrade the park with these types of activities. Because again, as she said before, this about including everyone and every kid involved. And this is also where, as before as well, yes, again, it seems to include the voices of the people. This makes me think

about my special needs parents, and what do those type of needs look like for their children? And more importantly, when they have that public activities, outdoor activities, libraries, other spaces that are evolved for youth enrichment, what are those needs looking like for their children? And more importantly, how are we as the City ensuring that we're meeting the needs of those types of children, especially when we talk about the recreation, recreational, and youth enrichment activities. I yield my time.

**Welch:** Thank you. I'll go next to Mr. Tallman.

**Tallman:** Yeah. I think that the build out of the facilities that we want to see in the community clearly is a process, it doesn't happen all at once, it's in the context of scarcity, of budget. And we know that not all disability needs are the same, so not everything is a wheelchair ramp, and so we want to be mindful of the specific needs that that people have. So that is something that I would be committed to, and in my administration.

**Welch:** Thank you. Mayor Kincannon.

**Kincannon:** Thank you. I'm familiar with the 2015 ADA study that Stephanie helped lead, and my friend and neighbor, Gordon Coker was teamed up with her on part of that to just examine firsthand what it's like to navigate our City when you're a person with disabilities, so I'm committed to implementing the recommendations of that plan, and I'll just share my commitment. It's not just talk, it's action. So since I've been Mayor, in Sharp's Ridge Memorial Park has an all access adaptive trail, Sam Duff Park is added accessible bathrooms, sidewalks, and a parking lot that's accessible. Morning Side Park, we're in the process of doing massive improvements there, thanks to a Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Place Grant, which includes accessible parking and bathrooms. We're applying for a half a million dollar grant to do improvements at Holston River. You all helped me navigate and then celebrate the huge improvements for Fort Kidd, which is now accessible for kids and family members, it's very, very popular. Fountain City Park was donated to the city, but from the Lions Club, and now we've enacted significant ADA Improvements at Fountain City Park. Augusta Quarry, we're doing five million dollars of improvements there, that that park is amazing, but was not really accessible to people at all, and after improvements it will be, and it will also have accessible bathrooms. I've increased capital funding for Disability Services by half a million. Cal Johnson Rec Center, ADA trail, and most importantly, across the city curb cuts is an ongoing commitment. And that's just the beginning, in the second term that will continue.

**Welch:** Thank you. We will be going to our fourth question, Karen Lowe will come and ask that question.

**Lowe:** Can you hear me? Yes, yes. So I have questions four and five. Question four is, part of a robust age friendly plan is having adequate and affordable housing where older adults can age in place. To

quote AARP, "affordability is only affordable if it is also accessible." For many older adults the cost of living in Knoxville is an extreme burden with senior homelessness on the rise and support networks diminishing because of the cost to live in the City. Knoxville's lack of accessible and affordable housing and a rapidly aging population compounds this problem. This can force individuals to live in institutional settings versus independent living within their communities. As mayor, how will you increase the percentage of accessible and affordable housing units in proximity to community gathering spaces and health services that is necessary to address the systemic issue. We'll start with Mr. Tallman.

**Tallman:** Good question. Thank you. We need to be mindful of the scarcity of housing and certain requirements to impose additional requirements on builders and providers of housing. This paradoxically has the unintended consequence of keeping housing tight. So we need to be mindful of the marketplace, exert pressure where we can, general persuasion where we can, and where the City has a budgetary input on housing. There's clearly more opportunity for input there, so I think one of the things that is of concern to me, I frankly am not a fan of the tax increase for the city on property taxes, which paradoxically, had the effect of squeezing more people out of housing. So one of the things that my plan is to bring about a new wave, new era, of entrepreneurial capitalism that generates revenue, that makes it possible to afford more of the things we're discussing here tonight.

**Lowe:** Thank you. Miss. Every.

**Every:** Yes, thank you so much. So it's no secret that we are having communities with medical and food deserts. The first thing we have to do is one, stop closing hospitals. Closing Baptist in St. Mary's without a contingency plan was definitely not wise, nor was it ethical. We have to now look at things and get more creative, like looking at partnerships such as RAM, and maybe bringing external partnerships with mastered ability to give pop-up shop, one-stop shop care, and services to some of these areas where we are having these medical deserts. The second factor is, we have to also, again, stop selling our public land for privatization. Last night Kincannon bragged about for every one dollar spent in public expense, \$12 went towards privatization of the public housing market. That's not a good analogy, and that's not actually causing affordability for our communities. When I look at the Tanglewood properties, it is tragic what is happening there, because a lot of those members are fixed income, disabled, combat veteran members, and as we know, there's tragedy happening in the Veteran demographic. Twenty-two Veterans a day are committing suicide, and one the highest homeless populations in America are our Veterans, so we need to ensure we are maintaining housing, not just for disabled, but for elderly, and absolutely our veterans and fixed income members. I yield my time.

**Lowe:** Thank you. Mayor Kincannon.

**Kincannon:** Yes, thank you. I appreciate CODI and the ADA office for championing efforts to make Knoxville an age friendly community through AARP, and appreciate the roundtable that AARP hosted not

too long ago, that I was able to participate in. So housing is the top need in our city. It's a crisis. It's a crisis for everybody at all incomes and of all abilities and mobility's, in the people experiencing disabilities need in particular to focus on accessibility. But if, as you said at the beginning, if you're not experiencing an issue with mobility or disability now, you hope you will age. We all get older, and we hope to live to an age and enjoy health and mobility as long as possible, but aging in place is really important, and it's a high priority for my administration. I have backed that up with action again, of putting fifty million dollars into the affordable housing fund, and a priority in that fund is visitability, and I'm really proud of our progress on that. Permanent supportive housing and missing middle housing are part of that as well. Just last week we approved half a million to support Liberty Place, which is going to be thirty-two permanent supportive apartments for the veterans. Dogwood Springs is fifty-two units for seniors, permanent supportive housing that happened in 2022, Villages at Holston Court is twenty-four units of supporting housing for seniors and people with disabilities, all low income, visitable. Callahan Flats is under construction, that's going to be fifty-eight more units and homes for people with disabilities. We see and hear this, and we're answering the call as we speak.

**Lowe:** Thank you. And last, but not least, Mr. Lawhorn

**Lawhorn:** Okay, well, I'm a general contractor, and I think the best thing that we could do right now is looking at building complete apartments, or condos, that are all for disability, every one of them. Everything from wheelchair accessible with the pull down cabinets to some of them with the voice command type stuff for the blind. And if we build complete complexes, we can offer developers discounts on the taxes for developing them. We can get grants to develop them. But when we get all the people in one place we can design the whole thing around people with disabilities. And that way it's easier because we can set up transportation, which is going to be our last question, and we can get to them, to help them get to places. It makes it a lot simpler if we got more people in one place and spread out all over the city. So I would suggest that we start building apartment complexes where the whole thing is designed around different kinds of disabilities, everything from inside to the outside activities that they could do. And by doing so we can set it up the same way. You get a lot of people on disability, on fixed incomes. It could be set up like the section 8 housing and different things that we've set up, that where they pay based on their ability to pay. But that way we got everybody in one place, and we can set up transportation for them. We can get them places, we can set up even basic medical care in front them, some of them.

**Lowe:** Thank you. Question five. Transportation is more than simply vehicles or buses, and includes infrastructure, such as sidewalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian signals. Accessible options are critical concern for thousands of individuals with disabilities, and those aging in the Knoxville area. These options should be safe, affordable, dependable, and user friendly. So what is your vision for the future of accessible transportation in Knoxville? Mayor Kincannon, you can go first.

**Kincannon:** Thank you. I believe in equitable mobility. That no matter where you live, or how you move around the city, you should have the ability to get where you need to go and to get there safely. KAT is obviously a big part of the puzzle. We support KAT with fourteen million dollars of annual funding, and 1.3 million in my first term alone to improve bus stops across the city, because some of our bus stops are not accessible and not safe, and not as safe as they need to be, so we're making progress on that. I'm also pleased that we work carefully with CAC to complement their services for transportation and City helps fund that also through the transportation planning organization. I'm grateful for Justice Knox working with us, not only on affordable housing, but also in micro transit pilot that I've committed to, helping to complement our fixed route services, and that could again be sort of like the equivalent of an Uber for people who are not served by the fixed route, or who have some special needs beyond that. Also, importantly, again, about safety. I've adopted a plan called Vision Zero, and I think in our society we accept traffic deaths as a matter of living our life in America at this time in place. We don't have to accept people dying from getting hit by cars, and so Vision Zero is my commitment to eliminate traffic fatalities on our streets by 2040, so this involves safe crosswalks, it involves traffic signals that give people time to safely cross, and it's in partnership with Bike Walk Knoxville, and obviously our engineering teams and CODI is part of that as well. So this is my commitment to safe and equitable mobility.

**Lowe:** Thank you. Miss. Every.

**Every:** Yes, thank you so much. Yeah. So my vision for public transportation is definitely to expand it. Currently, we have cut some bus lines that we need to restore, like I brought up before last night, the 90 90 needs to return immediately. The trolleys are under tech, we need to keep the trolleys, and if anything, add cable car. As well as with that, we know the State is talking about light rail. I've been advocating for light rail for very long time, not only because it allows the City and County to connect various residents and workforce to workforce individuals, also, the fact it is a green energy initiative and reality is the future. It's the twenty-first century of public transportation, but it also helps reduce car traffic, which is the other critical concern when you talk about our disabled members especially if they're pedestrian they're pedestrian travelers versus our public transportation travelers, as well as highlighting definitely our bus shelters are not safe. Have you ever tried to catch a bus on Millertown Pike. It's very dangerous, and most of them are uncovered, that's the other issue, we need to cover them, and we need to make them safe, and safe locations accessible for everybody to be able to use, but especially for our disabled members. And again, you all have to lead the charge, but one of the things I would like to expand is the Lift service. Right now Lift is a great program, but it needs to be expanded, and we need to find ways to encourage more drivers by obviously increasing the pay rate and encouraging folks with special backgrounds and disability certifications, is how we can recruit the staff we need, to or expand, this lift service of KAT bus line and then, of course, the last piece is the safety piece. As we all know, Greyhound is of extreme concern right now that we're dealing with as well, too, and when we talk about safety, we have to be realistic that even though that we may have 2,000 units available, we have a four thousand applicant wait list. And so that's still not enough, and therefore, as people continue to be pushed out of their house, due to affordability, crime, and other things will continue to go well, because poverty is the driving factor of our crime rate in our city. Thank you.

**Lowe:** Thank you. Mr. Lawhorn.

**Lawhorn:** Yes. As I said, with the apartments, if I'm elected, we're spreading people out everywhere. We need to start putting more handicap accessible apartments together so that we can get transportation to the handicapped. I will commit to taking and doing like an Uber system that will be able to get transportation people, because it's nice that buses are set up, but sometimes you don't live in a place where you have access to get to a bus station. All of this is nice for the people that live within the City, but we need to get it to where it's successful to everyone. Right now it's not. So, I think we need to look at building more apartments that are strictly handicapped accessible. We need to start putting more handicap accessible apartments within one unit, we need to keep stuff like the trolley system to get people there, and we need to set up like an Uber transportation for the special needs for people that don't have access to trolley's or bus stations. I would commit to doing that as well as appointing people within my administration if elected that can serve to help discuss the problem with the disabilities, because people that have them better understand them than all of us setting up here that don't, well, with the exception of Miss. Every.

**Lowe:** Thank you and Mr. Tallman.

**Tallman:** As the mayor mentioned, I'm fully committed to the safety of the public way. I'm a pedestrian. I love to walk in our city, and I'm a bicyclist. I love to bicycle around the town, and we need to protect and preserve the public space from people and 4 wheels that don't particularly recognize the folks that they share the pavement with. One of the things I've been thinking about is that we have in our community at the University of Tennessee a transportation and logistics concentration of excellence, some of the smartest people on the planet, who can figure out ways to get things from here to there, and get rid of dead legs and manage calls. I'd like to see us work with the expertise and intelligence there to come up with something that is more Uber like, so that we've got transportation available that is, basically decentralized, and that can be available on-call to meet the specific needs of anybody at any particular time.

**Lowe:** Thank you. Miss Stephanie Cook will be having our closing statement.

**Cook:** Thank you, Karen. I'll stay right here. I don't want to disturb the peaceful service doll that's resting between me and that microphone. So I wanted to thank each and every one of you for coming. I want to thank all of the members of CODI who are here. We have friends from AARP, we have friends from the disAbility Resource Center, and we have friends who've come out from Oak Ridge just to be a part of this evening. But given the fact that we are so ahead of time, County ADA Coordinator Carly Pearson's here to keep me in, you know, I kept up with this timer for so long, and then I gave up on my job. Thank

you, Carly. But if you would, if you each of you would please go to [www.KnoxvilleTN.gov/CODI](http://www.KnoxvilleTN.gov/CODI), and in a few days to a week you will have the transcripts from this evenings forum, as well as the video there. You can see tonight we have used CART, or computer aided real time captioning, for our folks in the audience to be able, if there's a need, to speak louder or more slowly, or something. If we miss something, we can certainly go back up there and read that transcript, it will be available as well, and I would just like to give each of you two minutes, up to two minutes, for a closing remark, if you have any, since we are so far ahead of time. If it's okay, I'll just start on my left with you, Mr. Tallman, and we'll go to the right.

**Tallman:** Thank you very much. Thank you for putting this together and thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here and speak about this like I mentioned earlier, I'm excited about the future and ways in which our community, collectively, can unlock our capacities to contribute and to benefit from the larger prosperity in Knoxville. I think we've got a good, loving, caring community, and I think in some ways we see this in the interest in hiring people based upon their unique skill sets. And so I think we're sort of in an exciting time, not to celebrate disability, but to celebrate our resourcefulness to make the best of disability, and I think what I would do as Mayor is put pressure and encouragement on our private sector partners, so that there is a real willingness, and we've got an environment where there's a lot of help wanted signs out there so that we can unlock the capacity of all of our members of the community. I say sometimes to folks, my disability is that I see opportunity everywhere I look, and I don't mean to make light of disability, but I genuinely see when I get in the car, and it drives people around me crazy, but I see opportunity to build our city in ways that we're currently not talking about. And so this affects not only the housing units that we're talking about for specific need, but for the broader conversation on housing, and it reflects where we're going to generate revenue to make a lot of the things we want in our city possible. So I'm all about doing everything we can collectively in our community that we breed geese that lay golden eggs that give us the wherewithal in the capacity to do more of what we're talking about here tonight. Thank you.

**Cook:** Thank you. Mr. Lawhorn.

**Lawhorn:** I think that we need to start with the basics. We need to start with the children in school. We've got a lady right here doing sign language. We teach multiple languages in school, but we don't teach sign language. We don't teach your children about disabilities. They tend to have a stigma to children that have disabilities. We need to teach sign language and disabilities, and we need to start with the children. We need to teach them to respect people with disabilities, to help people with disabilities. Then we need to, If I'm elected mayor, I'll work on getting apartments. I'm a general contractor, getting grants and stuff to build apartments. We need to start employing more people with disabilities. I will also do that, and as far as the Board it will be appointed to determine parks and stuff like that, every one of them will be a person with a different disability. We seem to have too many people without disabilities, making the decisions for the ones that do, that needs to change. The only way that we're going to understand is to communicate with them and have them be a part of the discussion. So I will also work on trying to get a system of transportation set up for them, work on

getting more people in in certain areas, work on a way to get grants to help get ramps built because, as we said, as people get older they that don't have a disability may have one. My brother's a fine example. I went down and remodeled his bathroom. I'm going to have to probably build a handicap ramp on his front porch before long. He's not far from being in a wheelchair. Well, there's a lot of other people out there that need the exact same things. We need to put together grants and money to help the people that can't afford to remodel their bathroom as they get older, they can't afford to put ramps on. There's a lot more need than just in parks and stuff, and while I think it's very important, I think the first thing we need to do is to take care of the people themselves before we worry about everything else, and then worry about that after we get to get the basic needs of the people taken care of first.

**Cook:** Thank you. Mayor Kincannon.

**Kincannon:** Thank you, Stephanie. I want to thank all the members of the Mayor's Council on Disability Issues. You volunteer your time and energy to help me and the entire city be more accessible and inclusive, and equitable, and I'm grateful. I want to also thank AARP for co-sponsoring this Forum. This forum is first of all very well organized and planned, I appreciate that, and also just the fact that you provide these forums to the voters of the City to educate candidates and voters about these issues. That is a huge value, and I hope the media covers it, and I'm glad it's going to be up on our website soon. So thank you for those who are watching from afar, those who are watching in this room, I appreciate that you are here and listening to these issues. As I've tried to highlight during the course of this forum, I'm very committed to being inclusive, to building more housing that's accessible, visitable, and affordable and we've made a lot of progress on that. But there's always more to do. I also appreciate the ongoing support I have from this council on how we can do better. About a year ago there was a fire at Northgate Towers and in the course that fire, you know, you can't use elevators during the fire, and it's a tall building, there are a lot of people who need wheelchairs and walkers. Our firefighters, you know, raced in, rescued people, carried many of them down the staircases, and then they got out. They were safe, but they didn't have wheelchairs, they didn't have walkers, they didn't know how to get around. We found a way to help them during that immediate thing, but we learned from that, and now, thanks to many partners and the leadership of KFD's Paul Trum pore, we have a trailer filled with emergency mobility devices, wheelchairs of all sizes, walkers, just in case there's a need in our community to you know, rescue people, get them out and then still have them have their access to mobility. So I'm committed to maintaining this momentum and appreciate all your help. Early voting starts next week. I'm asking for your vote and appreciate your support.

**Cook:** Miss. Every

**Every:** Thank you so much. I'll take a pause and talk about some of the invisible disabilities. I think about Mouse Walker with his Tourette's, who when you look at him on the faces of the surface, very normal looking until Tourette's has its moment. I also think about the Austin East teenagers, who have been traumatized by the constant death that is occurring in their community, and the unfortunate murder of

Anthony Thompson, Jr. And how inefficiently and inadequately all administrations of the City failed to provide those necessary resources. I also think about the victims of Lisa Edwards, Robert Bailey, Sierra McCullen, I mean, the list is long. I think about the triggers of myself as a disabled Vet with PTSD. And the depression, Tennessee is one of the highest states of depression in America. And so we talked about a lot about the physical, but we still have the invisible. And so these are the things that I get concerned with, and these are the things that I focus towards. And I think about Lady Tiara Wilson as I brought her up before, a known advocate in our community for a variety of needs, but definitely has been an open and public advocate for disability needs. I think about Kristy in the Tanglewood apartments, who is battling brain cancer as we speak and has no time to deal with the crisis of her housing as well as her health. I think about Gany Smarts, who is moving into the aging factor of the elderly and walks now with a cane. I think about Tanya Garcia, who has two special needs children, and not only does she have issues in Knox County school system, but as we highlighted, it's park and recreation outdoor activities for her own enrichment of her children. I think about Hubert Smith, who is an elderly member who is badly as we speak right now for the trolley fight, and to save the trolley, but more importantly, expand and make more accessibility to the trolleys. I think about Aisha Brown, who lost her housing recently to a simple, reasonable accommodation request. By the way, that's a protected class, and so there are avenues she is fighting as we speak. But last but not least, who, we may not think is a disability, but it may be because of the children factor, I think, about Brianna Holloway, and my name is Constance Every and I'm running for mayor of the City, and I am a disabled combat veteran, and I know for a fact that when it comes with disabilities, you have to follow the people who have been most impacted by the decisions and therefore disabled members to the front, and we follow their lead. I yield my time.

**Cook:** Thank you. Thank each of you for being here. I want to thank all the individuals that are here today, and that are visiting with us on the big screen out in Zoom land. But Mayor Kincannon mentioned this being one of the most smooth, and well organized forums. I have to give that credit to Misha Dziubak. Misha, would you please raise your hand or stand to be recognize, ma'am? She is all things disability services, and we appreciate you. So thank you all. Thank each of you in the audience for coming and definitely go watch the Facebook, City of Knoxville CODI, and make sure you go to [KnoxvilleTN.gov/CODI](http://KnoxvilleTN.gov/CODI) in next week, and you will find the Transcript and the videos from today's forum there. Thank you all.