

**Mayor's Council on Disability Issues  
August 11, 2021 @ 4:00 PM  
Small Assembly Room, City County Building**

**Agenda**

**I. Call to order – 4:06pm**

**II. Roll call**

**Present:** Alexander, Barber, Briggs, Childress, Cook, Colebrooke, Foutch, Huang, Landfather, Lowe, Moore, Mull, Orr, Rogers, Simmons, Spangler, Villanueva, Welch

**Absent:** Byrne, Houston, Loebner, NeSmith, VanDyke

**Guest:** Lauren Longmire, Knoxville Area Chamber of Commerce

**III. Approval of July Minutes**

Mull made a Motion to approve the July meeting minutes. Barber seconded the motion. All were in favor; the motion passed.

**IV. Knoxville Chamber Overview (Lauren Longmire)**

**Topic: Knoxville Chamber of Commerce's Path to Prosperity Initiative**

The mission of the initiative is to drive regional economic prosperity. The vision of the plan is to create a vibrant, innovative economic ecosystem for the entire Knoxville region that considers today's realities while contemplating tomorrow's aspirations. The Path to Prosperity Plan focuses on six core components to advance the Knoxville Chamber's mission of driving regional economic prosperity: Business Expansion, Business Attraction, Business Climate, Infrastructure, Talent, and Entrepreneurship/Small Businesses.

Lauren Longmire focuses on two regional strategies which are: Workforce Redefined and Talent Redefined.

**Workforce Redefined Regional Development strategy components:**

- Adopt a holistic view of Workforce Development, one that is more responsive and flexible, with better coordination and sharing of information among service providers. Conversation will lead to collaboration.

- Empower employers to participate in regional Workforce Development efforts to better meet the long-term needs of the regional business community such as having conversations with employers and asking what they see as barriers to employment.
- Prepare workforce-ready graduates by supporting more career awareness, exploration, and training opportunities in grades K-12 by sharing with students what will be available to them once they graduate.
- Create more targeted and accelerated training opportunities that are responsive to economic conditions. Dealing with mass lay-offs, loss of job due to COVID, and whether these individuals need to be reskilled.
- Support more equitable and accessible education, training, and employment opportunities. Ensuring individuals who did not complete school have opportunity and access to broadband.
- Champion top-tier reading and math skills for public education students as measured by nationally recognized standards. Employer feedback showed local graduates do not retain the basic reading and math skills needed for work.

Talent Redefined: Regional talent retention and attraction strategy components:

- Increase the talent pipeline between Knoxville area employers and local post-secondary education institutions. Strengthen the relationship between businesses and education. What do businesses need and what do the schools provide?
- Grow the impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts of regional employers outwards to the wider community. Supporting DEI – Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.
- Position the Knoxville region as a long-term destination for 25 to 54-year-old professionals by creating an online presence.
- Assist with recruitment and engagement of professional-level talent through talent attraction campaigns and speaking with specific professionals about opportunities available in Knoxville.

Workforce Service Providers Directory

- Created for individuals interested in a career change, entering the workforce for the first time, or re-entering the workforce after an absence.
- Organizations interested in securing a talent pipeline, particularly in low-skill trade positions.
- Created for service providers to help refer clients to other providers.

- 43 regional organizations listed; organized by service population.
- <https://www.knoxvillechamber.com/workforce-service-providers/>
- The Workforce Service Providers Directory is also for Veterans and for Workers with Disabilities.

#### Workforce Transportation

- This task force was created to research available transportation options to increase the available pool of candidates for Forks of the River Industrial Park
- Surveyed employers at Forks of the River reported that 17/27 employees failed to appear for work because of transportation issues.
- 17/27 employers reported trouble filling positions
- Up to 550 jobs currently are unfilled with up to 1,400 jobs forecasted to be added in the next five years.
- The task force is currently working on a pilot program with the Knoxville Urban League, Knoxville CAC Transit, and a local employer to create a fixed route from KAUL's office in downtown Knoxville to Forks of the River.
- The chamber also has an Employer Ride Resource Flyer as well as an Employee Ride Resources Flyer.

#### Untapped Talent

- A planning meeting is tentatively scheduled for September 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10:00pm
- Virtual panel to discuss employing various populations with barriers, including workers with disabilities.
- TN Department of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Brad Turner is confirmed to join the panel meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- Lauren Longmire to send Stephanie Cook the planning meeting invite to distribute to interested CODI members.

### **V. Member Advocacy and Information**

- Catalyst Sports has Adaptive Kayaking at the COVE starting August 23<sup>rd</sup>. They will host the Para Olympics in March 2022 and would like to present at a future CODI meeting. For more info visit [Knoxville@catalystsports.org](mailto:Knoxville@catalystsports.org)

- Para Pickle Ball and Para Tennis is coming to Knoxville through Knoxville Parks and Recreation Department.

## VI. Committee Reports

### Transportation Committee Report:

- Anne Victoria from KAT attended the last Transportation meeting to go over feedback and clarify questions regarding the KAT Bus Stop Improvement plan.
  1. Are there weight limits to the benches/seating at the bus stops? We can read that there is a weight minimum requirement but wondering about maximum. If so, are those posted for riders who may exceed the weight limit for seating? Semi-seat will hold up to 500 lbs., leaning rails are stressed at 640 lbs., benches have no limit at this time to be reported by manufacture.
  2. We have some confusion on the bus stop landing pads vs shelter space, the shelter spacing is separate from the spacing required for the landing pads, correct? A shelter pad and landing pad can be one in the same, but not always – They are 2 different items. The landing pad needs to relate to the pathway. The landing pad is used for the deployment of the wheelchair ramp when opened to the ground. *There are several locations that will be fixed as the new signage is installed as well. (Chapman Hwy, Lincoln Park, Five Points, Lula Powell Dr)*
  3. We also feel that if a visual of a landing pad in the final report/written plan could be provided that would help with overall clarity. Anne was able to provide Miller with a copy of some dimensions and visual drawings – handout
  4. Following recent accidents involving KAT buses, are the buses clearly marked and/or lights flashing when stopped? Each bus has reflection marking lights all around – driver must use 4-way flashers when stopped until ready to pull out
  5. Could KAT work towards providing both audio and visual prompts for upcoming stops on buses? The audio does not say every single route, just too many to call out every single route (if you need your frequent stop called out in the future, you can request that change) Visual : lights up and blinks at your stop on the indoor sign inside the bus – NOTE: if the AVL system is out> the operator will call out the stops verbally
  6. Making sure simme-seats aren't blocking footage on the sidewalks for wheelchairs and walking accessibility. The one on Sutherland seems close to the power pole, and feels tight, so we wondered if others could be monitored in future to provide more space? There is supposed to be a 4-foot spacing at sidewalks, etc. for a “passageway” but is considered okay with documented 3 feet spacing – Anne reported the measurements at Sutherland Ave, and they fall in this range.
  7. We need some clarification on far-side stops vs. near-side stops. Far-side and near-side are in relation to intersections and the actual bus stop. – there are risks there and some are favoring put more stops on the Far-side
  8. The new bus-stop signs are appealing, and easy-to-spot and we are noticing them as we drive around town.
    - Ann Victoria reports that there has been a 3-month delay in signage installation due to supplies being available.

- 23 routes are due to be outfitted with new signage by late Fall 2021 – KAT is using their own poles to install the new signage – ideally the sign will be at the front of the bus when it stops.
- CODI member, Joel Simmons, has been riding fixed routes for the last month and reports that all drivers were attentive, asked where his destination was, and that they were positive in interaction.
  - They stopped in locations where the lift could be lowered to a safe-space and tried to get him as close to his stops as they safely could.
  - Two of the routes he used: one in South Knox (Chapman Hwy) and East Knox (Millertown Pike) are very limited and lacking current landing pads/shelters. It seems to be mostly stops in grass by the side of busy streets. We, as a committee, know this is something you are working to improve, especially with this plan.
    - Anne asked the question; do you know of a grassy area that needs a landing pad? KAT would like to install at least 100 landing pads. – this will allow for a “comfort zone” and safety as well. To help with muddy spots, visual impairments, and uneven grassy areas.

#### MORE HELPFUL NOTES:

- KAT is working on providing lighting with their new signage and adding comfort amenities at stops when they can. (Shade trees, trash cans, landing pads, etc.)
- On their new signage there is an ID # you can text to get “Real Time” information about a bus’s estimated time of arrival at your stop.
- They also have a trip planner on their site that can help you plan your trip. What bus routes to take if you must transfer, etc.
- KAT does count wheelchair rides (counts # times ramp deployed) and can give detailed count of certain routes, certain times, usage can be tracked to bus stop location, and the fare box also counts riders – soon they will have another system that keeps a more accurate count.
- All buses are kneeling buses- even the trolleys (which are FREE).
- All buses and trolleys accommodate two wheelchairs at a time. If there is not room for an additional wheelchair, the operator will find out when the next bus will arrive or can even radio in to dispatch for a van to come pick up the wheelchair user. KAT is installing solar lights on posts with the new signage.
- At the top of the priority list is to improve 100 stops – add more lights at each stop.
- More shelters are coming, and they will have trash receptacles. The shelters are on order and will be here by the end of 2021.

Transportation committee’s next step would be to communicate with the community engagement committee on how to present top tips on riding KAT, which tips to share, and how to share them out.

- KAT is easy, it’s accessible, it’s appropriate for all ages, and family friendly
- KAT operators will try their best to get the closest they can to a landing pad or safe area for wheelchair users (sidewalk, etc.)

- Currently KAT has 80-90 shelters and are adding 20-25 more to that
- KAT provides maintenance three times weekly to their stops that have trash receptacles
- Cameras are inside and outside (in multiple places) of each bus to provide accountability and safety for all
- Videos can be reviewed if need be
- There are also cameras at the Knoxville Station platform
- Two bikes can be transported on the buses or trolleys
- Free WiFi on all buses / some have chargers now
- Using KAT gives people freedom to be independent
- Bus passes make it convenient and affordable – currently have a reduced fare
- The 20-ride pass is the only pass you can share, and it never expires??

**Membership Committee Report:** Did not meet

**ByLaws Committee Report:** Did not meet

**Community Engagement Committee Report:**

- Cook provided an overview of how the Community Engagement Committee came to be for new individuals in attendance. It was Mayor Kincannon's vision to engage the community with CODI.
- Cook mentioned we have foldable business cards which are being printed locally. These will provide information about CODI in a smaller format and will be given to CODI members to pass out in the community. Rack cards have also been updated and the Disability Services Office should receive 1,000 of those by September. It is speculated by September we will be holding Zoom CODI and committee meetings again.
- Childress recommended CODI utilize social media more, maybe place the information on the Rack Cards and put on a flyer and display in residential halls or place where large communities gather. Also possibly promote CODI in the news media. Ways we can engage individuals in the community were discussed below:
  - Planning for parking day to be in 2022. This will allow time for planning and to see any additional cost that may be involved. Parking day is held on Gay Street. This is where agriculture and construction companies are involved to enhance public awareness and interaction. Landfater to send out Facebook link for Parking Day.
  - Spangler is attending Community Resource Fairs through KCDC. Spangler will be staffing the CODI table and will buy some candy to promote attraction to the CODI information table. (Cook will reimburse)
  - Cook mentioned CODI has its own Facebook page. If anyone has something, they would like to share they are to send their information to Misha. Cook encouraged anyone who has a need or concern to please bring it to Community Engagement and it would be addressed appropriately.
  - Barber suggested CODI post on Facebook the events we did and not just upcoming events and what the outcome or outreach was.

## VII. Strategic Plan Reports

**COVID Committee Report:** Did not meet

**Livability Committee Report:** Did not meet

**Universal Design Committee Report:**

- Universal Design Committee discussed two projects they have in progress:
  1. Creating a cheat sheet of different types of housing – a simple one-page document.  
Universal Design Committee will gather more information then meet with Mr. Tente from the City of Knoxville to assist with filling in gaps of information.
  2. Meet and educate with home builders and contractors on the need for and importance of building accessible (on the front end) construction of homes. In previous meetings, this committee was given contact information from the Chamber of Commerce for local homebuilding contractors and developers in Knoxville.
- Welch has contacted the Home Builders Association of Greater Knoxville to confirm the dates of the Parade of Homes. HBAGK replied with the dates of 3 separate weekends, Oct 1 – 3; Oct 8-10; Oct 15-17. Also inquired if there are ever builders who build accessible homes for this event? They replied that they do sometimes have accessible homes at the event, usually pre-sold for clients- and built to local code , but there isn't one this year.
- Universal Design Committee learned that the Planning Commission is made up of Developers and Contactors and will be looking into *how they can propose a change to Mayor Kincannon regarding to request that a certain percentage is comprised of representatives from the disability community on this board and any/all other City boards.*
- Cook mentioned some local resources which can assist with accessible accommodations. Operation Backyard, through the Knoxville Leadership Foundation, will assist with building ramps, etc. There are three main agendas when seeking accessibility. 1.) 36" doorway clearance throughout 2.) One useable/accessible bathroom and 3.) A zero step entrance.

## VIII. New Business

- Spangler announced the KAEC Annual Disability Breakfast will be held virtually on October 26, 2021. This is a free event with both Mayor Jacobs and Kincannon presenting. Spangler is still seeking nominees for the Rudy Sullivan and Chris Willet awards. If you would like to nominate someone for the awards, please contact Stacy Spangler at [stacy.spangler@cacwfc.org](mailto:stacy.spangler@cacwfc.org)
- Landfather recommended CODI should be a resource for other county commissions and suggested coordinating a quarterly meeting between CODI and the other County's Disability Advisory Group (DAGWould).

**IX. Announcements and Public Forum**

- Christina Shipley and Mr. Sam Saleem announced a new nonprofit start up call “The Youth and Senior Alliance Program”. The program will serve Knox, Jefferson, Union, Sevier, and Grainger counties.

**X. Adjourn**

- Landfather made a Motion to dismiss the CODI meeting. Childress seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:20pm.

**Upcoming Meetings/Reminders:**

September 8, 2021

October 13, 2021

November 10, 2021

December 8, 2021