



Fort Wayne/Allen County Disability Advisory Council's 2021 Annual Report



PURPOSE

The purpose of the Council is to assist in providing people with disabilities equal access to employment, services, programs, and activities throughout the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County. Some of the council's responsibilities include serving as an information resource for City and County elected officials and administrators, highlighting the needs and conditions of people with disabilities, identifying barriers to full community participation, and recommending corrective actions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- Serve as an informational resource for City/County elected officials and administrators.
- Identify barriers to full community participation encountered by people with disabilities.
- Recommend corrective actions to address identified barriers.
- Produce an annual report.

2022 COUNCIL MEMBERS

- Chairperson: Ronald Duchovic, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry Purdue University (IPFW)
- Vice-Chairperson: Becky Weimerskirch, Retired Executive Director, Community Transportation Network
- Secretary: Rachael Miller, Special Education Teacher, FWCS
- Patti Hays, CEO, AWS Foundation
- Heather VanWagner, City of Fort Wayne ADA Coordinator
- John Guingrich, President/CEO, The League
- Tina Acosta, Turnstone
- Jeff Scherer, Communications Coordinator, Scherer Resources
- Laura Maser, Allen County ADA Coordinator

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES 2019-2021

As the year 2020 dawned and the Council began preparing to produce the 2019 Annual Report, SARS-CoV-2 made its appearance. The viral pandemic dramatically changed the activities of the Council. Consequently, this report will summarize the activities for the years 2019, 2020, and 2021.

2019 ACTIVITIES

Advisory Council 2019 Members: Charity Murphy, Nancy Louraine, Cindy Atkinson, Krista Maxwell, Ronald Duchovic, Becky Weimerskirch, Rachael Miller, Patti Hays, Heather VanWagner, John Guingrich, Jeff Scherer

Parking

Arts United took on sponsoring their parking meter space and has taken the responsibility seriously. Patti wrote about it in the AWS newsletter at awsfoundation.org:

"18 blue post accessible parking meters are scattered around the downtown Fort Wayne area. These are meters that are restricted to only those with handicapped placards or license plates to ensure convenient on street parking. However, in the months of snow the distance between the car and the sidewalk might be blocked by a virtual Mt. Everest of snow. For the person with a disability, even local travel requires additional planning and time allowance but, in the winter, a trip downtown can be insurmountable and filled with risks. The 20% of the population with disabilities may just choose not to come downtown and being already at risk for a sense of isolation, become even lonelier.

"Arts United has agreed to pilot an "adopt a meter program". The Blue Post meter on Barr and Main is the closest meter to Art Link, Pembroke Bakery and the FW Ballet. Arts United has agreed to ensure that the space will be clear of snow so that the ramp from a wheelchair accessible van can be deployed; so that the individual with ambulation challenges doesn't need to climb over a mound of snow or walk along the road to gain sidewalk access at a cleared intersection. They will assess for ice in and around the meter. They will be sending a clear message to ALL of the residents of the area that they are welcomed.

"The Fort Wayne City and Allen County Disability Council will be working with the City to evaluate the program for possible future replication. We will be promoting the program as it hopefully expands. But it shouldn't stop with Fort Wayne."

Departments/groups/individuals that the Disability Advisory Council met in 2019

- Public Safety, 911 Communications,
- Eric Lahey (Fire Chief),
- Steve Hafner (Police, Southwest Division),
- Beth Dlug (Director of Elections),
- John Caywood (Building Commissioner),
- Susan Eisenhower (Neighborhood Code),
- Lana Keesling (City Clerk),
- David Bub (Consolidated Communications),
- Tony Mays (Crisis Intervention Unit),
- Maurice Pearl (CitiLink).

2019 ACTIVITIES

Training Commitment

The League had a MSW intern who took responsibility for developing a training guide. Her excellent writing and editing skills assisted with developing operating procedures and completing the 2018 the Annual Report.

DisABILITITES Expo

The Expo is on Saturday, May 11, 2019

The group agreed to have a table/booth. Patti made the necessary arrangements.

This year, the survey focused primarily on transportation issues so that we can narrow down the challenges that individuals with a disability face. Ron and Becky agreed to work on the survey. Additionally, the survey was posted online and promoted throughout the disability community.

Becky, Ron, and Rachael worked at our table that day.

Accessible Parking Riverfront

About 7 accessible spaces will be added on the stub end of Wells St. by the bridge for the Riverfront project.

The Parks and Recreation Department prepared a brochure as well as information on its website about all the accessible features in the project: family restroom, resurfaced bridge, parking, support under the lawn area for wheelchairs, stripes in sidewalks, raised edges of sidewalks, shade trees, signage, etc.

Accessible Parking Space Signs

Parking Control enforces parking in accessible spaces, but some signs designating accessible space are missing. There is also a problem with the removal of signs that designate fire lanes and lanes reserved for grocery pickup. The removal of the signage means that the spaces and lanes no longer meet City code. At some locations the signs were removed intentionally; at others, there is no clear explanation for the removal. Parking Control has a list of businesses that are out of compliance.

John Caywood has a document that will be sent out from the County attorney to be sure that it will have an impact. They plan to take the list that Lana has compiled and send notifications to the businesses that are no longer in compliance with code and give them time to make changes. Fines and penalties are options; alternatively new signs can be posted at the business's expense. It was suggested that a press release be prepared to let people know that accessibility is a serious issue. Parking Control would appreciate the support of the Council in doing this. The goal is to educate first before sending out letters or levying fines

Charity said there is no issue with sending out the letter notifying businesses now; legal would just need to be involved with implementing enforcement.

Lana: Curbs will be painted blue for on-street accessible parking.

A new space was added at Allen County Cardiology just last week. This was the 20th accessible parking meter.

2019 ACTIVITIES

Finder

People can find statewide resources and services online for people with disabilities and their caregivers and service providers.

Developed in 2018 through an initiative funded by AWS Foundation, FINDER gives people living with disabilities 24/7 access to a comprehensive range of community resources designed to improve their quality of life.

Service providers, community advocates and medical professionals regularly contribute to FINDER, keeping the information current, relevant and practical. Participation is voluntary, and new information is added regularly. If you notice a resource that benefits the disability community is missing from the site, please contact the council. With your help, FINDER will continue to grow and improve.

FINDER supports the right for people of all abilities to freely choose how they wish to live their lives to the fullest. It does not rate or endorse programs, services, or organizations. It is up to individuals to decide if a resource fits their unique needs.

Transportation Survey

The survey was sent to all 23 members of the Northeast Indiana Disability Advocacy Coalition (NEIDAC).

Ron compiled the survey results. There were 55 online responses to date (May 2019; the survey is still open) and 18 written responses. 5 people stated at the expo that they had no problems with transportation.

There is a difference between the online and written responses in ranking items: the paper version asked respondents to rank highest priority, medium, and lowest; online asked them to rank-order all the items. This was a limitation of adapting the printed survey to the constraints of the Survey Monkey formatting options.

Addressing parking issues, the survey found: accessible aisles and drop-off zones were highest priorities for the respondents. Metered spaces and roadside assistance were lowest. Addressing transportation services, the survey found: 78% of people would like to see bus service 7 days a week. The lowest priority was individual private services such as taxi, Uber, etc. It is suspected that cost and convenience may be factors in these responses. The preferred method to receive communications about transportation services is social media, but respondents prefer to file complaints by phone.

Transportation is a central issue affecting employment opportunities.

2019 ACTIVITIES

Citilink has done surveys on transportation. We will review the results of those surveys before unintentionally duplicating effort by collecting the same information. We would like to do a follow-up survey to complement the Citilink data.

ADA pages

Charity recommends the content that goes on the ADA page for the County. Some cities have very extensive webpages that deal with ADA; their disability councils have been established differently and frequently disability council members are employees. Charity welcomes any feedback on how to reconfigure the County webpage. Ron has reviewed the Chicago and Bloomington pages to see what elements we could add to our webpage to increase the online presence. The disability rights webpage in Wisconsin is another good one.

Strategic Planning

The Disability Advisory Council has begun thinking about its future. What are we going to do in the future? These initial thoughts will have consequences in 2021. See below.

There is a need to identify some concrete goals. We have been learning and understanding for 2 years. Now what? Maybe this should be our overarching goal for 2020. John will see if he can get someone in here to plan with us. Charity knows a City/County person who could help with planning as well.

Parking Revisited

Lana Keesling made several comments (October 2019):

On Parking meters:

The Council has discussed having businesses adopt a meter. Logistically, there were some things that need to be thought through. Maybe we could do something for this winter. There are several challenges: For example, how can a sign be erected that doesn't permanently affect the meter? Identifying businesses is another challenge. The people cleaning the sidewalks are typically the building owners and not owners of an individual business. Some meters have no businesses around them.

The Council discussed that businesses do not mark parking spaces appropriately; consequently, the spaces do not meet the building code. So, with the Building Department, sent out letters and have been the "eyes" to see who is being compliant. There are a couple of places who took down signs because they didn't want it enforced. Most businesses on that list had complied at one point in time but have since redone their building or parking lot; signs came down and they didn't realize they had to go back up. Kroger, for example, has signs with pedestals, which is good for snow removal, but the signs don't get put back

2019 ACTIVITIES

correctly and Kroger doesn't realize the consequences of not having them in the right spot. Everyone has been good about becoming compliant. Round 2 letters are going out soon. The Tincaps did put their signs back up. There was a lot of education: they were getting 20-30 calls a day. They generated a lot of response. The Building Department has recently added about 20 more businesses who will receive their first letter. It is working well. The Council will continue to work with John Caywood to send letters as new businesses are identified that are no longer compliant. Everybody that has called has been very understanding and willing to resolve the problem. There is one church in Fort Wayne near downtown that has a gravel lot in the back and small lots on each side. They recently redid their parking lot and believe their three accessible spaces should be used for officials of the church. It went to court when they were cited. They have since removed all accessible spaces. They do not believe they have to comply. It is up to the County who is looking at the permitting because the church is in violation of code. All citations that have gone to court have been upheld. Churches are exempt from ADA, but cities and counties can enforce more stringent codes.

How can we help with the parking meters? The Council needs to put together some sort of letter to the businesses in the areas where the meters are located and must determine how to fund the signs. If someone agrees, the council could write a request to the Community Foundation to fund it. Arts United did this last year. The Downtown Improvement District (DID) actively clears many intersections from snow. The DID might be able to endorse or support it. In the past, The DID was a bit resistant to this suggestion. Arts United said it was difficult to keep up; if a snowplow cleared the snow, they were unable to get back out right away. When there is freshly fallen snow, an attempt will be made to minimize the mounds of snow. commit to do best effort. There are 2 parking locations in Freimann and 2 in the Barr Street lot that are not dedicated to a business.

There are a total of 20 parking spaces available. There are meters and poles for 5 more; just waiting to be placed in ideal places. The 200 block of Wayne Street may be good near the restaurants; maybe Harrison in the vicinity of The Landing and Promenade Park, or Pearl Street when the hotel is done would be additional attractive locations. Several spaces were lost on Maiden as well as on Pearl; when the hotel is done, more diagonal spaces will be added on Pearl. Some meters were recently added on Superior for the first time. Meters may be installed near Nowak. There is a preference to install meters in targeted areas rather than placing them randomly.

Census 2020

There is going to be a big push for people with disabilities to be counted in the census. It would be great if somebody from the Disability Advisory Council could attend the meeting. 70% of the population participates in the census. People with disabilities need to be counted.

2019 ACTIVITIES

30th anniversary of the ADA Legislation

Patti and Nancy met with Todd at The History Center about doing a historical overview of the old State Development Center. He wants to do a display. He will consider pursuing a grant from AWS Foundation to put things together. A book was written at one point, but it has not been located. A second meeting will take place to continue this project. They discussed having PBS doing a documentary (the Henry family could be a useful resource since Jerry Henry Sr. worked there and the children lived on the farm where Canterbury Green is now located). There is a small cemetery there as well. Perhaps it could be fenced in. There is a plaque posted at the old campus where the Parks Department is located. Perhaps it could be replaced/updated as it uses the term “retarded” and the old plaque sent to the History Center.

2020 ACTIVITIES

Departments/groups/individuals that the Disability Advisory Council met in 2020

- Nikki Quintana (Fort Wayne Metropolitan Human Relations Commission),
- Lana Keesling (City Clerk),
- Chris Deisler (Safety Claims Investigator, Risk Management),
- Bernie Beier (Homeland Security),
- Luke Labas (Advocacy Coordinator, The League),
- Matthew Sutter MD (Health Commissioner).

The reduced number of guests attending the Disability Council meetings is a reflection of the impact of SARS-CoV-2.

Advisory Council 2020 Members: Chris Deisler (Safety Claims Investigator and Trainer, City of Fort Wayne), Kristen Hahn, Nancy Louraine, Tina Acosta, Charity Murphy, Krista Maxwell, Ronald Duchovic, Becky Weimerskirch, Rachael Miller, Patti Hays, Heather VanWagner, John Guingrich, Jeff Scherer

History Center/Developmental Center

A working group is looking ahead to October to do multi-tiered activities including recapturing the history of the State Developmental Center, putting together an exhibit for the history center, and hopefully updating the plaque on State Blvd. to use the better word choice (not “retarded”), and preserve the old sign at the History Center. The History Center is going to do a magazine. They want to mark the cemetery at the old Developmental Center. An application will be made for a grant from the AWS Foundation to fund these ideas.

Access Aisles

Parking Enforcement continues to write a lot of citations and pass out the education brochures on the responsibilities of having a placard. Lana is not getting anywhere at this point with the BMV. The next step may be to talk to Suzanne Crouch and/or legislators.

Are there templates for stencils to paint “No Parking” in the crosshatched areas? Does the ADA law require/permit/recommend this? Coordinating with all the different contractors would make for a challenge. It could be more cost-efficient than posting the signs at the access aisles. However, the signs have been effective in getting people’s attention.

2020 ACTIVITIES

There are still a few more accessible meters available. There are accessible spots at Promenade, but they do not yet have signs.

Sending letters has been very effective in getting compliance with businesses that do not have signs posted at their accessible spots.

Disability Awareness Month 2020

Press conference: March 3 or 10 at 11:00 am are times that the mayor is available to do this.

Nikki Quintana

Executive Director of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission (Metro)

How can the Disability Advisory Council be a resource for employers and people with disabilities?

Metro is an enforcement agency. The complaints received frequently are related to employment accommodations. Metro does a lot of training and education and deals with issues of discrimination.

If someone files a complaint, an investigator works with them. A determination is made that Metro has jurisdiction based on location, company size, and timing. The investigators are neutral fact-finders who try to work through the situation with both parties to resolve issues.

Metro enforces Title I with regards to disabilities. It could be accommodations, termination, harassment, etc.

The most frequent complaints about fair housing tend to be disability-related.

Metro can be a resource and cannot advise on specific situations. Metro can point people to the information and resources that they need to deal with a situation.

City and County ADA Coordinators

The ADA coordinators discussed emergency preparedness at their April meeting. Most people with disabilities do not have a plan for disasters.

The coordinators want to encourage people with disabilities to make sure they have a plan. Maybe the council can work with Bernie Beier to set up an emergency preparedness plan for people with disabilities.

2020 ACTIVITIES

COVID and Disabilities

How has the disabilities community been impacted by the virus as far as infections and deaths? This is difficult to define. Underlying health conditions and age, of course, are factors. Many do end up in nursing homes. The State of Indiana is monitoring group homes. At the end of last month, the state had numbers about group homes: 34 consumers tested positive with 2 deaths and 39 staff positive with 1 death, most in Marion County. The local numbers are currently low.

ADA anniversary

Change the sign on State to use person-first language. Monday July 27th could be a good media day for that and then the Friday July 31st for the prime-time live show. NEIDAC would be happy to join in support. It will be an opportunity to talk about how language changes and the use person-first language. This is not like tearing down offensive statues.

The new sign has been ordered. AWS can work on getting the media together for it. We can get City and County representatives there as well for the unveiling of the new sign. The council and NEIDAC will plan to attend.

The old sign will go to the History Center. There will be a PBS documentary before the end of the year. There will be an in-person and virtual exhibit at The History Center as well.

Disability Awareness Training

The training has been delayed by COVID. It would be easier to assemble in smaller groups in the various City and County departments. This approach could have a greater impact as well. The training should be done in person rather than online or as a video.

Homeland Security

COVID highlights some of the challenges in the community and how fragile we are. Emergency planning and community preparedness also highlights how we are all different as well. So many of the issues we have seen recently with regards to covid, **2020**

Protests, even funnel clouds, all have differing impacts on our community. A City challenge is not a County challenge; it's the smaller groups that are affected. Being prepared for those small things makes a difference for the bigger community. Each small group needs to take and adapt the plans. Being ready for all the small challenges prepares us for the big plan. Bernie can suggest standardized preparedness kits, but each person needs to personalize such a kit. How does the council help to complete that task?

One possible answer: Leverage our collective knowledge.

2020 ACTIVITIES

FEMA and the state provide many useful tools, but to make them meaningful, local groups need to come together for local solutions. A failure to do that is a failure. Small, local groups can go a long way.

The Director of the local Homeland Security Office is not an expert on every individual subject. The Director is the local expert who connects groups, empowering other individuals. It's important to build trust and stay connected with partners that can help with any variety of challenge. It's important to maintain those partnerships so that when something unexpected occurs, you know the correct person to contact for help.

It is important to look at local challenges and local opportunities. In the Community Organizations Active in Disasters (COAD) group National and State agencies are identified but there must be more local connections and resources for personalized local solutions.

If Bernie needs to gather people from the local disability community, the council can bring people to the table for him; he just needs to say the word. Hopefully sooner rather than later.

30th Anniversary ADA Press Conference

The dedication will take place on July 27th at 10:00 am at Northside Park. More information will be forthcoming. It will be centered around replacing the plaque and updating the wording. Everybody is welcome to come. Nelson Peters will be there. It's about getting some media attention to the person-first language. The ceremony will take place at the pillar itself.

There is parking at Park Center and at the Parks Department. Patti will walk it to check that it is wheelchair accessible for attendees and see about setting up ramps if needed.

There will be a Friday night Primetime show with PBS.

Curb cutouts/sidewalks

Becky showed various curb cuts in her neighborhood. The issue is the path of travel directed by the curb cut, not just curb cut itself. These curb cuts point people into the middle of an intersection without indicating a clear path. This is not safe for someone with a vision impairment since there is no clear direction provided to the corresponding sidewalk on the other side of the intersection. It is important that these observations are reported so the City can respond.

2020 ACTIVITIES

August 2020 Administrative Decisions

Becky's term is up this year. She is willing to continue as a member of the council and the council values her contribution to the group. Nancy Louraine has resigned from the council. NEIDAC will nominate a replacement member.

The PBS (WFWA, PBS39) website, under Primetime, hosts the video that aired in July.

Initial Discussion about Strategic Planning

What direction should the council pursue? Perhaps the council should focus on priorities this council has identified: employment and transportation. Is it possible to develop a strategic plan with measurable goals that focuses on employment? This is a difficult challenge. Have the City and County governments handled things well through the pandemic? Are there things that could be done differently? What lessons have been learned in 2020? We have offered our assistance to a lot of departments over the years. Bernie Beier with Homeland Security made both the clearest and most emphatic request for help and guidance. The County government asked for help with sensitivity training as well. Should representatives from the council now begin attending meetings of other groups rather than inviting them to speak with u to influence directly their work and to advocate for specific decisions?

Is it the council's responsibility or prerogative to create a plan? Should the council work with outside groups? We as a group cannot request funding in a grant. It would have to go through a fiscal agent.

Further Strategic Planning Discussion

Strategic planning is going to be important for the council moving forward to be a resource to the community. Perhaps a grant should be sent to the AWS Foundation to get a strategic planner. Charity may be able to help with this. Mike Stone worked with NEIDAC to do this. Ron is willing to assist with the writing, aided by Becky. The League is willing to work as a fiscal agent for the grant.

What would be the council's objective? The proactive work done by the council has been limited to the survey and to meeting with different City and County departments, establishing relationships with these departments. What are the priorities? Jeff is working on community employment. Transportation is a priority. Housing is another priority that is a challenge. The departments with which there have been discussions have not come back to request advice from the council. Sidewalks, curb cuts, safe crossings, audible signals are all important.

2020 ACTIVITIES

The goal is to identify priorities that can be proactively pursued over the next 2 years. This will involve considering how the world has responded to the pandemic. There are positive outcomes; there are challenges.

Some of the things the council has discussed have been used advantageously by many people. These discussions focused on existing infrastructure. Other questions involve influencing institutional changes. There are 2 levels of involvement. Some things are of immediate importance and others have a long-term impact. How does this council have a long-term influence on both infrastructural and attitudinal barriers?

Is employment something the City and County governments can influence? They seem to have more immediate influence over things like curbs, streets, etc.

The next grant cycle for AWS starts in November. A letter of intent would be due by Oct. 30th. Is there money in the City or County governments for a consultant for strategic planning? Heather can check into what the mayor's office may be able to contribute.

We should try to target a couple of issues where we can get some tangible results.

Membership

John and Becky are willing to return. NEIDAC will reappoint them at the October meeting as well as nominate a new person. Becky does have reservations that she is not as well-connected these days (since her retirement). However, she does offer perspectives for the council based on her experience.

Further Discussion of Strategic Planning

Ron contacted Charity about strategic planning. Charity was waiting to hear back from others. The City and County governments share an employee that does strategic planning: Kate Love-Jacobson. Charity is not sure if this is something she could easily do. She may be able to do a lot of this working alongside the council. It may be best to start with her and see if there is a possibility of her helping us based on her workload. If nothing else, she could give good names and contacts. Perhaps a zoom meeting could be set up with her and a few committee members (Charity, Ron, John, and Becky) to explore options. Charity will look at setting something up for next Monday.

The deadline for a letter of intent to AWS is the end of the month, Fri., Oct. 30th. If we could meet with her prior to then, that could help with making decisions. Ron will put together a draft grant proposal tomorrow just to have it ready.

2020 ACTIVITIES

Voting

NEIDAC, The League, and CTN are working together to provide transportation for people who need a ride to early voting. Call by Wednesday to get a ride next week. The 3 organizations can accommodate 300 people; 40 have signed up so far. This is available to anyone with a disability in Allen County.

Transportation

The Citilink Transportation Planning Committee discussed today the reductions in service during the pandemic. Around 40% fewer trips are being. What do we know about the people who are no longer using public transportation? What is the human story? Can information be gathered by contacting the major healthcare systems? Are these healthcare systems hearing from patients that the availability of transportation is a factor resulting in a reduced number of visits? Virtual visits may be filling in some of these gaps. Could the healthcare systems collaborate with transportation providers? Could there be adjustments made in planning when rides are less than 15 minutes long and everyone is wearing a mask? What guidance can the health department provide?

COVID Discussion with Matthew Sutter MD

Cases have risen quite sharply since the beginning of October. Most of the state is in orange, including locally. Looking at weekly cases, we are in the red. The state's dashboard has interactive information. The positivity rate is well over 10% in Allen County. Death rates are trending upward toward April's peak. Hospitals are already feeling the strain. Phase 3 data on a vaccination from Pfizer is looking positive with 90% effectiveness. It will be difficult to reverse the trends without another stay-at-home order. There is a lot of optimism about vaccination.

People with disabilities are twice as likely to die of covid as persons in other populations. If possible, it would be advantageous to prioritize people with disabilities to receive a vaccine, especially recognizing group homes and other similar settings of congregate living.

How can this council help to deliver a clear message? The League is helping people to exit long-term care facilities. There are more than 90,000 people with disabilities in our community. This council is happy to help wherever possible.

A lot of decisions about vaccine distribution will happen at a higher level, so there may not be a lot of influence at the local level in how groups are prioritized. Mobility and transportation could be serious barriers to get people with disabilities to receive both doses of the vaccine. There are a lot of other logistical issues and questions with the distribution in general.

2020 ACTIVITIES

Should this council write a letter stating our perspective based on the information presented? John would be willing to draft a letter. The council can communicate to local officials in the City and County governments as well as to the State government, advocating for people with disabilities.

Strategic Planning

The council did not submit a letter of intent to AWS yet because it will be under \$50,000. John has suggested a couple of names of individuals who could help with strategic planning that we can reach out to. Ron will reach out to these people. Ron, Rachael, John, and Becky will look at the grant application together before it gets submitted.

New Member

Tina Acosta joins the council, bringing valuable experiences, information, and connections to contribute.

COVID vaccine

Phase 1A with frontline workers--Direct Support Personnel (DSPs) who work one-on-one with people with disabilities are included in this. Phase 1B will include people with disabilities who have comorbidities that put them at risk. Phase 2 will include people with disabilities who live in congregate settings. Phase 3 will include other people with disabilities

2021 ACTIVITIES

Advisory Council 2021 Members: Chris Deisler (Safety Claims Investigator and Trainer, City of Fort Wayne), Kristen Hahn, Tina Acosta, Charity Murphy, Krista Maxwell, Ronald Duchovic, Becky Weimerskirch, Rachael Miller, Patti Hays, Heather VanWagner, John Guingrich, Jeff Scherer

Strategic Planning

We have 2 proposals as well as the County as options for this. Communication and cost are considerations with this decision. The scope of the proposal from True North addresses more of the unmet needs. It is more expensive, but within the cost range that would be easier to apply for from the AWS Foundation. Charity wants to be engaged with the strategic planning process.

An exchange of emails between 2-1-2021 and 2-4-2021 identified Kate Love-Jacobson as the choice of the Disability Advisory Council. To lead a strategic planning effort. Kate is an employee of the County and committed to undertake the role of strategic planning coordinator. This came at no cost to the council since the council exists as a joint City/County entity.

Becky wrote: Did Kate assure you the time and energy since it took so long to even hear from you? I think it is judicious to use her and saves those precious resources for other agencies.

Charity Murphy reported via email: “I talked with her [Kate] outside of meeting with Ron to ensure that she was not too overwhelmed with other work. She [Kate] said ‘absolutely no’ and this is something that she would really like to take part in.”

From Becky: I don’t want to speak for anyone else, but I don’t think we owe True North anything and should not waste their time. I completely trust Charity’s recommendation and

we can tell True North we are pulling the bid due to the County offering to provide the service.

From John Guingrich: I think this is a logical approach. I’m sure that Chris at True North will understand our rationale

From Rachael (2-4-2021): I will be honest in saying that this entire process is outside of my experiences in knowing how best to approach any of it all whatsoever, and I defer to all of you on this and will support any decision.

2021 ACTIVITIES

Kate Love-Jacobson wrote:

Again, I am honored to propose a strategic planning process for the Fort Wayne/Allen County Disability Advisory Council (hereinafter referred to as “Council”). I am passionate about strategic planning and believe it is a critical activity for the success and sustainability of all organizations, groups of any size, and individuals. Below, please review the structure and timeline I believe will provide the Council with a comprehensive, dynamic, and workable strategic plan.

Kate proposed the following schema

Prepare for planning: (3 – 4 weeks time)

- Meet in person or virtually with Council members to develop internal and external environmental scans that will identify strengths, opportunities for improvement, threats and opportunities that may impact the Council’s success and sustainability. Determine external key stakeholders to engage for external scan. (90-minute meeting).
- Conduct internal environmental scan with Council (electronic survey form)
- Conduct external environmental scan (virtually or in-person 90-minute meeting)
- Prepare environmental scan result report

Develop Strategic Plan Foundation: (1 three-hour session, or 2 90-minute sessions)

- Meet in person with Council members to achieve the following:
 - o Analyze environmental scan results: prepare to identify priorities and establish strategic goals;
 - o Identify the Council’s **Core Values**: What do we care most about? What do we want to exemplify and demonstrate in the community?
 - o Create a **Shared Vision**: What is the most important outcome we want to achieve over the next 3 – 5 years?
 - o Develop a **Mission Statement**: What is our roadmap to achieve our Vision? (This could be the Council’s current Purpose Statement).
 - o Establish 3 – 5 Strategic Priorities: The things the Council will focus its energy, resources, and attention to achieve its Vision and Mission.
- Set Strategic Goals: (90 minutes to 2 hours)

2021 ACTIVITIES

- Council to meet in person to establish **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) goals under each strategic priority. These goals will provide a structure by which the Council can measure its effectiveness as an entity, as well as measure whether it has achieved specific accomplishments.

Sustain success: (Can be developed at the meeting to establish goals)

- Develop a communication plan to:
 - o Regularly report progress and/or barriers to achieving strategic goals to Council for the purposes of overcoming barriers, celebrate successes, or determine whether goals/timelines need to be adjusted.
 - o Annually report to appointing elected officials or bodies, key stakeholders, and the community on the successes and progress the Council has made.

Overall timeline:

Depending on the availability of council members and key stakeholders to participate in the strategic planning activities, the process should take three to four months from the preparation for planning to development of the communication plan.

Cost:

Because the Council is formed and appointed by Fort Wayne and Allen County officials, there will be no cost for the facilitation of this process.

Facilitator Information:

Kate Love-Jacobson has been involved in strategic planning for over 13 years, for large organizations, small organizations, neighborhood associations, and not-for-profit groups, and individuals, including but not limited to: City of Fort Wayne, Allen County Government, City of Indianapolis, Town of Chesterton, City of Angola, Six (6) County Health Boards, Area 5 Council Board, Eight (8) Community Housing Development Organizations

Internal scan statements and external scan statements drafted by Kate, Becky, Ron, and Charity were shared with the council. The council collaborated to improve wording of the questions to be more precise and objective.

The external scan was given in small groups via zoom to members of NEIDAC, City Council, and Allen County Commissioners. For each item, respondents determined whether things are **threats** (the council has little to no control over this and could lead to a

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negative outcome) or **opportunities** (the council has some influence and could lead to a positive outcome) and whether there is a high level of impact or a low level of impact. Work was also done to clarify items that may not be as clear to respondents outside of the council. Some council members attended these zooms to be available to answer questions and provide information as needed.

Timeframes:

Internal: Out by this Wednesday with a one-week window for completion.

External: Completed by the end of April.

Strategic Planning

Working on developing priorities and goals based on observations from survey results. Kate took notes based on the conversations and Ron created graphs based on the responses to visualize more easily discrepancies between agreement and disagreement with the various statements.

This council would like to be included in planning when new initiatives are started and maintain a continuing dialogue with the possibility to create meaningful change. In Indianapolis, the department of disability and accessibility is included in the Planning Department. This includes paid employees, not an unpaid advisory council (Fort Wayne/Allen County Disability Advisory Council).

The Fort Wayne City ADA Coordinator is also the Director of the City Risk Management department.

Some areas for improvement that were identified included the annual report, improving social media/technology presence, and providing proper orientation to new council members to understand the council's role and their role within the council.

There was also a discussion of the need to understand the different City and County departments for both the benefit of the council and the departments themselves. Has the council truly made an impact on the community? The council has a lot of passion but has not yet achieved desired outcomes. The council has identified a lot of goals and priorities that will be organized from our survey results.

We will get feedback from NEIDAC members who are in Fort Wayne/Allen County. We will also schedule meetings with departments. Charity, John, Ron, and Tina will work with Kate to schedule and continue gathering feedback.

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Citilink

John Metzinger (who began as Citilink CEO on April 19, 2021) shared a report about Citilink.

There is strong community support for public transportation and expectations are high. Citilink recognize the opportunity to amplify advocate voices. There has been a budget deficit for the past 5 years, however. Citilink is planning to refocus on realistic priorities and build positive momentum.

Becky observed that he social service community and disability community in Fort Wayne are strong. Currently, the Citilink board does not include any representatives from the disability community. Lana Keesling, however, does also serve on the board for The League.

Citilink's services are relatively typical compared to other area in the State. Other factors in other cities would include universities, however. Our public transportation does not presently meet the needs of the community. The goal is to be transparent moving forward.

Strategic Planning

Transportation, Housing, Employment, and Education are priorities identified by NEIDAC that we want to be able to influence as we emerge from our strategic planning process.

Jeff proposed meeting quarterly with the mayor's office and the County commissioners to be more proactive and have a greater impact and influence in the community in these areas.

Strategic Planning Summary at the Conclusion of 2021

INTERNAL SCAN RESULTS

Review of Internal Environmental Scan results

The Council reviewed each survey statement and identified potential issues to include as priorities or goals in the strategic planning process:

- Statement #1:** The Council has wide-ranging representation and diversity of abilities in its members.
- The consensus was that the Council cannot represent all diagnoses, however, it should keep in mind individuals with cognitive and emotional challenges.

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Statement #2: The Council has wide-ranging representation of members who have influence with NEIDAC and City/County Departments.

- Nothing was identified to include in the strategic plan

Statement #3: The Council acts as a partner with other community service agencies to provide critical data and advice to City and County departments in support of people with disabilities.

- It is important to continue and enhance collaboration and partnerships

Statement #4: The Council effectively creates meaningful change in the way City and County departments support people with disabilities.

- Statements #3 and #4 are tied together. The Council should be more proactive and interact more directly with departments. We should look at what other communities are doing. Indianapolis has a disability coordinator in its planning department. Bloomington has an ADA coordinator position. We should consider including a goal to get a joint City-County ADA and Universal Design full-time created and funded.

Statement #5: Meetings between the Council and City/County departments have provided those departments with an awareness of the Council.

- The group felt responses to this statement were also related to Statements #3 & #4.

Statement #6: Meetings between the Council and City/County departments have resulted in an increased understanding by the Council of the departments' services to the community.

- We need to continue dialogue to enhance the council's understanding

Statement #7: The frequency of our Council meetings (once per month) is adequate to further our purpose.

- John Guingrich stated that he can't imagine meeting only quarterly, which was the original concept.

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Statement #8: The development of subcommittees would enhance the work of the Council.

Statement #9: What subcommittees should exist?

- The Council may consider creating an Executive Committee. Once the strategic plan has been developed and goals established, we may create subcommittees to work on and achieve the goals.

Statement #10: The length of our Council meetings (1 hour on average) is adequate to engage in meaningful discussion.

- Nothing was noted for inclusion in the strategic plan.

Statement #11: The Council has demonstrated timely follow through on projects, resulting in measurable outcomes.

- The Council needs to identify projects through establishing its strategic goals.

Statement #12: I understand the overall purpose of why the Council exists.

- Nothing was identified to include in the strategic plan.

Statement #13: The City of Fort Wayne has demonstrated a willingness to listen to critical feedback and implement necessary changes based on that feedback, provided by the Council.

Statement #14: Allen County Government has demonstrated a willingness to listen to critical feedback and implement necessary changes based on that feedback, provided by the Council.

- The Council grouped these two statements together. One project that was noted was the expansion of parking meters. It was a collaborative effort between the City Clerk, Neighborhood Code Compliance and the Allen County Building Department. When the Building Department is out and observes that there are no accessible signs up, a letter will be sent to the owner.

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- Statement #15:** The Council has collected a sufficient body of information describing the disabled population in Fort Wayne and Allen County to prioritize unmet needs.
- The Council wants to gain more data to drive decisions and provide analysis that will influence others to act/fund unmet needs.
- Statement #16:** The Council regularly reports (at least annually) its findings, activities and accomplishments to City and County officials.
- The Council did submit an annual report once. Then the pandemic hit. This should be a priority going forward.
- Statement #17:** I understand my role, the value and contribution I bring as a member of the Council.
- The Council should consider establishing a new member orientation process, which will include a listing of all local government departments and their function and contact information. In addition, the group would like there to be a staff orientation to help them learn what it is like to be a disabled person.
- Statement #18:** The Council has adequate access to the uses of technology to further its purpose.
- The Council needs greater visibility, which can be accomplished through social media (i.e., a webpage, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.). This would require someone with the skills and time to do it. A full-time joint City-County position was suggested.
- Statement #19:** I feel the greatest strengths of the Council are:
- John Guingrich noted that although the Council diverse in backgrounds and abilities, it is a pretty white group. We need to explore become more racially diverse.

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Statement #20: I feel the greatest challenges of the Council are:

- Disability needs to be seen as the fabric of the community. Currently, the Council has not made a meaningful impact, like Turnstone, AWS, and others. The City and Council will need to embrace the mission of the Council, identify and addressing issues. What was the original expectation of the Mayor and County Commissioners?

Statement #21: If the Council could wave a magic wand and resolve ONE problem facing people of varying disabilities, it would be:

- The Council should address all issues identified under this statement.

External Environmental Scan Results

Environmental Scan Analysis Process

Three (3) external scan meetings were held. Several Council members were present at each session to answer questions and provide context for the external stakeholders.

The following external stakeholders participated:

- Bernie Beier, AC Homeland Security
- John Caywood, AC Building Commissioner
- Nikki Quintana, Metropolitan Human Relations
- Kyle Winling, FW Traffic Engineer
- Anna Bogdon, NEIDAC, CASS Housing
- Beth Dlug, AC Election Board
- Chuck Reddinger, FW Parks & Recreation
- Joni Schmalzried, NEIDAC, AWS
- Rebekah Coffey, NEIDAC, YMCA
- Justin Clupper, NEIDAC, CTN
- Jason Meyer, NEIDAC, Passages/ARC
- Rob Davis, AC Highway Dept.

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The groups were presented with statements (which had been developed by members of the Council) relating to four categories: political factors, economic factors, social factors and technology factors that may impede or propel the Council toward achieving its vision and mission. The stakeholders identified whether each of these factors were an opportunity or a threat, and whether they would have a high or low impact on the Council's success.

The subcommittee reviewed the external scan results, highlighting those factors that the stakeholders identified as "Opportunities" (things the Council have some influence and control over and could lead to a positive outcome), with the highest impact. We eliminated all issues the stakeholders identified as "Threats" (things the Council has little or no influence or control over and could lead to a negative outcome). Although "Threats" are important to be cognizant of, these are not things we should focus on or develop goals around, since we have no way to influence them.

This analysis revealed to the committee, the following priorities (identified as High Opportunities):

1. Strong relationships and collaborations

a. External Scan support:

- i. Q2 – Political: Relationship with Fort Wayne Mayor
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- ii. Q3 – Political: Relationship with County Commissioners
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- iii. Q8 – Political: Relationship with NEIDAC
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)

b. Internal Scan support:

- i. Q2 – The Council has wide-ranging representation of members who have influence with NEIDAC and City/County Departments
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- ii. Q4 – The Council effectively creates meaningful change in the way City and County departments support people with disabilities.
(64% Strongly Agree/Agree and 36% Disagreed)
- iii. Q5 – Meetings between the Council and City/County departments have provided those departments with an awareness of the Council.
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)

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- iv. Q13 and Q14 – City of Fort Wayne and Allen County have demonstrated a willingness to listen to critical feedback and implement necessary changes based on that feedback, provided by the Council
(80% Strongly Agree/Agree on both while 20% Disagreed on both)
- v. Q16 – The Council regularly reports (at least annually) its findings, activities and accomplishments to City and County officials
(90% Strongly Agree/Agree and 10% Disagreed)

2. Disability-focused Infrastructure

a. External Scan support

- i. Q12 – Economic: Available funding for infrastructure projects (streets/roads/bridges, etc.)
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- ii. Q18 – Social: Universal design for new construction to enhance visitability for people with disabilities
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- iii. Q19 – Social: Available and accessible recreational facilities and opportunities for people with disabilities
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)

3. Local government investment

a. External Scan support

- i. Q10 – Economic: Input on City and County budget for relevant initiatives (ask for funding of projects)
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- ii. Q11 – Economic: Ability to provide input on City and County budget for relevant initiatives (influence local government to budget for disability initiatives)
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- iii. Q13 – Economic: Funding of educational or training programs for City and County employees about people with disabilities
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)

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- iv. Q20 – Social: Available, affordable and accessible transportation for people with disabilities
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- v. Q21 – Social: Inclusive and competitive employment opportunities for people with disabilities
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)
- vi. Q24 – Technology: ADA compliant websites for Allen County Government and City of Fort Wayne
(100% Strongly Agree/Agree)

b. **Internal Scan support**

Q18 – The Council has adequate access to the uses of technology to further its purpose.
(50% Strongly Agree/Agree and 50% Disagreed)

Core Values identified and defined by the Council on 9/13/2021

Commitment

We are bound and dedicated to a course of action that focuses on a process which involves a contribution of time, energy and treasure.

Integrity

We embrace integrity as the uncompromising adherence to ethical principles and values that support inclusion. This requires patience and perseverance to trust the process. All our actions require truthfulness and honesty.

Wisdom/Expertise

Our Council represents a high level of in-depth knowledge and experience related to people with disabilities. This gives us the capacity to foresee consequences, make unbiased and emotionally mature judgments that address increasingly complex problems.

Fairness

We believe there should be equal opportunity for all. Our unbiased decisions and activities reflect justice, empathy, and compassion for people of all abilities

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Legacy

Through our collaborative relationships, we seek long-term, enduring and sustainable change that has a positive impact on our community.

Cooperation

Through our relationships, we work together without bias to achieve outcomes that support the mutual good and fundamental benefit of everyone.

Courage

We act with perseverance and patience, trusting the process and confronting uncertainty, even in the face of popular opposition.

Vision Statement

We envision an inclusive community of equity, dignity, and respect, where disability is understood as a natural part of human diversity.

Mission Statement

The Fort Wayne / Allen County Disability Advisory Council is an official voice advising both City and County governments to build a community of inclusion by advocating for people with disabilities, their families and supporting organizations, to ensure they are treated with equity, dignity, and respect. By reporting on identified problems, recommending solutions, and engaging local government, we work to remove physical and societal barriers. The Disability Advisory Council highly esteems as its core values:

- **Commitment** to the community,
- **Integrity** in its actions,
- **Wisdom and Expertise** in making thoughtful recommendations,
- **Fairness** in all its endeavors,
- **Legacy** as a reflection of enduring change,
- **Cooperation** with all members of the community, and
- **Courage** in the face of opposition.