



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: March 16, 2010

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: City Administrator's Office

SUBJECT: Annual Report - Access Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive an annual report from the Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator on the activities and achievements of the Access Advisory Committee.

DISCUSSION:

Resolution No. 08-095, establishing the Access Advisory Committee, calls for the City's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator to report annually to Council regarding the activities and achievements of the Committee.

Background

In September 2008, Council established the Access Advisory Committee (the Committee) as a successor to previous access advisory bodies. The group was restructured to reach beyond just building-related issues in order to take advantage of opportunities revealed during the City's recently completed voluntary update to its ADA Transition Plan and Self-Evaluation.

The Committee is designed to consist of two members from the Disability Community, two members of the architectural, engineering or building communities, and three members from the community at large, with at least 51% of its members being people with disabilities. The initial membership of the committee included three members of the former "Access Advisory Committee to Staff", Karen Johnson, Adelaida Ortega, and Victor Suhr, all of whom had many years of experience working with the City on disabilities issues. It also included new members Brian Barnwell, Jeanette Chian, James Marston, and Amy Van Meter. During the summer of 2009, Mr. Marston resigned due to an out-of-state move, and Council replaced him with Ken McLellan in December 2009.

During the past year, Ms. Johnson has served as the Chair of the Committee. Staff and Committee members are very grateful to her for her leadership.

Activities in 2009

The newly formed Committee had its first “kick off” meeting in February 2009, and held six meetings during the year: four regular quarterly meetings, and two special meetings. With the serious budget problems in the General Fund, there was limited ability to work on the list of non-mandatory access improvement projects to City facilities that were identified in the ADA Transition Plan. Nevertheless, as discussed below, the Committee found more than enough meaningful work to complete.

- Reviewing and Refining Committee Roles & Responsibilities

As this was the first year of this Committee in its current form, staff and the Committee spent some time reviewing and refining the role and responsibilities of the Committee, and establishing a framework for the future. Initial activities included, for example, receiving an overview of Brown Act requirements.

Later in the year, the Committee formed an ad hoc subcommittee on Education. The purpose of this subcommittee will be to develop a plan to help the ADA Coordinator educate employees and the public about the work of the Committee, and about access issues facing people with disabilities in our community in general.

The Committee recently appointed a liaison to the Transportation and Circulation Committee to stay abreast of new developments with access with implications in the City’s rights-of-way and report back to the Committee. The Committee also appointed a liaison to Facilities division staff to keep track of day-to-day access improvements being made by maintenance staff that might otherwise escape the notice of the Committee.

- Planning for Access Improvements to City Facilities

Staff and the Committee also reviewed a plan to ensure Committee’s meaningful participation in capital planning related to non-mandatory access improvements to City facilities. A list of facilities improvement projects that are not mandatory, but would significantly enhance existing access levels for people with disabilities, was developed as part of the City’s ADA Transition Plan update, and it is a long-term goal to complete as many of these projects as possible. Though capital funding was seriously reduced for Fiscal Year 2010, and probably will be for Fiscal Year 2011, staff felt it was important to set up this structure for long-term planning purposes, and for when funding for these access improvements does become available.

From a long-term planning standpoint, every two years City Engineering staff will meet with the Committee for help in prioritizing projects identified in the City’s ADA Transition Plan for inclusion in the City’s 6-Year Capital Improvement Plan. This process is next scheduled to occur in November 2010. Then, every spring, the Committee will be given

the opportunity to comment on the recommendations for projects from the Capital Improvement Plan selected to be incorporated the proposed General Fund financial plan and/or operating budget for the upcoming fiscal year, given the available funding designated for access improvements.

- Access Improvements to the Public Rights-of-Way

One of the biggest opportunities for the City to improve access for people with disabilities exists in the public rights-of-way. Access issues in the rights-of-way include curb cuts, sidewalk infill, audible pedestrian signals (APS), and vegetation management, among others. These types of improvements significantly improve the ability for people with mobility and vision impairments, as well as other disabilities, to move comfortably and independently around the City.

As one of its projects this year, the Committee helped Engineering staff to evaluate and select a new standard design for two-way directional access ramps with curbed divider islands, one-way directional access ramps (for T-intersections), and diagonal ramps (delta ramps) in order to ensure easy access and minimize confusion and obstacles for people with various, and sometime competing, needs.

Fortunately, funding for projects in the rights-of-way is currently very healthy. In addition to regular funding through the City's Streets Program (\$250,000 in FY 09, \$400,000 in FY 10, and FY 11 funding yet to be determined), the City has received or will receive additional funding for curb cuts and sidewalk improvements from the following sources: 2010 CDBG Project (\$90,000), 2011 CDBG Project (\$50,000), the CDBG Recovery Act (\$156, 883), and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (\$800,000).

The impact of this funding is significant. For many years, the City has maintained a list of "priority corridors" for sidewalk access ramps in the rights-of-way, which was developed with input from previous iterations of the Committee. These corridors included large parts of the following streets: Modoc, Gutierrez, Coast Village Road, Milpas, and De La Vina. Micheltorena and Alisos Streets were later added to this list. Over the years, steady progress has been made toward removing curb and sidewalk obstacles in these corridors. Because of the influx of funding last year, staff was able to schedule almost total completion of these priority corridors over the next year, a huge accomplishment for access. Many other improvements were funded as well.

The Committee worked closely with Engineering staff on plans for these projects all year. One of the major tasks for the Committee in the coming year will be to help develop new priority corridors and/or priority areas for the next wave of access improvements in the public rights-of-way.

- Connections with Department Liaisons

Each City department has an ADA Liaison who is tasked with ensuring full access for people with disabilities to the department's programs, activities, and services, and resolving requests and complaints at the department level. This year, the Committee heard presentations from, the liaisons from the following Departments about program access efforts in those departments:

- Parks and Recreation: Sarah Hanna, Recreation Programs Manager
- Waterfront: Karl Treiberg, Waterfront Facilities Manager
- Police: David Whitham, Police Lieutenant

These meetings have been very well received on all sides. For one thing, these presentations allow the Committee to appreciate just how much the City already does to ensure access to its programs and services. Committee members also get the opportunity to speak to these liaisons directly about the types of challenges people with disabilities encounter with the services their departments provide. Interestingly, one of the chief benefits of these types of presentation has been keeping our liaisons engaged in access awareness. In each case, the liaisons came away with reinvigorated focus and energy toward access goals.

- Special Outreach

The Committee invited several people to attend Committee meetings to find out what other organizations were doing to ensure access, and they graciously complied:

- Joe Ayala, the Projects/Programs Administrator from the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Dispatch visited to give the Committee an overview of the Reverse 9-1-1 system;
- Steve Maas, the Manager of Strategic Planning & Compliance for the Santa Barbara Metropolitan Transit District (MTD) gave an overview of MTD's public transit access efforts; and
- Yolanda McGlinchey, City Emergency Services Manager, gave an overview of disaster response accommodations for people with disabilities both at the City and County level, and introduced members to the County's "Emergency Disaster Plan for Vulnerable Populations".
(http://www.sbcphd.org/documents/ems/disaster_plan_for_vulnerable_populations.pdf)

In all of these cases, Committee members had the opportunity to ask questions and provide their perspectives to these key staff members.

Facilities Improvement Updates

Access improvements are constantly being completed in City facilities through various new construction projects and facility modification projects, as required by the ADA and Title 24 of the Building Code, and through opportunities identified during routine

maintenance. These projects are separate and distinct from those non-mandatory Capital Improvement Program projects that are completed specifically to address the access improvement opportunities identified under the ADA Transition Plan.

Staff tries to keep the Committee updated about as many of these access improvements as possible. Examples of current or recent projects where access improvements are being achieved include upgrades to City facilities at the Airport, Carrillo Recreation Center, Downtown Parking lots, the Cater Treatment Plant, and at the Marina.

Challenges for 2010

Staff and the Committee are pleased with what we have been able to accomplish during 2009.

Due to the ongoing budget crisis, we expect that funding for non-mandatory access improvements will be limited in Fiscal Year 2011, as it was in 2010, and there will continue to be significant pressures on available staff time due to staffing reductions. Nevertheless, we are confident that there will be plenty of important work for the Committee to accomplish, such as developing an education plan, prioritizing new access corridors, and possibly identifying outside funding sources for access improvements.

Mr. Barnwell will serve as Chair next year, and staff will return to Council to provide another annual update at the expiration of his one-year term.

PREPARED BY: Kristy Schmidt, Employee Relations Manager (ADA Coordinator)

SUBMITTED BY: Marcelo Lopez, Assistant City Administrator

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office