

CITY OF MESA
HUMAN RELATIONS ADVISORY BOARD (HRAB)
Disabilities Action Team (DAT)
January 19, 2016 Minutes

The Disabilities Action Team of the City of Mesa met on January 19, 2016
at 5:45pm at the Mesa City Plaza, 20 E. Main St. Ste. 170.

MEMBERS PRESENT

LuAnn Schmidt- Chair
Denise Heap- Vice Chair
Cheryl Anderson
Collen Byron
Mark Tompert

MEMBERS ABSENT

STAFF PRESENT

Bethany Freeland
Ruth Giese
Liz Morales
Gordon Sheffield

GUESTS

1. Call to Order.

Ms. Schmidt called the meeting to order at 5:47pm.

2. Items from citizens present.*

There were no citizens who requested to speak to DAT.

3. Approval of minutes from the November 17, 2015 DAT meeting.

Dr. Byron made a motion to approve the November 17, 2015 DAT meeting minutes, Ms. Anderson seconded and the motion moved unanimously.

4. Hear a presentation on the following items:

(4a) Provide input about design standards for adapting housing for people with disabilities.

Ms. Schmidt explained that she brought this item before the Committee with the intention of finding out how the standards and requirements are met for adapting housing for the needs of people with disabilities. She wished to focus not just on those who require wheelchairs, but also individuals who may be blind or deaf. Liz Morales, Housing and Community Development Director, explained that according to law, a minimum of 5% of units be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Also, 100% of bottom floor units of family housing built after the year 1991 must be adaptable to individuals with disabilities. She also cited that the Landlord-Tenant Act requires landlords to allow tenants to make specific modifications to their units if they are disabled, as long as the unit is returned to its original state after the tenant moves out. Ms. Morales also explained how the City helps to fund Ability360, formerly ABIL, which is an organization that helps to bring units up to accessibility standards.

Gordon Sheffield clarified that he is the City's Zoning Administrator and that he is not very familiar with the City's building codes. He cited an instance where a couple needed to add an ADA accessible bathroom to their existing unit that would have taken up considerable space in their side yard. This addition would have forced the addition to be too close to the property line, so a hearing was held with the Board of Adjustments. The Board understands that exceptions to the zoning laws are being requested to accommodate individuals with disabilities and the variances are granted. Ms. Schmidt asked about the zoning law that requires there be a sidewalk that comes from the street directly to the front of business. Mr. Sheffield stated that this is a zoning requirement and that it has to be separate from the paved access that is set aside for the vehicle. Ms. Heap and Mr. Tompert also expressed concern over the handicapped parking situation at the new Mesa

Fiesta Police Station. They stated that the distance between the handicapped parking spaces and the building entrance is elevated and quite far.

Ms. Morales stated that in the Housing Department it is a priority for them to provide as much information regarding accessibility to their tenants, but a common statement is that there is not enough accessibility in the Valley. Mr. Tompert asked Ms. Giese if complaints were made to the City regarding these types of issues if there is a proper complaint chain for a resident to follow. She stated that there is.

Mr. Tompert asked about accessibility regarding in neighborhood homes that are used for the express purpose of housing multiple individuals with disabilities even if the neighbors don't want them there. Mr. Sheffield stated that these homes are registered as "Boarding Houses," but exceptions are made if they are used for the sole purpose of housing individuals with disabilities. The main stipulation is that these homes are at least 1200 feet from another group home. This is due to the fact that neighborhoods with these types of homes come with certain advantages. They often have additional access to schools, commercial facilities, and medical facilities.

Ms. Schmidt stated that she was also curious as to what could be done to help make appliances in homes friendlier to individuals with disabilities, mainly individuals who are blind. Ms. Morales suggested that if the unit is a rental, that the tenant first speak to the landlord to see if accommodations can be made. If not, then she suggests contacting an agency such as Ability 360 to help fund those types of changes. Individuals are also able to go to the Attorney General's Office or directly to HUD in order to file a Fair Housing Complaint. Ms. Anderson stated that it might be a good idea to have Ability 360 come to speak to the Board in order to outline their program regarding Fair Housing. Ms. Heap made the motion to invite Ms. Morales and Mr. Sheffield to a future Board meeting. Ms. Schmidt seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Hear an update, discuss, and take action on the following items:

(5a) Create options for the best methods and topics to educate the business community on mental health and substance abuse issues for the second town hall meeting.

Ms. Anderson stated that at a prior meeting it was discussed that the Committee speak to the Chamber in order to give them a presentation regarding that topic instead of a Town Hall Meeting. Ms. Anderson asked if this agenda item could be refined to more accurately reflect the new objective. Ms. Freeland said that she would find the proper verbiage.

(5b) Collect information and recommendation about ways to support the availability of services and programs for people with disabilities and the implementation of the ADA.

Dr. Byron suggested that this agenda item remain as a reminder as to what the DAT is currently working on, such as inviting Ability 360 to come and speak to the entire Board.

(5c) Recent updates to the LDS church organization involving same-sex couples.

Ms. Heap explained the situation and why she asked that the item be placed on the agenda. She stated that she wasn't sure what action could be taken, but that she would like to keep an eye on the issue. Dr. Byron suggested that this item is not really appropriate for the DAT agenda and that it be moved to the full Board agenda instead.

6. Scheduling of meetings, future agenda items, and general information.

Ms. Anderson suggested that an item regarding the City's Anti-Discrimination Ordinance be added to the regular Board agenda so that it may continue to be monitored and discussed.

- Next DAT meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 16, 2016 at 5:45pm.

7. The meeting adjourned at 6:23pm.

Submitted By:



Ruth Giese,
Diversity Program Administrator