

Jon M. King
133 Providence Road
Lawrence, Kansas 66049
(785) 856-5464
(785) 691-5378
jonking@sunflower.com

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David L. Corliss
City Manager
City of Lawrence
6 East 6th St.
Lawrence, KS 66044

VIA E-MAIL: dcorliss@ci.lawrence.ks.us
RE: Kansas Half Marathon

Dear Dave,

Having received the e-mail agenda for the February 12 City Commission meeting, I write to give some thoughts regarding Agenda Item # 3: the Kansas Half Marathon. I plan to attend the meeting on the 12th but, should circumstances prevent it, I want to make sure my thoughts are considered.

First, I wish to express my personal thanks to the City Commission, City Staff and your office for the support and enthusiasm that has been provided for the race over the years. It is not only a major fund raiser for Health Care Access, but a great showcasing of our city for out of town guests.

Second, I do not speak for anyone at Health Care Access.

As you are aware, I am an avid runner and triathlete. I am also a strong advocate for Lawrence and bringing events and attention to Lawrence. In the ever crowding market of Marathons and Half Marathons, the only way to effectively attract runners is to have a superbly run race. Most running surveys of which I am aware put the quality of the course at the top of the list when runners make choices as to which race to attend. I have run all the courses that the Kansas Half Marathon (and before it the Lawrence Half Marathon) have run. There are definite differences in quality among those courses. Of the two before the City Commission, the course that Health Care Access is proposing is by far superior, in my opinion.

I have had strong concerns over a continuing perception that the Lawrence Police Department does not favor runs that cross major intersections and roads. While I have my suspicions as to why that is, I believe that it is more important that we realize that our city streets are not the province of automobiles alone. Runners, cyclists, walkers and pedestrians have equal access to our streets and sidewalks. Particularly, when a special event such as the Kansas Half Marathon is involved, we should keep a wide open mind as to possibilities for courses. I believe that there are many even better courses that could be designed but the LPD has hampered some of those choices because of a misplaced concern over safety issues. Let's face it, New York City, Chicago, Los

Angeles and even Kansas City manage to run major marathons through major streets each year. Lawrence race directors have to beg and plead for bike paths and sidewalks.

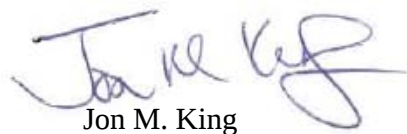
I am concerned that the Police Department prefers to avoid “traffic concerns” in general. Rarely is Sunday morning traffic a major issue; even if it were, cars are not the only users of our roadways; nor should we continue to allow that perception to be fostered, particularly by our Police Department.

I have also heard that the Police Department believes its resources are being stretched thin with running events. Last year, I had a conversation with a City Commissioner indicating my concern that many “races” were being run on city streets that weren’t actually races, but events. The distinction is not small. I was concerned that these events would distract from real races. My concerns may have been justified if the Police Department is, in fact, stretched thin. I do not believe that this race should have to compete with those events for resources for a number of reasons including the fact this one benefits a local non profit while the others were for profit ventures. Moreover, it should be the citizens, through its City Commission, who decide where our resources are spent. The Police Department can then figure out how to allocate based on the policy decisions made.

A willing partner in the City of Lawrence and the Police Department can make this race a yearly success. Perhaps, with the Police Departments support, a course that features much more of the beauty of Lawrence could be done (there isn’t anything special about running down Iowa, Clinton Parkway and back).

I strongly support the clinic’s preferred route as well as their request for city funding. Again, thank you for supporting the race and the clinic.

Sincerely,



Jon M. King

cc via e-mail: Lawrence City Commissioners, Tarik Khatib, Chief of Police, Nikki White, Health Care Access