



Montgomery County, MD
Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
January 8th, 2014

Welcome and Approval of December, 2013 Meeting Summary Minutes:

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. Charlie Crawford, Vice-Chair, made a motion to approve the December, 2013 Meeting Summary Minutes as written. Hilary Kaplan, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the December, 2013 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

County Council and Key Issues Impacting People with Disabilities – The Honorable Craig Rice, President, Montgomery County Council

Montgomery County Council unanimously elected Craig Rice as Council President on December 3rd, 2013. He is beginning his fourth year on the Council and previously served in the Maryland House of Delegates. Council President Rice serves on the Council's Education Committee and its Health and Human Services Committee. In addition, he is the Council's "Lead for Libraries," weighing in on issues that affect the County's library system. He also serves as the Council's representative to the [Maryland Association of Counties \(MACo\)](http://www.marylandcounties.org) in Annapolis.

Council President Rice detailed his personal experiences with individuals who have disabilities. His twin nephews were born prematurely and one had undeveloped lungs requiring artificial respiration. Due to an incorrect medical procedure he suffered lack of oxygen resulting in brain damage. He shared his personal experiences about trying to get services for his nephew and the struggle it was to maintain his medical care and well-being. His mother became a home care provider so that she could care for the nephew herself. Unfortunately, his nephew passed away at the age of eight.

Council President Rice stated that he is well aware that discrimination against people with disabilities still exists today. He noted a resident with a disability who had been struggling to locate employment had contacted his office. He offered to assist the resident who eventually became employed by a local car dealership. The resident has been working there for over a year now and the staff at the car dealership say the individual is an excellent employee. The individual's disability has also helped to educate them on his Abilities.

Council President Rice encouraged Commissioners to be aggressive about educating the Council and the community about the issues that are important to them. Education is vital when trying to gain support and understanding.

The floor was then opened up for questions and comments.

Trish Gallalee, Chair, noted that the County's Office of Human Rights (OHR) is proposing legislation that would change the current hiring preference for a veteran, a veteran with a disability, and a person with a disability from priority consideration to a numeric point system. The legislation would also generally amend the merit system law concerning hiring preferences for certain persons with disabilities and veterans.

Lu Merrick and other commissioners stated they are against a point system. Mike Pearlman stated he feels it is not equitable for veterans with a disability to receive more points than a person with a disability. The hiring preference should be at the same level for all. Mike Pearlman noted that he worked in the Federal Government in the Human Resources department and he witnessed favoritism towards veterans with disabilities over those with disabilities that had not served in the armed forces. Trish commented that in discussions with Joe Adler, Director, OHR, he has mentioned that hiring managers find the current process cumbersome and time-consuming given that if a person with a priority preference is not offered a job a bypass memorandum must be drafted and sent to OHR for approval. For some Departments the current system has also resulted in lengthy delays in filling vacant positions. Council President Rice said he will need to talk with OHR about this issue, but that he does agree with the Commission that a point system is not fair.

The goal was to increase employment for persons with disabilities rather than create a subset. He will also discuss this issue with the other Council members.

Steve Riley, Commissioner, asked how the Commission can work best with Council President Rice. He suggested bring any ideas, suggestions or issues directly to his attention.

Charlie Crawford, Commissioner, discussed crimes against the elderly and the individuals with disabilities. Those two populations are more vulnerable to crime.

Trish discussed the approximately 600 individuals with disabilities that are currently living in nursing homes who are under age 62. Independence Now has identified at least 40 persons who are entitled to the Living at Home Medicaid Waiver for services and supports but who need deep housing subsidies in order to move into the community. The Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) is going to oversee \$3M in Bridge Subsidies, of which \$2M will be earmarked to 18 - 62 year olds wanting to leave nursing homes. John Brennan, Chief of Staff at MDOD, is heading this state-wide project. Bridge subsidies pay 100% of the rent for three to five years with the expectation that the entity receiving them will come up with a voucher, spot or unit after the three to five years. Typically housing authorities that administer them have a turn over in vouchers during that time making one available.

The MDOD hopes to spread the \$2M around a few to each housing authority across the State. The City of Rockville has committed to five. Prince Georges County has committed to three to five. They will be approaching Glenarden and College Park. They have also approached the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC). Sarah Sorenson, Executive Director of Independence Now, made a presentation to HOC in December. She presented the opportunity for three to five year bridge subsidies. The State would provide that three to five years rent for each and also a \$950 administration fee per year to cover costs.

Council President Rice commented that now is the time to start laying the groundwork as the County Executive and County Council work on the coming year's budget. Lu Merrick, Commissioner, highlighted a few projects the Commission has worked on that she thinks the County should market and promote including:

- The County's Disability Hiring Initiatives: [Internship Programs](#), [Hiring Preference \(Veteran with a Disability, Veteran without a Disability, Person with a Disability\)](#), and [Non-Competitive Hiring Program](#);
- The [Respect the Space Campaign](#); and [Design for Life Montgomery](#), which helped to establish the new legislation offering property tax credits for homeowners that install accessibility features or for making their home visit-able or live-able.

Lu added that Howard County Government is looking to copy the County's Project Search program. Project SEARCH Internships are one-year training programs for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are either in their last year of high school or recent graduates to serve as interns in County Departments and acquire marketable job skills.

Trish noted that since the County is increasing its efforts to hire people with disabilities they should also focus their efforts on making County buildings more accessible. Council President Rice agreed and added that if renovations are being made to a facility they should incorporate universal design features into those plans rather than have costly retrofits later. Hilary Kaplan, Commissioner, suggested that the County have signs installed with a customer service phone number listed so individuals can report issues or problems. For example, if an automated door is not functioning. Diane Stahl, Commissioner, reported that the Rockville Post Office automated door has not been functional for several years now. Nancy Greene, Ex-Officio Member, ADA Title II Compliance Manager, commented that the U.S. Access-Board is responsible for handling complaints on accessibility of post offices. A complaint can be filed via their website: www.access-board.gov/aba-enforcement/file-a-complaint. Nancy encouraged Commissioners to report to her any instances of inaccessibility at County facilities.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority) would be willing to designate drop-off and pick-up locations for MetroAccess as several County facilities if the County were to pay for signage. One example is the County Council Office Building, which has several entrances and causes confusion for MetroAccess riders. Another example is the Rockville Memorial Library, which also has two entrances.

Seth Morgan, Commissioner, discussed the issue of the proper use of accessible parking spaces reserved for people with disabilities. The Respect the Space Campaign was an enforcement and education initiative by the County Executive that began in November, 2011. The Commission has offered to volunteer their time to the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) to review private parking lots for compliance, but the project has become stagnant. Council President Rice said he will look into this issue. (Please note that for Montgomery County Government Buildings, the Commission will be forwarding the surveys directly to Nancy Greene, ADA Compliance Manager, for enforcement.)

Dana Cohen, Commissioner, commended the Montgomery County Police Crisis Intervention Team, which receives training on how to deal with people with issues like and includes tools to respond to individuals with mental health issues, developmental, and intellectual disabilities. She has personally seen this team respond to crisis situations. She suggested that this training be expanded to include all officers.

Council President Rice encouraged Commissioners to contact his office or to connect with him via his social media accounts about issues that they would like brought to his attention.

Homelessness – Kim Ball, Administrator, Department of Health and Human Services, Special Needs Housing

Kim Ball, Administrator, is responsible for the County's two homelessness programs:

- Emergency Eviction Prevention, which provides crisis intervention assistance including emergency financial assistance and/or shelter to families and adults who are homeless, at high risk of losing housing (eviction, put out, foreclosure), victims of individual or community disasters, or persons stranded from their homes. Help is also available for overdue utility payments and burial assistance.
- Shelter services are available to homeless individuals and families, including outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. Services are provided primarily through partnerships and contracts with community non-profit organizations. Housing Stabilization staff provide emergency assessment services to homeless families with children. Case management services are provided to all homeless clients to link clients to needed services, including housing referrals, treatment, employment and entitlements.

Every year the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires a Point-in-Time (PIT) count to assess the number of sheltered and unsheltered homeless individuals and families in Montgomery County. The 2013 PIT count identified 1,004 homeless individuals. The number is down from 2011 where the PIT count identified 1,132 homeless individuals.

The 2013 PIT identified 312 homeless families. The County has contracts with local hotels to provide shelter for families. The County has a policy of not letting children go without a place to stay. Case managers work with Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) to ensure children are still attending school and receiving an education.

In the homeless community there is a large population of chronic substance abusers and chronic health problems are a growing trend. Approximately 20% of the 1,004 homeless individuals identified in 2013 had chronic health problems. Domestic violence has also been increasing over the last several years.

In 2011 the PIT identified 98 homeless young mothers between the ages of 18 to 24 with one to four children. The 2013 PIT identified 97 young mothers. This population typically has a lack of education, with many dropping out of high school, has little to no work experience, and may have post-traumatic stress disorder. Unfortunately, they do not meet the criteria for supportive housing because they do not have a disability. The County does not have the affordable or low-income housing to meet this need.

In 2009 President Barack Obama developed a plan to end chronic homelessness. Chronic homelessness is defined as a person that has a disability and has lived in an emergency shelter for at least 12 months or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in three years. In 2013 there were 228 chronically homeless in Montgomery County.

During Montgomery County's 100,000 Homes Campaign Registry that occurred over three days in November, 2013, approximately 357 persons were identified as meeting some form of vulnerability, including a severe medical condition, were over the age of 60, and had at least three hospitalizations in the last year. A person's likelihood of dying is increased by 40% if they are street homeless. The County is looking to house those persons that are listed as the most vulnerable. In the last year the County has housed 40 vulnerable persons and of those 40 persons four have passed away.

As for accessibility at shelters, many are not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Some shower facilities have been modified, but are not completely accessible. She is working with Nancy Greene on these issues. Two shelter facilities with access issues in Bethesda will be relocated to more accessible locations as well as the Dorothy Day women's shelter in Rockville. She reported that if a person with a disability is unable to gain access to a shelter, accommodations can be made to move them to a nearby accessible shelter or to a hotel.

The floor was opened for questions and comments.

It was asked what proportion of homeless persons accept services and shelter when offered. Approximately 30% initially welcome services and/or shelter. Many homeless persons may have mental health issues or paranoia and refuse to accept services or to go to a shelter. The opposite may also occur where a homeless person is able to get into supportive or transitional housing, but refuses instead to stay in the shelter.

Cindy Buddington, Commissioner, inquired as to how the County outreached to homeless individuals. Cindy added that some homeless persons may not want to stay at a shelter because they are not able to stay there 24 hours a day. Ms. Ball noted that there is an outreach program that meets with individuals living on the street to try and engage them to participate. She also noted that shelters are open 24 hours a day except in the winter due to winter overflows, which allows the shelters to operate 395 beds. During the winter shelters are open from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. She also noted that many individuals will go to work or to another jurisdiction during the day.

She will send to Betsy Luecking cards that Commissioners can give to homeless persons that include emergency numbers and locations for food shelters.

Chair and Vice Chair Report: Deferred due to time restraints.

Workgroup Updates: Deferred due to time restraints.

Roundtable:

Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, HHS, announced that Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, was the recent recipient of the annual Carol Johnson Memorial Award for Community Service. Betsy was nominated as she provides consistently outstanding staff support and has achieved remarkable outcomes with the Commission on People with Disabilities and the Commission on Veterans Affairs.

Susan Hartung, Commissioner, is not the Commission's Liaison to the County-wide Recreation Advisory Board. She will be reporting to the Commission about these meetings and encouraged Commissions to bring any issues to her attention and she will relay them to the Board.

Charlie Butler, Ex-Officio Member, Department of Recreation, shared the new Winter 2014 guide for [Therapeutic Recreation](#) and the Spring 2014 guide for [SOAR](#) (Senior Outdoor Adventures in Recreation).

Community Speaks: Deferred due to time restraints.

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, February 12th, 2014 – Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Auditorium, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 – 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. **Please try to arrive by 5:15 pm to reconvene workgroups.**

Steering Committee Meeting: Wednesday, February 15th, 2014 - 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor Tan Conference Room, Rockville, Maryland, 20850 – 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Luecking, Program Manager II