



**Montgomery County, MD  
Commission on People with Disabilities  
September 9th, 2015**

**Welcome and Approval of June, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes:**

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. Susan Hartung, Commissioner, made a motion to approve the June, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes. Lu Merrick, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the June, 2015 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd).

**Effective Advocacy Strategies at the State Level – Melanie Wenger, Director, Montgomery County Office of Intergovernmental Relations**

The Office of Intergovernmental Relations (OIR) represents the County interests at the regional, state and federal levels. The Office prepares the annual State Legislative program and the annual federal priorities request and serves as liaison with State government, the County's state delegation and Congressional staff. The Office is the lead agency representing the County before the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and the National Association of Counties (NACO). OIR is unique in the State in that they represent both the Executive and Legislative branches in the County. Most counties in the State only represent the Executive Branch. OIR has contacts with Congressman Chris Van Hollen's office as well as Senator Ben Cardin's office.

In July, the County Council Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee held a worksession to discuss advocacy of Boards, Committees, and Commissions (BCC) in HHS. There are many differences in the authorizing language for the HHS BCCs. The County Council will be introducing legislation that would allow all Health & Human Services Boards, Committees, and Commissions to advocate at the State and Federal level if the advocacy is approved by the Office of Intergovernmental Relations.

OIR staff are assigned to various subject matters. One staff member focuses solely on HHS issues.

When OIR staff begins to develop their priorities lists for the year they reach out to all Executive Branch agencies and departments to find out what legislation they would like the County to pursue at the State level. Many of the priorities are driven by funding for programs and projects, such as infrastructure investments.

Priority lists are drafted in September. Once the priority list is developed and approved by the County Executive it is sent to the County Council for review and approval in mid-November. If there are bills that only apply to Montgomery County they are run through the 32-member State delegation before it is vetted through one of the General Assembly's ten standing committees. If the bill is Statewide, it will immediately be assigned to one of the ten committees. Past priorities can be viewed online: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OIR/Resources/Files/2015%20Session%20Priorities.pdf>.

When OIR testifies before Annapolis, depending on the issue, they will identify individuals or agencies with expertise on the issue that can assist in testifying. Melanie noted that the Delegation is very open and willing to listen to constituents and encouraged Commissioners to meet with them to discuss their concerns.

Seth asked how the Commission can proceed to advocate for ending the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) waiting list. There are approximately 1,000 individuals in Montgomery County on the waiting list, as well as a seven year waiting list for the Autism Waiver. Melanie stated that the Governor releases the State Operating Budget in mid-January. She suggested reaching out to the County now. She also suggested aligning with other agencies and counties to create a stronger advocacy effort. Seth noted that he is the Vice-Chair of the Maryland Alliance of Disability Commissions and Committees. There have been discussions of having the Alliance send a joint statement to the State concerning the wait list, but other Counties are dealing with the same issue and are unsure that they are allowed to make a statement on behalf of their

County to the State. Susan Hartung, Commissioner, asked how the Commission can advocate to make ending the developmental disability wait list a top priority of the County. Melanie noted that the County Council will be holding a hearing regarding priorities in mid-November and now is the time to submit priorities to departments before they are sent to the County Executive.

In 2012, the State passed a bill that would raise the alcohol tax with the intention of using the funds to end the DDA waiting list. Unfortunately, this has not been the case with funds going to various other programs. It was asked how the Commission could advocate for surplus funds to be put towards the DDA waiting list. Melanie suggested working with State legislatures to change the law.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, discussed a recent issue which Nancy Greene, ADA Compliance Officer, brought to her attention a Federal Transit Administration proposed nationwide regulation change for paratransit, such as MetroAccess. She questioned whether or not the Commission could comment on the legislation. Uma Ahluwalia, Director, HHS, commented that if such legislation were brought to the attention of HHS they would seek out comments from the Commission. Ms. Ahluwalia suggested aligning with other Counties when addressing statewide issues.

**Establish Two Policy Issues for FY16 with Theme of Prevention for County Council:**

Seth Morgan, Chair, reported that the Commission will need to draft two FY16 policy issues that will be presented before the County Council Health & Human Services Committee on October 15<sup>th</sup>. The issues must focus on the theme of prevention. A discussion was held and the following policy issues were voted on:

**1. Increase Health Prevention Strategies of Secondary Illness for People with Disabilities.**

The Commission recommends that the County increase health prevention strategies of secondary illnesses for people with physical, developmental, cognitive, psychiatric and sensory disabilities. This includes our partnership with the Commission on Health to ensure that all County health clinics are accessible and make necessary reasonable accommodations. It also includes the Department of Recreation and Montgomery County Parks to provide programming that is developed in coordination with the Commission and with the agencies that serve them.

**2. Develop Strategies to Eliminate the Developmental Disabilities Waiting List**

We have 1,076 county residents on the State Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) waiting list. We ask the Council to work with the Commission and the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee to develop strategies to eliminate the DDA waiting list for residential and other services; beginning with those persons in crisis resolution and crisis prevention. This may mean working with the Office of Intergovernmental Relations to determine their role in making this happen. Most serious, residential services for persons with developmental disabilities in most circumstances require the parents be 80 years or older, the caretaker to have died, or some other serious crisis situation. We need to make recommendations to the State on a more realistic age of caregiver before the adult child with a significant disability receives residential placement. We will be asking the Commission on Aging to weigh in on DDA's age criteria.

**3. Increase supports for caregivers.** We see a real need to provide supports to caregivers such as respite and making sure that people are supported who provide 24/7 care.

Ric Kienzle, Commissioner, made a motion to accept the top three policy issues. Kathy Mann Koepke, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion was unanimously approved.

**Chair and Vice-Chair Report:**

Seth Morgan, Chair, reported that he and Susan Hartung, Commissioner, testified at the HHS BCC worksession held in July regarding advocacy of BCCs.

In July County Executive Isiah Leggett announced an FY16 Savings Plan that would cut \$51,000,000 from the previously approved FY16 Operating Budget. The cuts were due to a shortfall of income tax and the recent Supreme Court decision in the case of Wynne v. Comptroller for the State of Maryland. County Executive Leggett had proposed cutting \$969,420 for the Developmental Disability Supplement as well as \$146,688 for the Developmental Disability direct service worker wage increase. The County Council rejected these cuts and the two items were maintained in the FY16 Operating Budget.

Seth reported that in July the County Council approved two bills that will improve taxi service in the County. Bill 53-14 provides for more taxicabs to be available for calls and requires the County's Department of Transportation to develop a plan to increase the numbers of wheelchair-accessible cabs (vans) that have lifts or ramps, with a goal of having 100 percent accessible taxicabs in the County by 2025. The bill requires companies such as Uber and Lyft to contribute to improved accessible services through a surcharge they will pay into the Transportation Services Improvement Fund. Disbursements from the fund will be used to improve the delivery of accessible taxicab services. Key provisions of the bill also address taxicab regulations for company owners and drivers, including rules for Passenger Vehicle Licenses (PVLs). The bill authorizes the issuance of 50 accessible vehicle licenses to a driver-owned cooperative to help individual drivers and spur innovation in the expansion of accessible transportation.

Gabe Albornoz, Director of the Department of Recreation, attended the July Steering Committee to hear the concerns and suggestions from the Commission regarding recreation opportunities and access to classes for persons with disabilities. Mr. Albornoz will be the guest speaker for the Commission's November Full Commission meeting.

A Respect the Space meeting will be convened tomorrow and in attendance will be Nancy Greene, ADA Compliance, Mike Subin, Special Assistant to County Executive Leggett, the Chief of the Maryland Building Code Enforcement, and representatives from Department of Transportation, Department of Permitting Services, Office of Human Rights, and the Police Department. The group will discuss code enforcement of accessible parking spaces and properly striped parking lots. In 2010 a bill was passed by the State of Maryland requiring local jurisdictions to bring existing park lots into compliance with Maryland Accessibility Code requirements for parking spaces for individuals with disabilities.

#### **Ex-Officio Updates:**

Nancy Greene, ADA Compliance, reported that the County continues to work on Project Civic Access. There is going to be more major construction at the EOB and this may preclude parking for any future meetings until completed.

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation, reported, that ActiveMontgomery, the County's new registration system for Recreation and Parks, is now available online: [www.activemontgomery.org](http://www.activemontgomery.org). Users must create a new account in order to use the system.

Faisal Khan, Department of Transportation (DOT), reported that DOT is doing more outreach to seniors and people with disabilities. The Call-n-Ride program has seen an increase in reservations and registration is growing by 40 to 50 members every month.

Angela Washington, Office of Human Resources, reported that the County's Project SEARCH internship program has started again with 15 new interns. Since the County began tracking hiring initiatives in 2013, the County has hired 159 veterans, 8 veterans with disabilities, 21 individuals with disabilities, and 15 non-competitive hires. She also introduced Darryl Gorman who is their department's newly appointed deputy director.

Susan Smith, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), reported that HOC has opened their waiting list and it will be available year round. There are currently 9,000 individuals on the waiting list. Applications can be filed online at [www.hocmc.org/for-our-customers/public-housing-residents/public-housing-waiting-list.html](http://www.hocmc.org/for-our-customers/public-housing-residents/public-housing-waiting-list.html). Susan also reported that HOC is moving forward with property renovations.

Francie Gilman, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported that MPLC will be hosting a Library of the Future Summit on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00pm at Silver Spring Civic Building. To register for the event, please visit: <http://montgomerycountymd.libguides.com/summit>. Francie also reported that this summer the Rockville Memorial Library hosted a pilot book group for adults with developmental disabilities. It was very well received and they hope to expand the group to other branches.

Simone Geness, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), reported that the first in a series of parent/student workshops for families with students ages 14 to 21 will be on September 29<sup>th</sup> from 7pm to 9pm at Richard Montgomery High School. More information and future workshop sessions can be found online: [www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/special-education/programs-services/transition-services-unit.aspx#resources](http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/special-education/programs-services/transition-services-unit.aspx#resources).

Kim Mayo, Manager, Community Support Network (CSN), reported that Coordination of Community Services (formerly Resource Coordination) now has 172 clients with an additional 13 clients pending transfer that should be completed by October. CSN is also currently actively recruiting for a Program Manager and a Coordinator for the program.

**Roundtable:** None.

**Public Comments:** Susan Emery, Executive Director, Circle of Rights, announced that they are looking for free meeting space to hold a young stroke group on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Fridays from 11:30am to 1pm.

Tammy Shepherd, Circle of Rights, announced that Circle of Rights will be spearheading a diabetes prevention program as well as a stroke survivor fitness program.

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Wednesday, October 14<sup>th</sup>, 2015 – Rockville Memorial Library, 21 Maryland Avenue, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Meeting Room, Rockville, MD 20850 – 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Steering Committee Meeting:** Wednesday, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2015 – 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, Community Outreach Manager

DRAFT