



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Minutes
March 9, 2022**

****MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM ****

Welcome and Approval of February 2022 Meeting Minutes

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the February 2022 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the February 2022 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Welcome to New Ex-Officio Commissioners

Seth welcomed newly appointed ex-officio Commissioners Bob Green, Senior ADA Compliance Project Manager, representing Montgomery Parks, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and Angela Luskey, Recreation Specialist, representing Montgomery County Recreation, Countywide Programs, Therapeutic Recreation.

Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) - Key Issues – Carol Beatty, Secretary, and Kimberly J. McKay, Director of Communications

Website: <http://mdod.maryland.gov/Pages/Home.aspx>

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/MDODMarch2022.pdf>

MDOD State Disabilities Plan 2020 – 2023:

[http://mdod.maryland.gov/pub/Documents/MDOD_StateDisabilitiesPlan_062321_COPY%20\(1\).pdf](http://mdod.maryland.gov/pub/Documents/MDOD_StateDisabilitiesPlan_062321_COPY%20(1).pdf)

Secretary Carol Beatty reviewed the PowerPoint.

Secretary Beatty reported Governor Larry Hogan will be declaring Maryland as a Technology First state. The Maryland Technology First initiative establishes a system of support for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to access assistive technology.

The floor was opened to questions.

Jeneva Stone, Commissioner, raised the issue of medically complex students transitioning from high school to adult services and how to address this at the state level. This is a subgroup of individuals who require skills nursing services that are outside of the purview. Jeneva said there needs to be a better pathway for parents and their adult child who are medically complex to get through transition. Currently those individuals can do self-directed services or go into medical day. Not everyone has the bandwidth for self-directed services or their child may not thrive in medical day. She has been communicating recently with Onesta Duke, Regional Director, Southern Maryland Regional Office, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration, regarding these issues. Secretary Beatty said she and Jeneva have had previous discussions about this issue and the preparedness of the provider system. She agreed that there are not enough providers in the community currently that feel comfortable serving this population and so it tends to be a more segregated setting. MDOD is working with the Maryland Board of Nursing. If the issue is not resolved by this current administration, then it will be continued by

the next administration. Secretary Beatty encouraged Jeneva to continue to be an advocate and asked that she and other families and individuals speak on this issue. She will connect with Jeneva to continue this conversation.

Eric Cole, Commissioner, asked if the program Terps-EXCEED will expand. The program is an inclusive higher education program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities that launched in the fall of 2021 with a small pilot of students at the University of Maryland. Kimberly said the program will be expanding to the College Park campus and to take more applicants this year. Applications are currently being accepted and interviews are taking place. Program expansion will be dependent on funding and resources. The long term goal is for the program to expand to other campuses within the state system particularly St. Mary's, Salisbury and Towson. This year's program has been phenomenally successful and they hope there is interest from other campuses. Betsy added Montgomery College has a Graduate Transition Program, which is open to students who have exited from special education high school programs and is a two-year, tuition-based, credit-free certificate program that enables students to transition to greater independent living through developmentally appropriate educational, vocational, and life-skill services.

Rabbi Dr. Reeve Brenner, Public, said he was encouraged by Laurie-Anne Sayles, an at-large candidate for Montgomery County Council and current City of Gaithersburg Councilwoman, to attend this meeting. He has concerns about accessibility and inclusion within County parks including more accessible options for adults with disabilities. He recommended that Bankshot courts be installed which have been installed in two City of Rockville parks. Secretary Beatty said MDOD operates a grant program called Access Maryland which provides funding to state-owned facilities, university system of Maryland campuses, and state owned parks to make continued accessibility upgrades, consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessible Design Standards of 2010. For example, MDOD has worked with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to making pathways at Rocky Gap State Park accessible for persons who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices as well as an accessible fishing ramp at Unicorn Fishing Lake Park.

While Secretary Beatty agreed that accessibility updates are not being completed fast enough, efforts are definitely being made. She suggested Dr. Brenner discuss his issues further with Bob Green, Senior ADA Compliance Officer, Montgomery Parks. Mario Damiani, Commissioner, said Bob Green was directly involved in addressing his accessibility concerns at Georgian Forest Local Park. Tonya Gilchrist, Commissioner, noted that Wheaton has some accessible outdoor exercise equipment near the big playground for wheelchair users. Seth added that Commissioners have conducted site visits to individual County parks to review planned design changes. Angela Luskey, Montgomery County Recreation (MCR), said Montgomery Parks has some wonderful and accessible options that MCR has been able to take advantage of with their summer camps and programs. Betsy suggested working together and identifying how to promote and provide information on the accessibility of County parks. One recommendation is to send out a press release.

Karen Morgret, Commissioner, asked for more information on MDOD's work with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and American Job Centers (AJC). Secretary Beatty said it is a complicated situation. Maryland is under an order of selection and based on the average income of its citizens DORS will only provide so much funding to the state. DORS does not have sufficient resources, both funding and staff, to provide services to all individuals determined to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. Due to Congressional mandates, DORS also has had to shift existing resources to Pre-Employment Transitioning Services (Pre-ETS), which is focused strictly on students with disabilities who are between the ages of 14 and 21. Therefore, DORS has a Waiting List for the VR program. Federal law requires that DORS' VR program must serve people with the most significant disabilities first. As there is a waiting list for services, those in category 1 who have been categorized as having a 'most significant disability' can receive services immediately. Individuals in category 2 who have been categorized with a significant disability will be placed on a waiting list that could be up to five years and individuals on the waiting list the longest will be served first. DORS is actively working to reduce the waitlist. DORS does not expect to provide services to individuals in category 3 who have been categorized with a non-severe disability in the foreseeable future. Secretary Beatty explained that DORS is managed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). MDOD has been in contact with the new State Superintendent of Schools to discuss recommendations gleaned from other states on how to address system inequities. DORS is one of seven states that still has a center in Baltimore City which is essentially a segregated center. MDOD is

suggesting moving towards a model of services that are available throughout the state. They are also suggesting that DORS be managed under Maryland Department of Labor or human resources. Secretary Beatty noted Delegate Michele Guyton has introduced [House Bill 660 – Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitative Services \(Student Job Training Reformation Act\)](#) establish a Commission to study DORS and evaluate and make recommendations on specified subjects related to improvements to DORS's programs and services.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Seth reported the County Council Transportation & Environment (T&E) and Health & Human Services (HHS) Committees held a joint meeting on February 14 to discuss the Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF). The meeting was attended by representatives of taxi fleets, taxi drivers, and staff from the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). The Council is actively seeking the opinions of taxi drivers as to what would incentive them to drive accessible vehicles and reviewing those recommendations. Seth will continue to report on this issue.

Seth reported that the County's [Building Better Beginning](#)'s program has been recommended to be included in the upcoming operating budget. The program received a two-year \$1 million grant from the Pritzker Foundation to partner with local Early Childhood Advisory Council's to build integrated data systems nationwide which will identify gaps in current data and integrate systems to support young children, vulnerable populations, and equity. The program has been a high priority for Council President Gabe Albornoz. County Executive Marc Elrich will release the FY23 operating budget on March 15.

Seth reported that the following three proclamations were presented during the County Council's session on Tuesday March 8:

- Proclamation recognizing Linda McMillan for her 35 years of service to the Montgomery County Council, by Council President Albornoz and the full Council
Video: <https://youtu.be/06sP3WEdq4s?t=428>
- Proclamation recognizing National Social Work Month by honoring Dr. Jay Kenney, NASW Social Work Pioneer, by Council President Albornoz
Video: <https://youtu.be/06sP3WEdq4s?t=2058>
- Proclamation recognizing Multiple Sclerosis Week, by Council President Albornoz - Accepted by Dr. Seth Morgan, Chair, Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
Video: <https://youtu.be/06sP3WEdq4s?t=3207>

The Steering Committee will meet next Wednesday, March 16 from 5pm to 6pm. A Zoom link will be sent out.

Ex-Officio Member Reports

Jeneva Stone, Representative of the Countywide Recreation and Parks Advisory Board, reported a new and improved ActiveMontgomery registration and reservation system has combined the databases for Montgomery County Recreation, Montgomery Parks and Community Use of Public Facilities. Individual's can check a box within their ActiveMontgomery account to indicate if they require an ADA accommodation such as sign language interpreters, companion, Braille/large print, adaptive equipment, assistive listening/auxiliary devices, and/or audio description. Direct contacts to request an ADA accommodation for each agency: <https://tinyurl.com/285y6fpf>.

Denise Isreal, MCDOT, reported Ride On bus service will increase beginning Sunday, March 13. The new schedule changes returned bus service to 86 percent of pre-COVID levels. The new increase in service reflects a 6 percent increase from the temporary January reduction due to the number of employees who were sick from or exposed to COVID-19 during the recent surge. Routes that will resume service or increase frequency include:

- Ride On [Flex](#), the on-demand service in Wheaton/Glenmont and Rockville, will resume service.
- Ride On [extRa](#), the limited-stop service along MD 355 between Lakeforest Transit Center and Medical Center, will resume service.
- [Flash](#), the bus rapid transit bus line servicing US 29, will resume full weekday service and will continue to service the Food and Drug Administration campus in White Oak.

- [Ride On](#) buses will increase service on routes 9, 14, 20, 30, 43, 56, 61, 63, and 100.

MCDOT continues to actively recruit for part- and full-time drivers. Denise also reported that WMATA's Abilities Ride program had been suspended temporarily due to the pandemic. Now that WMATA is offering the program again, participants no longer contact the individual taxicab companies. WMATA will make the decision if the MetroAccess ride should be transferred to a local taxicab company or to a transportation network company such as Uber or Lyft. Participants must fill out an online enrollment form for the program. For more information, visit <https://www.wmata.com/service/accessibility/metro-access/Abilities-Ride.cfm>.

Angela Luskey, MCR, reported many recreation programs have started in person again. Therapeutic Recreation recently held a social dance that was attended by approximately 50 participants.

Bob Green, Montgomery Parks, reported Montgomery Parks is in the process of updating their transition plan. He offered to make a presentation before the Commission to receive input and recommendations from the Commissioners. He noted that materials used at playgrounds have been an ongoing issue. While the use of wood fiber has been deemed as ADA accessible it is problematic. The only other surface that is allowed to use is a virgin rubber. Bob suggested inviting Montgomery Parks staff to give a presentation on playgrounds would like feedback from the Commission about the use of other surfaces besides virgin rubber and wood fiber. Bob said upgrading playground surfaces will go a long way in making more of our playgrounds more accessible. Another project Montgomery Parks has been working on is installing communication boards at South Germantown Recreational Park and Wheaton Local Park. The 3-foot-by-5-foot board is a framed panel that displays photos, symbols, and illustrations to assist people with diverse language skills to express themselves. The words or phrases are in English, Spanish, and Braille, and customized based on relevant features and activities at the site. Users can gesture, point to, or blink at images to communicate with others. Montgomery Parks will be making communication boards a requirement at all playgrounds moving forward. Tonya suggested Bob include in his presentation the types of playground surfaces that are currently being used. Bob said he could also invite Montgomery Parks playground design staff to give a presentation before the Commission to discuss surfaces, maintenance issues and other issues. Mario Damiani, Commissioner, noted that the Mattie J.T. Stepanek park in King Farm has a solid rubberized surface that is very accessible for him to use with his power wheelchair. Bob agreed that this type of surface is better than the wood fiber which easily becomes displaced and is difficult to maintain. Rubber surfaces tend to be put in areas that are subject to flooding. Unfortunately, virgin rubber is extremely expensive and sometimes can cost more than the playground itself. Mario works for the U.S. Access Board which has also conducted the same studies and determined accessible options are limited. He will ask his colleague if there are any new developments. Mario also suggested that contact information be posted at all parks for users who may be having accessibility issues. Bob said he will continue these discussions with Mario.

Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported MCPL has expanded the Sunday hours of operation at all MCPL branches, except Maggie Nightingale (Poolesville) and Noyes Library for Young Children, are 10am to 6pm. Libraries are open Monday through Thursday from 10am to 8pm and Friday and Saturday from 10am to 6pm. COVID-19 Test Kits and N95 Masks are now available during all library open hours. Kits still limited to two per person per day and masks still limited to four per person. Angelisa also reported that the Silver Spring Library has been renamed to the Brigadier General Charles E. McGee Library. Brigadier General McGee, who passed away early this year at the age of 102, served as a fighter pilot and member of the 332nd Fighter Squadron, famously known as the "Tuskegee Airmen," an all-Black unit in World War II, followed by combat missions in the Korean and Vietnam Wars. Betsy added that there will be an official renaming ceremony at a later date. She has suggested that all County libraries have the United States flag, Maryland flag, and Montgomery County flag as a means to honor and respect the service of veterans.

Betsy reported the Commission will need to finalize budget testimony to be given before the County Council on March 20 or March 21. She sent the budget testimony that was given back in December before the HHS Committee. Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, put in a request for funding to purchase early screening software for pediatricians for children with Autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities. Seth said the issue is particularly in underserved areas of the County where families may not have access to pediatric care and early intervention services.

Announcements

None.

Meeting adjourned – 7:30pm

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
April 2022 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Developmental Disability Advisory Committee (DDAC) – Monday, April 11

4pm to 5:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday, April 13

6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday, April 20

5pm to 6pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

<p align="center">Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities Attendance Report April 2021 – March 2022</p>

[illegible]

Attendance Policy: A Voting Member may miss up to 3 meetings within a one year rolling period. Voting Members who miss more than 3 meetings in that period or who miss 3 consecutive meetings will be automatically removed. Waivers may be requested for absences caused by extenuating circumstances.

[illegible]