



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
November 18th, 2020**

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

Welcome and Approval of October 2020 Meeting Summary Minutes

Trish Gallae, Vice-Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the October 2020 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the October 2020 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Statewide Transportation Issues – Christian J. Miele, Esq., M.A., Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), and Bong Delrosario, Director of Transportation Policy and Programs, MDOD

Christian J. Miele was appointed as the Deputy Secretary of MDOD in January 2019. Prior to his appointment, he served in the Maryland House of Delegates for four years representing Baltimore County.

Christian reported MDOD has begun a partnership with local Commissions on people with disabilities, state agencies, Montgomery County and Baltimore City in particular as well as with the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). At a Maryland Alliance meeting of statewide Commissions, Seth Morgan, Chair, spoke about safety issues regarding floating bus stops. Seth shared that each county or city has created its own design specifications for floating bus stops so the design is not uniform or predictable. Christian said this started a conversation of what role does the state of Maryland have in these local designs and if nationwide or statewide best practices should be reviewed. MDOD held a listening session two months ago with County disability agencies and MDOT to discuss this issue. After Christian convened a meeting with Bong Delrosario, Director of Transportation Policy and Programs, MDOD, partners within MDOT, and MDOT and MDOD Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Governor Hogan,

MDOD has been given authorization to form an informal workgroup to discuss floating bus stops. Anyone is invited to participate. Christian has identified a number of key stakeholders they would like to include in the conversation to discuss floating bus stop best practices from both a safety and accessibility standpoint. This workgroup will also discuss potential action steps needed to move forward which may include state or local legislation. Christian noted Montgomery County will play a vital role given its proximity to the DC Metro area, its large population, and the fact that Montgomery County is one of the few jurisdictions who has been installing floating bus stops. Baltimore City has also been installing floating bus stops but they are temporary and still in the design phase. The workgroup will include the National Federation for the Blind (NFB) which is headquartered in Baltimore as well as Mike Bullis, Executive Director, The Image Center of Maryland. Mike is a disability advocate who is blind. MDOD has also reached out to Ronza Othman, President, NFB of Maryland. MDOD also wants to reach out to the bicycling community as there are a lot of concerns about bicycle lanes as pedestrians must walk through them to access the floating bus stop. There is currently no mechanism in place to alert pedestrians who may have low vision or who are blind that there is a bicyclist in the bicycle lane. MDOD wants to hear from bicyclists on their experiences and get input on how to make floating bus stops safer. MDOD will also be relying heavily on technical assistance from engineers and planners from the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA). MTA publishes and periodically revises a bus stop guide. Any recommendations from this workgroup will be sent to MTA, which is very receptive to the idea of considering these recommendations and making those changes in future publications. Christian added that all bus stops will also be reviewed for accessibility. The details of how often the workgroup will meet still need to be sorted out. Bong will be sending out a Doodle poll to interested

individuals to decide on a time that is convenient for as many stakeholders as possible. Commissioners who are interested in joining the workgroup can contact Christian at Christian.Miele@maryland.gov.

Bong became Director of Transportation Policy and Programs at MDOD in June 2020. Bong has completed field visits in Montgomery County and Baltimore City to assess floating bus stops and has developed a list of concerns that he will be raising with the workgroup. Bong rode the bus to be dropped off and picked up at these floating bus stops. He noted there are several different bus stops in Montgomery County, especially around the Silver Spring station area which were built in 2017 and older, that do not have safety precautions or physical adaptations for persons who have low vision or who are blind. Montgomery County has acknowledged this and they are building more safety precautions into their newer designs. Charlie Crawford, former Commission Chair, and his wife, who are both blind, provided input on the floating bus stops that have been installed recently. Bong's goal moving forward is to make sure floating bus stops installed across the state are accessible and safe for all pedestrians. He reported that there is a nationwide [Complete Streets initiative](#) and floating bus stops and island bus stops will continue to be installed across the country. Bong encouraged Commissioners to notify him of issues or concerns. He added that he is a wheelchair user and will do site visits. He can be contacted via e-mail at Bong.Delrosario@maryland.gov or via phone and text at 410-767-3629.

Bong explained the safety issues are not just for individuals who are blind or have low vision, but also for those who are wheelchair users. Some of the concerns across the board were how to warn bicyclists to stop or slow down when pedestrians are crossing through the bicycle lane. He noted that with Baltimore City's temporary floating bus stops, if the bus does not stop directly in the middle of the platform that is adjacent to the connected sidewalk, there is not enough space for a person in a wheelchair to make a left or right turn without falling off of the platform which is approximately 2 ½ to 3 inches high. Bong has brought this issue up with Baltimore City. Another issue for the Montgomery County bus stops is the longitudinal tactile strips that are in place to alert individuals who are blind or who have low vision and use a white cane that they are entering an area where they need to turn left or right. These rubber tactile strips can cause issues for wheelchair users as they are extremely bumpy. If there are more than four of these strips in a row they can also cause pain and discomfort for certain wheelchair users. Bong suggested to a Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) engineer that he met with during his site visit that tactile strips be placed where they will not hinder the ability of a wheelchair user to go left or right while not taking away from a person who is blind or who has low vision. Trish noted that bicyclists also complain about these tactile strips and compare them to speed bumps. She added that it is a real challenge when an issue for one subset of persons with disabilities causes another issue for another subset of persons with disabilities.

Christian said when MDOD spoke with the Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Governor Hogan and his legislative team, there was a commitment from MTA to allow local jurisdictions to have autonomy when creating traffic calming devices or design specifications while still maintaining the statewide general idea of safety. He explained that within that context though, if there are issues within these local jurisdictions there is nothing to stop a state legislator from taking it up and making it a statewide issue and theoretically creating statewide standards. Christian said hearing from local jurisdictions and communicating to the MTA will be the most collaborative approach as the workgroup will hear from individuals who use bus stops and floating bus stops on a daily basis.

Christian reported the MDOD State Disabilities Plan will soon be approved. MDOD is required to review and revise the State Disabilities Plan at least once every four years. The recommendations have been submitted to Carol Beatty, Secretary, MDOD, to review, amend if needed, and approve the plan. The revised plan was the product of a statewide stakeholder survey which yielded over 400 responses. Each MDOD policy director held focus groups as well. Christian noted that the revised plan now includes a section for future public health emergencies as well as a health and wellness plan for mental health and behavioral health challenges that continue to have an impact. More opportunities and resources need to be made available to residents.

The floor was opened to questions.

Trish said there had been an overall consistency for design of streets and sidewalks that persons who have low vision or who are blind were accustomed to using, but the installation of bicycle lanes has disrupted this standard.

She asked how to address these issues of consistency. Bong said jurisdictions should be reviewing best practices for other transit modes including Baltimore City's light rail. There are audio and visual cues that could be implemented with the bicycle lanes to increase the safety for all users. He added that Baltimore City's floating bus stops are not permanent as they are in the testing phase. Montgomery County's adaptations and safety precautions for their floating bus stops have been tremendous and moving forward will only get better, but this will only happen if individuals continue to voice their concerns. Bong is here to listen and bring those concerns to stakeholders, local transportation departments, and the state of Maryland.

Trish reminded Commissioners that there are formal steps the Commission must follow if they want to comment on statewide issues, but they can make comments as private citizens. She thanked Christian and Bong for speaking to the Commission tonight.

Discussion on [Bill 46-20, Police - School Resource Officers – Prohibited](#), Lead Sponsors: Councilmembers Jawando and Riemer

A school resource officer (SRO) is a sworn uniformed law enforcement officer trained in emergency preparedness, crisis management, community policing concepts, and problem solving who is assigned to work as a liaison to Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS). The County Police currently assign 23 police officers to work as a school resource officer in a specific public school pursuant to an existing memorandum of understanding with MCPS. Bill 46-20 would prohibit the Montgomery County Police Department (MCP) from deploying SROs in County public schools.

Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, said this bill was brought to his attention by a student activist. Some students and their parents have concerns about having SROs in the schools. The County currently spends \$4,000,000 per year on SROs. There are concerns that SROs contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline by unnecessarily arresting students. There is some data that supports these concerns that minority students and students with disabilities are disproportionately arrested. Councilmembers Will Jawando and Hans Reimer have introduced this bill to eliminate SROs and to spend the funding on other services that are beneficial to students, in particular students with developmental disabilities. These services could include additional therapists or counselors to deal with discipline issues in a different way. The County Council will be discussing this issue over the coming months. Avner said he wants to understand the issue from both sides because even though individuals are bringing the Commission's attention to it, it could be an issue that this Commission should not weigh in on. It is the role of the Commission to be advocates for individuals with disabilities in the community.

Beth Shuman, Senior Legislative Aide, Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, reported SROs are being looked at as an equity issue. MCPS and the Board of Education will be releasing an extensive report on their findings in January that will include best practices and recommendations. After the report has been released, the County Council will be holding a worksession to discuss the report. SROs and MCPS will have opinions on security issues. Beth noted that everyone is in agreement that changes need to be made and that there is a critical need for mental health resources. She added that SROs are in the schools to form relationships with the students. Beth explained that Councilmember Albornoz has personal experience with overseeing the Excel Beyond the Bell program, which was a partnership between Montgomery County Department of Recreation, MCPS and the Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families to provide students with recreational and social programs, meals, and transportation home. Beth said the bill seeking to eliminate all SROs prior to MCPS having students return to class is a little extreme. The issue is divisive but the Council wants to work together to have a respectful discussion as everyone has concerns. This includes deciding what resources and supports should be in place and reviewing best practices across the country. Decisions would be in partnership and collaboration with MCPS. Beth noted that Councilmember Craig Rice is Chair of the Council's Education & Culture Committee and he has some strong opinions about this issue as well as Councilmembers Nancy Navarro, Sidney Katz, and Andrew Friedman. Beth noted the Council recognizes there is training available that can assist SROs with dealing with certain student populations. The Council also recognizes there are significant safety issues within the schools that MCPD must be able to respond to. A public hearing is tentatively scheduled for January 12 at 7:30 p.m. It will be a public worksession and individuals can testify. Beth will send the report to Betsy once it is released. She said it is her understanding that there were a significant number of focus groups that are included in the report.

Trish agreed with Beth and said more information needs to be reviewed and we should wait to read the report and see the data before making recommendations. We need to make sure resources are not being taken away and recommendations shouldn't be made without evidence.

Neal said he wants to pushback on the idea that only administrators and school leadership are the best resources on how schools should operate as the students are the ones who are affected. He added that it may not be wise for this Commission to take a stance on the bill even after the report comes out. Given the discussions that occurred over e-mail prior to the meeting about this issue, there are some very strong opinions and the Commission has potential to become splintered on their decision. He said SROs are not supposed to be used as a connection to MCPD, but then they are supposed to act as an additional support system for the school they are located within. In some cases, there is extreme harm to students that occurs, such as school shootings. Neal would like the Commission to tread lightly on how it takes a position as it may not include the opinion of all Commissioners. The decisions should include input from students and parents as well as administrators and teachers. The decision will also affect the MCPS budget. Neal agreed with Beth that SROs should not be eliminated without a transition in place. Beth supported Neal's comments and said we should reframe the whole discussion on how to keep students safe and how to provide the supports needed within the school. She said Councilmember Albornoz will want to hear from this Commission.

Michael Greenberg, Commissioner, said this issue is clearly very emotional and polarizing with various opinions, but he would like to know how it affects students with disabilities and the Commission's role in commenting on the bill. Avner said the advocates of the bill are saying that SROs are having a negative effect and are discriminatory specifically to students with special needs, especially students with developmental disabilities, intellectual disabilities and mental health issues, as well as minority students. Avner wants to understand what those issues are and why MCPS wants to keep SROs in the school system.

Day Al-Mohamed, Commissioner, said noted that there are reports dating back to 2005 that discuss SROs targeting minority students and students with disabilities. This includes data and reports from the school-to-prison pipeline, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the National Association of SROs. Day said statistics repeatedly show students with disabilities are negatively impacted by SROs and more students with disabilities are given citations, arrested, or are being pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline. She added that data shows that SROs are not very effective, but she also understands that there is a budgetary item tied to this program which cannot just be cut. She said it is the Commission's role to represent people with disabilities, including students with disabilities and it is the Commission's duty and responsibility to make a statement on this bill. At the very least this Commission should support that change is needed and that students with disabilities should not be targeted due to behaviors beyond their control. Day also suggested Commissioners review the studies she mentioned above.

Simone Geness, Supervisor, Transition Services Unit, MCPS, thanked Day for her passion on this issue. She agreed that it is a systemic issue for students with disabilities and there needs to be a deeper conversation. She also agreed that the data will lead to where the decisions are made. Simone shared that there is a high correlation between incarceration and illiteracy and between incarceration and mental health, both of which can be traced back to the school system. She noted that for the first ten years of her career she worked in criminal justice in New York City with jail displacement where she worked with removing individuals from jail. If SROs are removed from the school, then we must be mindful of how young people encounter law enforcement, what that encounter will be like, and what training is available. Ultimately, Simone wants to know what the interaction between students with disabilities and police officers will be. There is a memorandum of understanding between MCPS and MCPD that details when the school system must call the police department to intervene. Removing SROs from the school is not removing MCPD. Simone added data shows African American males are disproportionately identified for special education services than any other race of student. There is also a correlation between disciplinary referrals within the school. Some referrals do escalate to police enforcement involvement to respond to a crisis and there is a disproportionality there as well. Simone added that there are also positive experiences with police enforcement. Elementary schools partner with the police department to provide safety patrols. Simone has also been a school administrator at the middle school level where an SRO was removed. That SRO had become a positive part of that school's culture and community. She has also had recent experiences with student

situations where an SRO was better able to negotiate an outcome for a student with a developmental disability and this outcome may have been very different if a normal patrol officer had responded. Simone said systemic change is needed.

Beth reiterated that change is needed, the school has acknowledged that change is needed, and we all need to work together. She added that former Commissioner Jenn Lynn has been appointed to be on the Council's new Policing Advisory Commission (PAC). She is a disability rights advocate and has worked with her son to train more than 3,000 law enforcement officers about communicating and de-escalating police encounters with those with developmental, cognitive and intellectual disabilities. Betsy said Jenn Lynn wanted to be a part of this conversation tonight but had to leave early for a PAC meeting. She will share tonight's meeting minutes with her. Beth added that within the bill it outlines where the funding would be spent. Beginning next year, the \$3 million in savings would be allocated to three separate programs that will better address the needs of students: 1) Providing funding for an after school student service hub model to reduce risk factors for students through the Montgomery County Collaboration Council (\$406,000), 2) Providing recreational therapeutic group activities for students through HHS (\$312,455), and 3) Providing funding for restorative justice training for MCPS educators and staff (\$750,000). Councilmember Alborno is in support of these three programs and the Council will be holding worksessions to discuss.

Karen Goss, Commissioner, said this Commission needs to become educated on the issue, focus on how to support individuals with disabilities, and represent them that in that way. She said if we stay focused on the facts then we are doing our job as Commissioners.

Betsy reported she has been told that three school shootings have been prevented because an SRO was on the school premises.

It was mentioned in an email earlier today that training is important as it relates to understanding disability and how to interact with individuals with disabilities. The bill does include a training component. Beth said a bill regarding training will be introduced this upcoming Monday.

Trish suggested holding a Steering Committee meeting to continue the discussion.

COVID-19 Pandemic Critical Program Issues

Michael reported Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has partnered with the non-profit Primary Care Coalition (PCC) to provide technical assistance and support to agencies funded by the Developmental Disabilities Administration. He has volunteered his time and has been working very closely with them on this program. It has been going on for several months now and has been extremely successful. 22 of the 30 providers within Montgomery County have elected to opt into the program. Prior to the program, support at the state level had been fragmented and the 1,000 or so individuals that receive DDA funding in residential services and the direct support professionals who take care of them were in harms way without adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), training or testing. At this point, the providers in the new program are receiving fit training which means they now have the ability to properly use PPE. Michael, PCC, and Dr. Gayles, County Health Officer and Chief of Public Health Services, HHS, are working closely together to offer programs within each of the group home providers that allows them to obtain and perform direct testing of their staff and the individuals. This will be available within the next month. A lot has been accomplished in a short period of time due in large part to the collaboration between Councilmember Alborno, Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director, HHS, and staff within Aging and Disability Services (ADS). Beth attributed the success of the program to Michael's hard work and expertise. She added that the Council approved additional funding to keep the program going for at least the next six months. They are hoping to use the same program to implement the vaccination of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Betsy reported she received a call from Jewish Foundation for Group Homes today. They use a home care agency to provide in-home nursing services. The agency had agreed to give the residents the flu vaccine, but they are unable to acquire any vaccines as apparently there is a shortage. Betsy sent this issue on to Odile Brunetto, Chief, ADS. Beth said she has learned that the health department orders flu vaccines based on an

estimate from years past, but not knowing the actual count needed. Some years they get it right and some years they do not, but they cannot order more after the fact. Plus, there are certain flu vaccines that are needed for older adults. The County is trying to partner with private providers to make sure everyone receives the flu vaccine. (Since that time, HHS has provided 60 doses of flu vaccine.)

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Trish reported she attended an MCDOT virtual public hearing on November 12th on the [sidewalk and bikeway project for Tuckerman Lane](#) in Bethesda. The project includes shared use pathways of 10 feet next to a parking lane which is next to a bicycle lane and then the vehicle lane. Because there will be bicycle lanes on both sides of the street, only one side of the street will have parking. This was not received well by the residents who will lose parking spaces in front of their homes. The issue of school buses was raised in that if a school bus is dropping children off, the children will have to cross a bicycle lane in order to reach the sidewalk. There will be a parking lane that will obstruct the view of both the bicyclist and the child which has the potential to create a dangerous situation. Some attendees noted they were happy to have the sidewalks installed, but there were questions as to who was responsible for shoveling the snow. Attendees also voiced their concerns on how deliveries would be made to the houses and parking spaces being taken away. Visitors would have to park several blocks away and walk several blocks to reach a crosswalk to cross the street. There were also concerns of how drivers would be able to safely back out of their driveways into the street. Trish pointed out during the meeting that the County has several pedestrian and bicycle master plans currently being developed. She said by the end of the meeting the overall consensus was that residents did not want the bicycle lanes installed. The good news is MCDOT is only about 20% finished with their plan so there is more time to provide input before they move forward.

Trish reported she presented the Commission's two policy priorities before the County Council's HHS Committee. When discussing the pedestrian safety issues, she included the above comment regarding buses dropping children off and having to cross bicycle lanes. The HHS Committee said the three main topics that 311 receives calls on are housing, COVID-19 testing, and workforce development. Trish noted that the County Council did increase funding available to assist those who need housing financial assistance. The Council will also be convening a Transformation Committee and worksessions will be held throughout November. The HHS Committee would like this Commission to be involved.

Ex-Officio Member Reports

Tabled due to time constraints.

Announcements

Betsy will contact the County's Information Technology (IT) Department to receive guidance on how to prevent future Zoom bombings of meetings. The Commission must comply with the Maryland Openings Meeting Act so the meetings must remain open to the public. Betsy will also contact staff for the Boards, Committees, and Commissions (BCC).

Meeting adjourned – 7:50pm

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities December 2020 Meeting and Events Calendar

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday, December 9th

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

Developmental Disability Advisory Committee – Monday, December 14th

4pm to 5:30pm 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 January 2020 – November 2020</p>
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VOTING MEMBERS			JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	SEPT	OCTOBER	NOV	ABSENCES
☒ Volunteer Form on File with Risk Management E = Excused V = Virus P = Present / P* = Alternate Attended / A = Absence / C = Conference Call W = Waived Absences by County Executive / R = Waiver Requested													
1.	Al-Mohamed, Deena ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	P	P	C	V	C	C	E	A	C	C	1
2.	Anderson, Jametta ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2022	A	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	A	A	3
3.	Bram, Larry ☐	Agency Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2022	P	P	C	V	C	C	E	C	C	C	0
4.	Carter, Neal ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2022	P	P	C	V	A	C	C	C	C	C	1
5.	Coffield, Myra ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	A	P	C	V	C	C	E	C	C	C	1
6.	Cole, Eric ☐	Agency Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2022	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
7.	DuGoff, Benjamin ☒	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	P	P	V	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
8.	Gallalee, Patricia ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
9.	Goss, Karen ☒	Agency Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2021	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	A	C	C	1
10.	Greenberg, Michael ☐	Parent Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2022	P	A	C	V	C	C	E	C	C	C	1
11.	Hunger, Scott ☒	Person w/ Disability Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2022	P	P	V	V	C	C	C	A	A	C	2
12.	Hurtado, Luis ☒	Person w/ Disability Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2021	P	A	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	1
13.	Jenn Lynn ☐ <i>RESIGNED</i>	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	A	P	C	V	C	C	C	X	X	X	X
14.	Liniak, Tom ☒	Agency Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2021	P	P	V	V	C	C	E	C	C	C	0
15.	McLaughlin, Shonda ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2022	A	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	A	C	2
16.	Morgan, Seth ☒	Person w/ Disability Rep. 4 th term expires 9/2021	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	A	1
17.	Morgret, Karen ☐	Agency Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2020	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
18.	Peyer, Anne ☐	Agency Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2020	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
19.	Prather, Carl ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 2 nd term expires 9/2020	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
20.	Rice, David ☐	Person w/ Disability Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2022	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
21.	Robinson, Steve ☐	Agency Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	P	A	V	V	C	C	E	C	C	C	1
22.	Roe, Teri ☐	Parent Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2021	P	A	C	V	A	C	C	C	C	C	2
23.	Shapiro, Avner ☐	Parent Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2020	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	A	C	C	1
24.	Shermanski, Richard ☒	Agency Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2021	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	C	C	0
25.	Whittle, John ☐	Agency Rep. 1 st term expires 9/2022	P	P	C	V	C	C	C	C	A	C	1

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.

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