



## **Commission on People with Disabilities**

October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017

### **Welcome and Approval of September 2017 Meeting Summary Minutes:**

Seth Morgan, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the September, 2017 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the September, 2017 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd).

### **Montgomery County Government Customized Employment Public Intern Project (MCPIP) 10 Year Anniversary Celebration – Marie Parker, Program Manager for TransCen, Inc./Staff Liaison to MCPIP, and Stephanie Sawyer, Supervisor, Controller Division, Montgomery County Department of Finance:**

Michael Subin, Executive Director, Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission, and Robert Green, Director, Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, presented to Marie Parker the following proclamation:

WHEREAS, the theme for National Disability Employment Awareness Month this year is “Inclusion drives Innovation” and is an opportunity to educate about the importance of inclusion, especially when it comes to employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of workers with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, in Montgomery County we strive to be a model for local jurisdictions and private sector employers in the increased hiring of qualified people with disabilities, including Veterans with disabilities, as demonstrated by the Office of Human Resources in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services initiating 10 years ago the Customized Public Employment Intern Program; and

WHEREAS, the Commission on People with Disabilities and the Commission on Veterans Affairs will continue to advise the County on promoting a more inclusive disability and Veteran friendly work culture; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County is taking significant steps to address the high unemployment rates of individuals with disabilities by providing more inclusive career development and training programs which lead to increased levels of employment;

NOW, THEREFORE DO I, Isiah Leggett as County Executive hereby proclaim the month of October 2017 as

### **NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH**

in Montgomery County. We commend this observance to all of our citizens, and encourage employers to interview, hire, train, and maintain disabled and Veteran employees so they can contribute their skills and talents to the economic growth of our community.

Marie Parker thanked the Commission for their advocacy efforts for the program’s creation and continued support over the years. Marie gave a presentation about MCPIP. The program was created based on the County’s knowledge that people with significant disabilities often have difficulty accessing both job training and County government positions. As an employer, Montgomery County recognizes that there are many job candidates with significant disabilities who have much to offer but have difficulty competing for traditional jobs within the government. To go above and beyond what other County and State agencies have done, the County established this initiative to create flexible work training opportunities for individuals to fulfill the work requirements of County departments. All County departments have the opportunity to work with a customized employment career specialist to identify and create part-time position descriptions based on the department’s need. Individuals with significant disabilities are matched to work tasks based on their interests,

skills and competencies. The hope is that the public interns will gain job experience and training to be able to compete for merit positions within the County, as well as in the private sector.

The program started in 2007 with an annual budget of \$100,000, which allowed for 13,000 hours at the then minimum wage of \$7.25, and an additional \$50,000 budget for Marie's position. All intern positions are temporary and part-time (anywhere from 2 to 18 hours/week for 50 weeks and not to exceed 900 hours within one year). Each position can last for a period of no more than 2 years. The FY18 annual budget is \$108,809 and with the current \$11.50 minimum wage the annual hours have been reduced to 9,500. Due to the budget, there were not many opportunities to create positions last year. Marie is currently creating four new positions. Since 2007, 113 individuals have gone through the project. Interns have ranged in age from 18 to 70 years old and have represented all different races and disabilities. Interns are County employees with Grade 1 classifications.

Marie holds working interviews with potential interns to see first hand if they have the skills and abilities needed to fulfill the position. She also helps train the interns for the position if they do not already have a job coach through DORS or another agency. After leaving the intern program, some individuals have obtained merit positions within County Government, have become employed in the private sector, or enrolled in post-secondary education.

Marie has worked with many departments and divisions over the years, including Health and Human Services (HHS), Office of Human Resources, Correction and Rehabilities, Finance, Fleet Management, Technology Services, Montgomery County Public Libraries, Fire and Rescue, Police, and Liquor Control.

Stephanie Sawyer, Department of Finance, described her positive experiences of working with Marie over the years and the beneficial impact the interns have had in her department. Stephanie described the project as a win-win for the employers as well as the interns. She noted that Marie not only provides the initial job coaching, but is available with supportive coaching throughout the full two years. All interns are screened by Marie so departments know they are getting qualified employees. Interns can develop the skills they need to get future jobs as well as learning what their strengths and weaknesses are and working to improve those skills. Interns are also able to enroll in trainings available to County employees. Six months prior to an intern exiting their position, Stephanie assists them with job search preparation, working on sample cover letters, and applying for jobs.

Marie noted that six months prior to a position ending, she will meet with that department to discuss creating a new position. One issue of trying to fund more positions is that departments have their budgets decided on a year ahead of schedule. To retain and hire some interns, direct voucher contracts have been used with departments such as Corrections. A direct voucher can go up to \$10,000 and fund the position for a year until the position can be written into the departmental budget.

Since MCPID began, the County has developed other disability hiring initiatives including the hiring preference, the non-competitive hiring process, and Project Search. With the implementation of the hiring preference in 2010 and non-competitive hiring process 2012, the County has cumulatively hired 282 individuals as of July 2017: 24 non-competitive hires, 36 people with disabilities, 16 veterans with disabilities, 203 veterans, and 3 hires who did not identify.

Interns are eligible to apply for internal County employee only positions for up to two years after they exit the program. Yet, even with two years of County experience, it can be hard for the intern to be apply and be considered for higher grade positions. They can also claim a disability preference, but they still need to meet all the minimum qualifications of the job.

At this point, the program is being advertised through word-of-mouth. There needs to be a conversation for next steps on how to increase funding to create more opportunities. Marie suggested that departments build in a grace period within their budgets for hiring an intern. She also suggested that County hiring practices including working interviews as part of a customized approach or allowing interns to substitute their time as an intern in lieu of other qualifications.

Larry Bram, Commissioner, reported that per the latest Kessler Foundation report, which surveyed 6,000 supervisors in companies of various sizes and industries, only 21% of those companies included disability as diversity.

Trish Gallalee, Commissioner, discussed the issue of overcoming manager bias of hiring someone with a disability as well as hiring a person with a disability for higher level positions. Both have been big challenges for people with disabilities to overcome.

Hilary Kaplan, Commissioner, noted that at disability conferences Microsoft has been reporting that they need to conduct one-on-one interviews with potential employees rather than base their hiring from just a resume. Microsoft's particular focus right now is Autism.

Tom Liniak, Commissioner, reported that JSSA is working on a national level with SAP, a multinational software corporation, to implement their Autism and other disability programs. Companies like SAP and Microsoft are beginning to recognize that it is good business to hire people with disabilities and are beginning to invest their own money in the program. Tom reported that JSSA approaches employment from a business point of view and immersing themselves in that business to figure out what they need and what jobs they have trouble retaining employees in. Then they try to match the employee to those needs. Tom spends just as much time with employers as he does with job seekers. It is important to also focus on how the company will benefit. Tom Liniak noted that the Pre-Employment Transition Services (PRE-ETS) offered by DORS are available to students who have a disability ages 14 to 21. Tom also noted that if they do not have a good match for an employer, they will tell the employer.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that Montgomery County has the highest employment rate of people with disabilities in the country. This county has been on the cutting edge in hiring persons with disabilities and sets a good example for the rest of the country. The private sector, through companies such as Marriott, have made great strides in hiring persons with disabilities.

Jay Kenney, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, reported on how departments develop their budget priorities. Departments are given a target by the Office of Management and Budget. This year, HHS has been told to submit a budget with a 3% (or \$8,000,000) reduction. Reductions are not the same across all departments and it does not mean the final budget decision for the department will be reduced by 3%. Budgets are received by the County Executive and allow him to be responsive to requests from boards, committees, and commissions or private agencies who are requesting County Executive or County Council grants. Budget cuts give the County Executive the flexibility to make additional recommendations. Now is the time to submit such recommendations. Seth will be presenting the Commission's FY18 policy priorities to the County Council next week. Jay noted that sometimes it is easier for the Council to react to an existing budget item rather than having to add it in later.

Seth read the Commission's policy priorities for FY18:

- 1) Caregivers families/volunteers will be supported in ways that maximize their capacity and strengths to best nurture and support individuals/family members who have a disability to achieve their goals. (Respite)
- 2) Increase funding for employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the County and the private sector. (Montgomery County Public Intern Program)

Neal Carter, Commissioner, suggested meeting with the regional or county Chamber of Commerce to discuss collaboration goals and working with the private sector. Seth noted that the Commission would need to get approval first before moving forward on the idea. Seth has spoken to the County Council in the past about how the County can encourage the private sector to hire more persons with disabilities, but the County is limited in their abilities.

Betsy noted that when approaching employers, it is better to sell the idea to them that you can provide competent workers rather than them hiring employees out of charity.

Marie noted that part of the issue is educating supervisors about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities as well as assisting them in discovering what part of a position can be broken down to create an intern position. Robert Green agreed and offered to be a spokesperson for Marie about the benefits of the program.

**Chair Report:** None.

**Ex-Officio and Member Updates:**

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation, reported that the Wheaton redevelopment project is 10% complete. The South County Regional Recreation and Aquatic Center, that is expected to open in 2020, will feature an indoor recreation center with an aquatic center downstairs. The Aquatic Center will have one therapy pool with warmer temperatures separate from the main pools.

Susan Smith, Housing and Opportunities Commission (HOC), reported that HOC will be sponsoring a 2017 Health and Wellness Expo on Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Silver Spring Civic Center. Free clinical assessments and referrals.

Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation (DOT), reported that the new Ride On Extra service is currently operating for free during the month of October. The service features only 12 stops versus the 80 along the route. Buses feature free WiFi access, USB charging ports, information displays, and extra padding on seats. Denise also reported that DOT is in discussions with Regency for them to accept Call-n-Ride swipe cards for the WMATA Abilities Ride program.

**Announcements:**

Larry Bram, Commissioner, reported that as of October 1<sup>st</sup>, the Maryland Caregivers Supporting Coordinating Council was renamed to the Maryland Commission on Caregiving (MCC). MCC also is required to have State legislators appointed by the Governor. MCC will be hosting an event about caregiving across the lifespan on Tuesday, November 14<sup>th</sup> from 8:00 am to 2:30 pm at the Hilton BWI Airport. To register please visit <https://aarp.event.com/AARPMDCareforAll1142017>.

Cindy Buddington, Commissioner, reported that Equipment Connections for Children (ECFC) are having an open house at their new facility in Gaithersburg this Friday, October 13. ECFC serves children with disabilities in the greater Washington Metropolitan area by connecting costly adaptive equipment from one child with a disability who outgrows the equipment to another child who needs it.

Asha Clark, Commissioner, reported that a free Transitioning Youth Resource Fair will be held this Saturday, October 14 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm at Montgomery College Rockville Campus. Asha also noted that the Arc Montgomery County runs a support group called SibShops, which is a program just for brothers and sisters of kids with special needs. Children ages 8-13 who have a sibling with special health or developmental needs can connect with peers who have similar family situations. Together they play fun, high-energy games and talk about the good and not-so-good parts of having a sibling with special needs. Arc Montgomery County has also collaborated with the [Wings for Autism Program](#) which offers airport “rehearsals” specially designed for individuals with autism spectrum disorders and people with other intellectual/developmental disabilities, their families and aviation professionals. A Wings for Autism event will be held November 4<sup>th</sup> at Reagan National Airport. For more info, visit [www.thearc.org/what-we-do/programs-and-services/national-initiatives/wings-for-autism/what\\_initiatives\\_wings\\_events\\_washington\\_dc\\_2017](http://www.thearc.org/what-we-do/programs-and-services/national-initiatives/wings-for-autism/what_initiatives_wings_events_washington_dc_2017).

Trish Gallalee, Commissioner, reported that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, featured her and her service animal Indy in an educational video about service animals. YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/Mq3TUPr5st8>.

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Level Auditorium, Rockville, MD 20850 – 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Steering Committee Meeting:** Wednesday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – Health & Human Service, 401 Hungerford Drive, Conference Rooms 1A/1B, Rockville, MD 20850

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