



Commission on People with Disabilities
September 13th, 2017

Welcome and Approval of June 2017 Meeting Summary Minutes:

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

Updates & Thoughts on the Operating Budget – The Honorable Roger Berliner, President, Montgomery County Council:

At this point, the County does not know what the operating budget situation for FY19 will be and will have more information in November when the County receives the state tax returns. Council President Berliner said that major initiatives will not be explored, but small initiatives could possibly be handled. Overtime, the County has increased funding for seniors and people with disabilities. Last year the increase was approximately 2% and continues to marginally increase every year.

County Executive Leggett sent a proposal for increasing the minimum wage to County Council this evening. Leggett previously vetoed a bill that would have increased the minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour by 2020. Council President Berliner was not in favor of this bill due to his concerns that it would have a negative consequence on the small business community. Leggett's new proposal would increase the minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour by 2022 for large businesses and by 2024 for small businesses and non-profits. This is the schedule that was used by Minneapolis.

Council President Berliner stated that the County has made a commitment to the developmental disability community that direct care workers would be paid 125% above minimum wage. If the County is to honor that commitment with the increase to \$15.00 per hour minimum wage, it will cost the County an additional \$19M per year in funding. The County will also have to consider increasing funding for non-profits as well.

Council President Berliner has been working with Seth Morgan, Chair, and WMATA to create a better transportation program for individuals with disabilities to use using fund from the County Uber and Lyft tax. Also at this time, Metro Access is starting a new program Abilities-Ride which offers subsidized rides in partnership with Regency Taxi and Silver Cab. Eligible MetroAccess customers can request transportation through these providers for any trip that begins and ends within the MetroAccess service area in Maryland. Riders can request their trip in advance by calling the taxi company directly, or through their respective websites or smartphone apps. MetroAccess customers will pay as little as \$5.00 per trip to use Abilities-Ride for up to a 9-mile trip. An estimated fare will be provided to the customer before taking a trip. Customers pay the first \$5.00 with Metro funding the next \$15.00 in fare. Any remaining fare over \$20.00 will be billed to the customer. The program will save WMATA money as MetroAccess was a very expensive program to operate. The program is available to MetroAccess users in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties.

The County submitted a proposal to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) and received funding for 12 accessible taxicabs. Council President Berliner is working with Regency Cab and the Taxi Co-op to get those vehicles on the road.

The floor was opened for questions.

Larry Bram, Commissioner, asked if there are any requirements that accessible taxis must be on the road. Council President Berliner stated that the Transportation Improvement Services Fund will distribute funding to taxi drivers that will decrease their operating costs and provide an incentive to those drivers.

Commissioners discussed issues traveling from the county to Baltimore and D.C. Betsy encouraged Commissioners to review the Transportation Network Directory for options on how to get around the county and the state: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/tnd.

Teri Roe, Commissioner, discussed a MetroAccess issue regarding her son that occurred last week. Council President Berliner asked her to send him an e-mail and he will forward it to Paul Wiedefeld, General Manager and Chief Executive Officer, WMATA.

Ric Kienzel, Commissioner, asked for an update on sidewalks and snow removal. He suggested that County monitor curb cuts better this year. Council President Berliner encouraged Commissioners to e-mail the County if they see an issue.

Hilary Kaplan, Commissioner, asked what level of training snow plow operators receive. Council President Berliner suggested inviting Al Roshdieh, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT), to discuss this issue, and he will attend the meeting as well.

A discussion was had regarding the creation of a County snow shoveling volunteer group that could assist residents who are unable to shovel their properties. Karen Maricheau, Liaison to Commission on Aging, said that when she worked for the City of Takoma Park she helped to develop a core group of volunteers called Snow Angels. Trish Gallalee, Commissioner, noted that the City of Rockville has a similar program, but it is limited to seniors. The County is concerned about liability issues. Snow Angels was linked with a non-profit that held liability insurance.

Discussion of FY18 Priorities:

Seth Morgan will be presenting the Commission's FY18 policy priorities at the County Council Health and Human Services Committee breakfast on October 18th. The following priorities were suggested:

1. Caregivers families will be supported in ways that maximize their capacity and strengths to best nurture and support all individual members 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)

A motion was made to approve. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the policy priorities were unanimously approved.

H.R. 620 – Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Education and Reform Act of 2017:

Neal Carter, Commissioner, shared the following handouts regarding H.R. 620 – Americans with Disabilities Act Education and Reform Act of 2017. Commissioners may contact their State legislators regarding this bill as private citizens.

Overview of Concerns with H.R. 620: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/OverviewofConcernswithHR620.pdf>

Letter of Opposition from Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/CCWDOppLetter.pdf>

H.R. 620: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/620?r=1>

Chair Report:

Seth Morgan, Chair, reported that he held several meetings with Council President Berliner over the summer regarding the Transportation Services Improvement Fund.

Seth will be attending a breakfast with the County Council Health and Human Services (HHS) Committee in October where he will present the Commission's top two policy priorities for FY18.

Seth reminded Commissioners that they need to complete the Maryland Open Meetings Act training: http://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/OMA/class_oma_introl1.php. Certificates of completion can be e-mailed to Betsy.

Ex-Officio and Member Updates:

Charlie Butler, Department of Recreation, reported that the Fall 2017 Therapeutic Recreation & Inclusion Services Guide is now available: <http://montgomerycountymd.gov/rec/Resources/Files/publications/TRFall-2017.pdf>. They are currently working on the winter guide and next month will work on summer camps.

Faisal Khan, DOT, reported that on September 2nd Ride On and Metrobus expanded their free ride hours on Saturdays for people with disabilities and adults 65+ to 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Ride free hours are also available Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Beginning October 2nd, a new bus service called Ride On extRa will provide service from Lakeforest Transit Center in Gaithersburg to Medical Center Metro in Bethesda – running every ten minutes and making just twelve stops. The route will be free, on an introductory basis, during the month of October. The County's Same Day Access Program, which is part of the Call-n-Ride program, is designed to provide same day service regardless of income for certified MetroAccess participants who must reside in Montgomery County and have a current MetroAccess Identification Card. DOT is working to obtain a grant from MWCOC that would give Same Day Access users an additional subsidy. DOT has been providing more outreach about Call-n-Ride, Connect-A-Ride, and Ride On. Advertisements have been placed in buses, bus shelters, libraries, and shown in movie theaters. The stipulations for the Transportation Services Improvement Fund have been finalized. Vehicle owners who purchase an accessible taxicab will receive \$15,000 over five years in installments to assist in ownership and maintenance costs (\$4,000 for first and second years, \$3,000 the third year, and \$2,000 for the fourth and fifth years). Vehicles must be on the road at least 40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year. Owners will also receive 10 cents per mile added to the regular fare and \$10 for each ride that is dispatched for transporting a passenger who uses a wheelchair. Faisal introduced Denise Isreal, the new Program Specialist for the DOT Enhanced Mobility and Senior Services Section. She will be attending all future Commission meetings. Seth thanked Faisal for all his service to the Commission.

Susan Smith, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), reported that 400 vouchers were made available for those on the waiting list. HOC has a new database that allows users to enter accessible features for units. This should enable easier reporting. Alexander House and Elizabeth House are still undergoing renovations with 17 fully accessible units being developed. U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 811 is a supportive housing program that assists the lowest income people with significant and long-term disabilities to live independently in the community by providing affordable housing linked with voluntary services and supports. Using Section 811 funding, a property is being developed in Damascus as a joint project between HUD and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The units will include case management and nurse oversight for residents.

Susan is also a liaison for the Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC), which met last week and had representatives from the Veterans Administration (VA) discuss mental health programs. One of the MHAC's policy priorities is to increase capacity and/or staff support for the County's Mental Health Court. The program started in December 2016 and by June 1st had reached its cap. The program can only handle a certain number of clients. Both judges for the District and Circuit Court have said the program has been successful. The other policy priority is to increase capacity for psychiatrists and nurse practitioners. Some individuals are having to wait four months for an appointment. Also, many providers are not willing to take a subsidy and prefer cash upfront.

Rita Gale, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported that Director Parker Hamilton retired on August 1st. Anita Vassallo is the new Acting Director. A permanent Director most likely will not be appointed until the new County Executive is in office. Aspen Hill Library reopened on July 15th and Little Falls Library reopened at the end of July with a grand reopening ceremony at the end of August. Quince Orchard, White Oak, and Bethesda Libraries are currently closed. The ADA improvements for the entrance to White Oak have been completed. The entrance had steps and a ramp structure previously and has been changed to a sloped walkway. Quince Orchard is currently having ADA improvements made. MCPL will be renaming the Home Bound Service to Books at Home. The program provides select library materials to Montgomery County residents who cannot get to a library because of a physical disability, health issue, or frailty, and who have no one who can pick up and deliver books for them. They are also working on programming for individuals with Autism to include opening the Rockville Memorial Library (RML) before normal hours as well as creating an online tour of RML to provide a preview of what to expect.

Simone Geness, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), reported that with the new start date for the school year some students who could stay in Transition Services are not eligible as they turned 21 before Labor Day. Governor Hogan did give a waiver this year, but it is uncertain if a waiver will be given for next year. Simone also reported that Chris

Richardson, Associate Superintendent for the Office of Special Education, retired and Kevin Lowndes has taken the position. Transition Services Parent Meetings will be spread throughout the school year. The first parent meeting is scheduled for October 24th and will feature DDA and different providers for families to learn more about what is available in the community. Transition Services will continue to push forward with employment.

Jay Kenney, HHS, reported that Adult Protective Services (APS) has seen an exponential growth in referrals largely driven by greater awareness and identification of financial exploitation. It is a federally mandated program and the County is seeking additional resources to assist in processing the increase in APS referrals. He also reported that the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has been renamed to the Maryland Department of Health. HHS will have a new Health Officer and Chief of Public Health coming on board soon. The County Council is interviewing Dr. Travis Gayles this week, who is being appointed by County Executive Leggett. Jay noted that HHS continues to work with DDA on the issue of direct care worker salaries and is committed to maintaining the 125% above minimum wage pay increase. He added that the \$19M per year that the County would be responsible for if the minimum wage was increased to \$15.00 is on top of the \$14,000,000 already given annually. There is a study being conducted this year by consultants and Medicaid experts, and they are looking at applying for a Federal match for the \$14,000,000.

Kim Mayo, Community Support Network, reported that Coordination of Community Services (CCS) is at the 500-client cap and the unit is now fully staffed. She is optimistic about the future.

Susan Hartung, Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee (DDAC), reported that the Committee met last week and two representatives from Montgomery County Recreation spoke about programming and improving services. The Committee also discussed how difficult it is to navigate the DDA system. Susan added that Integrated Living Opportunities (ILO) is currently hiring part-time staff.

Announcements: None

Next Full Commission Meeting: Wednesday, October 11th, 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, October 18th, 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