



Commission on People with Disabilities
Wednesday, February 12, 2025
6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair
Jamila Michael-Sobratti, Vice-Chair

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7390017153?omn=82514641502>

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID 739 001 7153 followed by #. Those calling into the meeting can press *6 to mute and unmute their phone.

If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting, they must use the “hand raise” function. If connecting via a smart phone, tablet or computer, please click on the Zoom link to be able to access all functions, including raising your hand. If you are calling by phone, press *9 to raise your hand.

- 6:00 Call to Order & Approval of January 2025 Meeting Minutes – Tonya Gilchrist, Chair**
- 6:10 Housing for People with Disabilities – Rebecca Grayson, Disability Program Coordinator, Housing Opportunities Commission**
Housing Committee Update - Deborah Rozell and Jamila Michael-Sobratti
Property Tax Programs for People with Disabilities – Rebecca Murphy
- 6:45 Governor’s proposed \$200 million budget cut to the state’s Developmental Disabilities Administration – John Whittle and Karen Morgret**
- 7:00 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – John Whittle, Commissioner and Liaison to IDDC**
- 7:10 Chair and Vice-Chair Updates**
Right to Repair Powered Wheelchairs Testimony for General Assembly, Topics for Next Meeting Discussion and Next Steps for Designated Bike Lanes - Sidewalks and Floating Bus Stops, Accessible Parking
- 7:20 Updates – Ex-Officio Members, Updates – Commission Members**
- 7:25 Community Speaks**
Public invited to make comments, 2-minute limit, time permitting. For profit companies who want to speak should contact the Commission in advance. The Open Meetings Act does not afford the public any right to participate in the meeting, it does assure the public right to observe the deliberative process and the making of decisions by the public body at open meetings. Public participants generally are not invited to speak during presentations and time is set aside at the end of the meeting to allow the public to speak. This policy will be strictly enforced moving forward.
- 7:30 Adjourn**

ADA Reasonable Accommodations: Sign language interpreter services and other auxiliary aids or services will be provided upon request with as much advance notice as possible, preferably at least five (5) full business days before the meeting. To request any reasonable accommodation to participate in the meeting, please contact Carly Clem in advance at carly.clem@montgomerycountymd.gov or call 202-853-1109. In all situations, a good faith effort will be made to provide accommodations. For any additional questions or concerns, please contact Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison at betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov or please call 240-418-4865, MD Relay 711.



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
February 12, 2025**

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

Welcome and Approval of January 2025 Meeting Minutes

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the January 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the January 2025 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Housing for People with Disabilities – Rebecca Grayson, Disability Program Coordinator, Housing Opportunities Commission

Website: www.hocmc.org

The Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (HOC) operates as a Public Housing Authority (PHA), a Housing Finance Agency (HFA) and a Public Developer. As Montgomery County's designated PHA and HFA, HOC develops housing, provides mortgage financing to developers and first-time homebuyers, manages various rental units, administers rental subsidy programs (including the Housing Choice Voucher Program) and provides counseling and support services. HOC is the county's largest owner and operator of high-quality, amenity-rich affordable housing. The agency serves more than 20,000 Montgomery County households through a variety of innovative housing programs. Rebecca reviewed HOC's housing programs.

- **Housing Choice Voucher (HCV):** There are two types of vouchers available through the HCV program. Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) are assigned to a specific building and customers must reside in the building to receive assistance. Customers with Tenant-Based Vouchers (TBVs) can use their assistance at any home, apartment or other private market residence that meets household requirements, safety standards and rent reasonableness. The HCV program, formerly known as "Section 8," provides assistance for very low and extremely low-income households (single or family), the elderly, and the disabled to afford decent, safe and sanitary housing in the private market. The HCV program is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). HOC Customers who receive vouchers may search for their own housing, which may include single-family homes, townhouses and apartments, or even the family's present residence. Housing Choice Voucher assistance is portable anywhere in the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Provided the housing selected meets the requirements of the program, the housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the Housing Opportunities Commission on behalf of the family.
 - Individuals pay 30% of their income towards rent. The minimum rent is \$50 but oftentimes this is waived if the individual doesn't have the income to support it.
 - The current waitlist is 6 ½ years to 8 years – from the time the individual submits their application online for the HCV program.
 - For Project-Based Vouchers, HOC has the right of first refusal – they can obtain units when individuals are selling them before they go on the market depending how many there exist. HOC has obtained many individualized units in larger communities. Individuals are typically offered two units before they are put back on the waitlist. The application allows individuals to indicate a preferred geographical area. Rebecca noted that although some individuals do not want a project-based vouchers, those individuals who receive one can ask to be transferred to an HCV after one year. This is a way to fast track the HCV.

- **Mainstream Vouchers (HCV Program Set-Asides):** Mainstream Disabled Vouchers are vouchers for households with at least one disabled family member between the ages of 18 and 61. The household must be homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, transitioning out of institutional settings or at risk of institutionalization. The Mainstream Voucher Program applicant uses the voucher to find private market rental housing of their choice, provided the unit meets the Housing Choice Voucher Program requirements. Once a rental unit is selected and approved, the Mainstream Voucher Program applicant pays a limited percentage of his or her income (generally 30-40%) as rent, with the balance of the rent being paid to the property owner by HOC through the (Mainstream) Housing Choice Voucher Program.
 - HOC must apply for specialized vouchers every several years and the number of vouchers received depends on the success of the lease-ups. HOC received 50 vouchers the last time. Specialized vouchers are given to individuals who are coming out of the homeless system, persons with disabilities, and individuals coming out of long-term care facilities and group homes. Individuals who receive specialized vouchers circumvent the waitlist. HCV applications do have specific questions relating to disability, homeless status, victim of domestic violence, etc. – all information is used for these specialized vouchers.
- **Tax Credit Opportunity Housing Units:** The Federal Government makes available tax credits to be used to fund affordable housing. Investors, usually local businesses, purchase the tax credits, thus lowering their tax burden, and enter into partnership with HOC to purchase housing that is rented to moderate income households. HOC manages 467 scattered site units that were funded this way. Through an array of programs, HOC is able to offer these homes to low- and moderate-income families in Montgomery County at affordable rental rates. Prospective participants are required to submit an application to HOC's Housing Path waitlist.
- **Reasonable Accommodations:** HOC will provide the following reasonable accommodations:
 - Making a unit, part of a unit, or public and common use element accessible for a household member with a disability who is on the lease.
 - Permitting a family to have a service or assistance animal necessary to assist a family member with a disability and waiving any pet fees.
 - Permitting a disabled household member to engage the services of a live-in aide who will reside in an appropriately sized unit.
 - Transferring a resident to a larger size unit to provide a separate bedroom for a person with a disability.
 - Transferring a resident to a unit on a lower level or to a unit that is completely on one level.
 - Making documents available in large type or Braille.
 - Providing qualified sign language interpreters for applicant and/or resident meetings with HOC staff or at resident meetings.
 - Installing strobe type flashing lights and other similar equipment for a family member with a hearing impairment.
 - Permitting requests for extensions of HCV if there is a disability-related reason for the extension.
- **Homeownership Program:** HOC helps prepare residents to move from rental to homeownership. Residents must have an annual income of \$40,000 or higher to be eligible to participate in this initiative. This income level does not guarantee a mortgage or a home to purchase. Residents may choose to purchase a moderate priced dwelling unit (MPDU) from HOC through its random selection process or locate a home independently.
 - **Mortgage Purchase Program (MPP):** Offers first-time homebuyers down payment and/or closing cost assistance which can be combined with the HOC first mortgage in the MPP. The assistance can be used only to pay for various closing fees or the down payment. Offers two types of closing cost assistance programs. The first option provides 5% of the sales price up to

\$10,000 as a second mortgage which can be used for downpayment and/or closing costs. The loan is repaid in regular monthly payments over a 10-year term at an interest rate of 5%. The second option provides the first mortgage plus 3% of the sales price of the property which can be used for down payment or closing costs. Funds for the 3% closing cost assistance are provided as a deferred loan (second mortgage) with a 0% interest rate. No monthly payments are required. If the property is sold or the first mortgage is paid off during the first five years, the borrower will have to repay a pro rata portion of the down payment assistance to HOC.

- **Housing Stabilization Services:** A Montgomery County Health and Human Services program under SEPH (Services to Prevent and End Homelessness) administered by HOC. This program provides funds to eligible HOC Montgomery County residents facing defined crises in eviction, utility disconnect, moving/storage and security deposit assistance.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing Program:** HOC Resident Services Division supports the HUD funded Housing First McKinney Permanent Supportive Housing Programs (PSH). The HOC PSH program is not open for applications. Program referrals are made by the Montgomery County, Maryland Continuum of Care Coordinated Entry System (CES). Referrals must be homeless and have a documented disability. Supportive Services through the HOC PSH program include Housing and utility assistance, Clinical Case Management, home visits, furniture, transportation, and linkage with other critical needs.
- **Move Up Initiative:** a county-funded housing subsidy program serving individuals referred by the Maryland Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) who are seeking to “move up” from programs within the County’s Homeless Continuum of Care (CoC) into broader more integrated County communities. The subsidy amount is the rent minus 30% of household income. Subsidy is awarded for 12 months with an option to renew annually.
- **Community Choice Homes Initiative:** A county-funded housing subsidy program serving individuals referred by the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD) who are non-elderly and have a disability and reside in nursing homes. The subsidy amount is the rent minus 30% of household income. Subsidy is awarded for 12 months with an option to renew annually. HOC sets aside inventory and makes the necessary accessibility accommodations as well as subsidies to address barriers.
- **Youth Bridge Initiative (YBI):** A county-funded housing subsidy program serving young adults referred by the Maryland Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) who are aging out of foster care as a bridge to move them towards independence. The subsidy amount is the rent minus 30% of household income. Subsidy is awarded for 24 months. DHHS provides case management to help young adults get resources for employment and other types of housing.
- **Rent Supplement Program (RSP):** A county-funded housing subsidy program serving individuals seeking to obtain housing or avoid eviction. Priority is given to elderly heads of household over the age of 62), individuals/families fleeing domestic violence, individuals/families exiting homelessness, individuals/families at imminent risk of homelessness, and/or individuals/families with a documented disability. The Rent Supplement Program provides a shallow subsidy amount between \$50 and \$600 depending on total household gross income and rent amount. Subsidy is awarded for 12 months with an option to renew annually.
- **Hillendale Property:** The new development will deliver 463 residential units in two high-rise buildings. The project will consist of the Radia at Hillendale Gateway, which will provide 155 homes for seniors aged 62 and greater, while the adjacent Lumina at Hillendale Gateway will include 308 multi-generational homes for individuals, couples and families. Fifty-four percent (54%) of the overall development will be affordable at a range of income levels from 30% – 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). Construction is projected to be completed in early 2027, with occupancy and stabilization expected in the agency’s 2028 fiscal year.

Floor was opened for questions and comments.

- **Are HOC vouchers being used at Main Street Properties in Rockville?** Rebecca will have to look into this question.

Housing Subcommittee Update - Deborah Rozell and Jamila Michael-Sobrati

A motion was made to create a housing subcommittee that will meet until goals and outcomes are met. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and creation of a housing subcommittee was unanimously approved.

The subcommittee will work on the following goals and outcomes:

- Draft a letter to the County Council requesting updates on the MPDU program and suggest an increase of accessible units. They will request a staff member speak with the Commission to identify gaps within the program that should be addressed prior to drafting the letter.
- Property tax adjustments for homeowners with disabilities. Research existing tax credits.
- Research existing housing resources and ensure that the Commission's Disability Network Directory housing categories are up to date.
- Review Design for Life, Universal Design programs across the country and evaluate the Prince George's County Universal Design program. Draft a letter to the County Council reviewing cost factors of Universal Design included the cost for visit-ability features, return of investment and cost of not establishing a standard.
 - Betsy Luecking reported Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) will make a presentation to the Commission in March to discuss their plans regarding Prince George's County's Universal Design program and their updates to Design for Life. She suggested waiting to draft any letters until after that meeting.

Jamila will send a survey to Commissioners interesting in joining the subcommittee to determine the best date and time to meet.

Property Tax Programs for People with Disabilities – Rebecca Murphy

Existing property tax programs throughout the country are designed to compensate for disability tax which represents the disparity in income for a person with a disabilities as well as the typically higher expenditures for durable medical equipment, medical bills and specialized transport. Rebecca reported that the average income for residents of Montgomery County is \$61,000 and the average income of a resident with a disability is \$37,000. Individuals without disabilities are 16% outside the labor force whereas individuals with disabilities are 42% outside the labor force.

Existing property tax credits:

- District of Columbia offers a 50% property tax reduction for property owners over age 65 and for property owners with disabilities.
- Cumberland County, North Carolina offers three types of property tax relief for residents depending on the individual's needs. For individuals with disabilities under the Homestead Exception program residents that qualify for this program receive an exclusion of the greater of \$25,000 or 50% of the qualifying, assessed value of their permanent residence.
- Prince George's County, Virginia waives income tax for persons with disabilities making under \$40,000 per year.
- Montgomery County, Maryland does provide a 100% tax credit for a resident who is an honorably discharged veteran with a 100% disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs. [View Press Release: Council Enacts New Property Tax Credit for Veterans who are Severely Disabled](#). The legislation was recently amended to allow honorably discharged veterans who are severely disabled and earn \$100,000 or less in federal adjusted gross income to apply for credits in the following amounts:
 - 50% to 74% disability rating would be eligible for a 25% tax credit
 - 75% to 99% disability rating would be eligible for a 50% tax credit.

- This amended legislation is consistent with Maryland's enabling law. Legislation would need to be amended at the State level in order to provide credits below 50%.

Rebecca noted she spends \$16 to \$20 per day on property taxes. The reality safety nets in this country do not match the income that one receives as a working individual. Tax breaks should be need-based and not determined by specific employment held beforehand.

There is a relatively low owner-occupancy rate of 24% residents with disabilities owning property. Part of this number includes the veterans with disabilities already receiving tax credits.

This discussion should take into consideration what entity certifies the individual with disability.

More research on existing property tax credit programs needs to be conducted.

Governor's Proposed \$200 Million Budget Cut to the State's Developmental Disabilities Administration – John Whittle and Karen Morgret

John and Karen reviewed the following documents:

- [Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Cuts and Fiscal Year 2025 Contingency Cuts - Maryland Developmental Disabilities Coalition](#)
- [IDDC Letter to Maryland General Assembly](#)

There are approximately 4,000 individuals in Self-Directed Services and the proposed budget cuts would severely affect their services as those individuals hiring providers independently.

The Maryland Disability Council and other groups are questioning why the figure is \$200 million as it has not been explained. The Arc Maryland and MAX have developed alternate proposals. DDA helped a community meeting on February 7 hosted by DDA Secretary Marlena Hutchison who stated they are in support of the Governor's proposed budget.

The Federal government will match Medicaid dollars and the State will be losing federal funds by cutting \$200 million from DDA's budget. Montgomery County Government funded a \$22 million supplement for developmental disability providers but the County does not receive a federal match.

Commissioners may contact their state representatives as private citizens. Karen will email Commissioners with sample letters as well as how to determine their elected officials. Commissioners were also encouraged to tell their own stories and show how these cuts will impact their family members and their lives.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – John Whittle, Commissioner and Liaison to IDDC

The next IDDC meeting will be held in-person on February 27 from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville.

Susan Hartung was elected as Vice-Chair.

Chair and Vice-Chair Updates Right to Repair Powered Wheelchairs Testimony for General Assembly, Topics for Next Meeting Discussion and Next Steps for Designated Bike Lanes - Sidewalks and Floating Bus Stops, Accessible Parking

Tonya submitted testimony regarding [Senate Bill 382: Right to Repair – Powered Wheelchairs](#) to the Senate Financial Committee. the Commission is in full support of this needed legislation to promote the safety and protection of people who use powered wheelchairs.

Tonya attended the Commission on Aging's free virtual event that showcased programs and resources that support older adults in living active, healthy and independent lives.

Developmental Disabilities Day in Annapolis is tomorrow February 13 where legislators, state leaders, and other advocates will provide information about issues that are important to people with developmental disabilities and their families.

The Commission will continue to discuss the issue of designated bike lanes and accessible parking at the Steering Committee next week on Wednesday February 19 from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Updates – Ex-Officio Members, Updates – Commission Members

Denise Isreal, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), has released the finalized Ride On Reimagined Study which was a comprehensive, forward-looking assessment of the bus network that resulted in significant recommended changes to how transit operates in Montgomery County based on current and future needs. Recommendations will be implemented over the next five years and will include an increase in the on-demand service Flex. In 2024, Rockville Flex completed 4,836 trips and Wheaton Flex completed 3,027 trips. Denise noted that Ride On has been offering a courtesy stop program since July 2024 that allows passengers to request a drop off along the route when and where it is safe to do so after 9 p.m.

Angela Luskey, Montgomery County Department of Recreation, reported the aquatics department will be hosting several water safety days to improve programs for youth within the Autism community/

Matt Barkley, Montgomery County Department of General Services, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Team, reported that individuals can contact 311 if a street or sidewalk is not properly cleared of snow. The County currently has a request for proposal open for an ADA consultant. Matt noted that this July will mark the 35th anniversary of the ADA. There may also be a push from the current federal administration to eliminate Section 504.

Jennene Blakely, Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning, currently has an open position for an ADA Compliance Coordinator. The deadline to apply is March 2.

Public Comments

No member of the public signed up to speak.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:32 p.m.

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Shameen Anthanio-Williams; Felicia Brannon; Tonya Gilchrist; Tria Gray; Leslie Green Lyles; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Jamila Michael-Sobratti; Rebecca Murphy; Deborah Rozell; Richard Shermanski; Christopher Sinsheimer; Teresa Villani; John Whittle

Commissioners Absent: Azeb Adere; Jennifer Berzok; Karen Goss; Christian Navarro; Nina Russell; Mary Simons

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Compliance Team; Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks; Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation; Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Soumya Nukala, Office of Human Resources

County Staff Present: Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services; Peter Illig, Staff Liaison, Commission on Aging; Walt Harris, Department of Transportation

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Public: Cynthia Seemiller Miser (Sign Language Interpreter); Jenni Jackson (Sign Language Interpreter); David Engel, Chair, Commission on Aging; Sarah Reddinger, Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
March 2025 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday March 12

6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday March 19

5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager