



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Agenda**

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair

Jamila Michael-Sobratti, Vice-Chair

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov.zoom.us/j/7390017153?omn=88081979232>

*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 June 2025 Meeting Minutes – Tonya Gilchrist, Chair

6:10 Montgomery County Parking Lot Design Guide: Project Introduction and Discussion – Jim Elliott, AICP | Senior Planner(he/him) [TOOLE DESIGN](#), and Eli Glazier, Transportation Planner III, Montgomery County Planning Department in attendance. You will be asked:

- In your experience, what are the primary SAFETY issues for parking lots in the County?
- In your experience, what are the primary ACCESSIBILITY issues for parking lots in the County?
- Are there design features you've seen in the County or elsewhere that you think should be incorporated MORE OFTEN in County parking lot designs? Why?
- Are there design features you've seen in the County or elsewhere that you think should be incorporated LESS OFTEN in County parking lot designs?
- Are there any other issues that are “top of mind” for you that you think ought to be addressed in the parking lot design guide?

6:40 Establish 2 Priorities for FY 27 County Operating Budget – Please review Draft next page

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 meeting 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 with Montgomery County Council HHS Committee

Top Policy issues October 22, 2025

Tony Gilchrist, Chair Draft for discussion 9/10/2025 CPWD

Enforcement and Promotion of Disability Laws: Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance and greater Fair Housing

Transportation – sidewalks and street design to ensure equal access and equity for people with disabilities. Minimize or eliminate designated bike lanes, monitor state designs that are confusing to the public such as Old Georgetown Road and Rock Spring Drive. Encourage taxi drivers to rent accessible vehicles

Funding for new and innovative assistive listening devices

Promote programs that increase the amount of accessible and affordable housing – Promote Design for Life Montgomery, encourage the building and renovation of accessible homes

Explore property tax credit for people with disabilities. Supposedly it is on the books but has never been implemented.

Funding and support for Direct support Professionals – Given that Montgomery County has a higher minimum wage than the State ensure that direct support professional who support people with disabilities are adequately paid to recruit and retain workers. Funding the Developmental Disabilities Supplement I

Importance of Continued Support:

The annual DD supplement remains a cornerstone for InterACC providers, enabling them to sustain high-quality services and support for people with IDD in Montgomery County. This funding ensures the provider community can navigate cost disparities and workforce challenges while meeting the evolving needs of the people they serve.

DDA funding reductions have impacted providers, and we do not know how Medicaid will payout. Depending on what happens with Medicaid we could have a major challenge supporting individuals with IDD.

Greater Community Engagement

Promote Greater Employment Opportunities for Seniors and People with Disabilities

OHR to continue to promote the Hiring preference for Veterans, Disabled Veterans and People with Disabilities and the non-competitive hiring initiative for people with disabilities.

Work with DORS and Worksource Montgomery to promote hiring in the private and public sectors.

MCPS Cultural Broker for populations such as Ethiopia and Eritrea to enhance language access and provide culturally relevant resources. Promote avenues for greater parent advocacy.

Lastly, It is critical for Boards, Committees and Commissions (BCC) have commissioners appointed in a timely manner so that they can be most effective and also respecting the volunteer service of community members who serve. We ask that the County ensure proper staffing for the County Executives Office to ensure timely recruitment and appointment of BCC members.



Commission on People with Disabilities Meeting Summary Minutes

June 11, 2025

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

Welcome and Approval of May 2025 Meeting Minutes

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

Two Year Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Roadmap – Strategic Plan for the Priorities of the Department – Patrice L. McGhee, DPA, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

DHHS Mission Statement: DHHS assures delivery of a full array of services to address the somatic and behavioral health, economic and housing security, and other emergent needs of Montgomery County residents. To achieve this, the department (directly and/or via a network of community partners) develops and implements policies, procedures, programs, and services that: 1) offer customer-focused direct care and supports; 2) maximize financial and staffing resources to deliver services through effective management, coordination, and pursuit of strategic funding opportunities; 3) pilot and evaluate innovative approaches to service delivery and systems integration; and 4) develop, enhance, and maintain a broad network of community-based organizations, public agencies, and private entities to promote and sustain partnerships which increase the availability of needed services.

DHHS Vision: Build a healthy, safe and strong community by addressing the needs of the most vulnerable

DHHS is an integrated system that works to serve the community as a whole. DHHS is comprised of six service areas:

- **Aging & Disability Services** – affirm the dignity and value of seniors, persons with disabilities, and their families by offering a wide range of information, home and community-based support services, protections, and opportunities, which promote choice, independence, and inclusion.
- **Behavioral Health & Crisis Services** – Promote mental wellness, prevent substance abuse and suicide, and to ensure access to a comprehensive treatment and recovery system of effective services and support for children, youth and families, adults, and seniors in crisis or with behavioral health needs.
- **Children, Youth and Family** – Protection, prevention, intervention, and treatment services for children and their families, and through educational, support, and financial assistance for parents, caretakers, and individuals. These services work to build on the strengths of both the individual and the community in addressing issues of child development, abuse, neglect, health, and economic security.
 - **Office of Eligibility and Support Services (under Children, Youth and Family)** – Serves low-income families and individuals facing significant challenges in meeting basic needs including food, medical coverage, and childcare. OESS determines eligibility for Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA); Temporary Disability Assistance Program (TDAP); Refugee Cash Assistance; Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP- formerly known as Food Stamps); Medical Assistance for the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (including long-term care); and the Affordable Care Act which includes Community Medical Assistance, Maryland Children's

Health Program, Medical Assistance for Families and Children, and Refugee Medical Assistance. OESS provides these services on behalf of the State of Maryland Department of Health and Human Services. In addition, OESS determines eligibility for the County's healthcare for the uninsured services (Maternity Partnership, Care for Kids, Senior Dental Program, and Montgomery Cares).

- **Public Health** – Protect and promote the health and safety of County residents by monitoring health status and implementing intervention strategies to contain or prevent disease (including bio-terrorism and emerging diseases); fostering public-private partnerships, which increase access to health services; developing and implementing programs and strategies to address health needs; providing individual and community level health education; evaluating the effectiveness of select programs and strategies; and licensing and inspecting facilities and institutions affecting public health and safety.
- **Services to End and Prevent Homelessness** – Access by all people to safe, affordable housing, and opportunities to improve quality of life. Provides a full continuum of services including housing stabilization, homeless diversion, and permanent housing; and employs evidence-based and promising practices. Programs collaborate with public and private partners through the Interagency Commission on Homelessness. Special needs populations include: veterans; both individuals and families; persons with behavioral health challenges; individuals with developmental disabilities; transitioning youth; and seniors with disabilities experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Dr. McGhee is speaking with each DHHS Commission about the roadmap ahead of Commission budget priority conversations. It has been over 10 years since an established strategic plan has been developed. The two-year roadmap is a 52-page document that has been submitted to County Executive Marc Elrich and to the County Council. Once the document has been made accessible, it will be published to the public domain. The roadmap highlights key performance indicators, benchmarks and activities that DHHS wants to achieve as an integrated system.

The roadmap will focus on the following three pillars:

- **Outreach:** It is essential for DHHS to connect with and expand outreach efforts to partnerships with on-profits, faith-based organizations and other entities with boots on the ground doing the work. A&D serves on a workgroup in collaboration with Primary Care Coalition and other hospital partners to identify hard-to-place patients in one of four categories – uninsured, underinsured, older adults, and individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Example of hard-to-place patient: individuals who go to the emergency department that need step down services but cannot go to state hospitals due to capacity issues or there is no safe space for them to return. The workgroup meets quarterly and has discussed potential legislative actions that could be taken to address some of the needs as well as pilot projects. DHHS is also establishing a strong relationship with Montgomery County Public Schools. There have been collaborative meetings with leadership from both agencies to identify how to better serve MCPS students as well as initiating data sharing agreements.
- **Technology:** Leveraging technology for greater access and efficiency. Actions include expanding telehealth services for public health and behavioral health teams, enhancing platforms and case management systems and using data analytics. DHHS is overhauling its main case management system. The Community Connect Portal will better serve the community. Individuals enrolled can connect a profile, apply for benefits, see in real time access to their benefits and see how they are moving through the eligibility process. The Portal has undergone a series of tests and should be rolling out to all individuals soon. A&D is unique as most programs and services are regulated at the state and federal level. A&D's Aging and Disability Resource Unit (ADRU), the main access point for services, are informed and can connect residents to the Portal.
- **Economic Justice and Stability:** Establishing economic justice and stability as a public health priority. Expand rental assistance programs, increase access to food security and programs, strengthen workforce development initiatives, and advocating for policy change. DHHS will be reviewing partnerships and identifying legislative actions that could be made to make services accessible to all.

ADS Budget Highlights:

- Rate increase for respite services. In FY24, the respite program served a little over 300 participants. In FY25, the respite program served over 500 participants and a waiting list was established. There is an ongoing, growing need for respite care. The respite program covers individuals in the My Turn Program, In Home Services, Social Services to Adults, and veterans in Adult Protective Services.
- The eligibility age for the My Turn Program for FY26 was raised from 13 to 18 in order to capture transitioning youth. The program is underutilized. It provides assistance with summer camps, swim lessons and small financial supports to families. There needs to be more outreach about this service.
- Working to ensure all DHHS website are ADA compliant including all Commission websites.
- Championing and supporting Project Search. DHHS is committed to having a Project Search intern in different service areas.
- Launching a robust outreach, education and branding awareness campaign through the Public Information Office including ads via Comcast, radio and social media websites. Ads will also be posted on bus shelters and inside buses. Campaign will focus on educating the community on how to contact ADRU where Client Assistance Specialists can provide resource navigation.

The floor was opened to questions and comments.

- **Is DHHS strategically planning for more budget cuts at the federal level? What are the most vulnerable services?** DHHS is always on alert with funders and has been preparing for funding impacts since January. Any cuts to Medicaid will impact ADS. The Older Americans Act funding, which covers transportation, food services and respite, has not been reauthorized. The Social Services Block Grant has passed reductions in the House. DHHS is providing advocacy groups with talking points to advocate on behalf of maintaining funding and providing delegation as well as the County Executive and the County Council with information, statistics and any changes to funding or programs. A letter was submitted to Senators last week. DHHS stays connected to state partners and works with every state office including Maryland Department of Aging, Maryland Department of Health and Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration.
- **Is cultural brokerage being considered? There is large community of over 700 Ethiopians and Eritreans whose children have not received early intervention and diagnosis.** DHHS did try to implement a pilot program of cultural brokers, but it was only given a one-time grant two years ago and it was hard to sustain the model. Language barriers are a real issue. The DHHS campaign will be targeting areas that are underserved. Advocacy is needed to increase funding to expand access to individuals that need it. Dr. McGhee suggested having an offline conversation to further discuss this issue. Betsy Luecking, Staff, suggested reviewing MCPS data regarding other populations.
- **There are also language barriers in senior residences. Minority health programs and initiatives do not meet the needs of everyone.**
- **Suggestion to increase My Turn Program age to 21 as children with disabilities do not transition from the school system until age 21.**
- **Did the community provide any input regarding the DHHS roadmap?** Public Health had a Community Health Needs Assessment that focused on community input. The response directed DHHS' strategic plan development. [View Community Health Needs Assessment](#).
- **Utilities are an issue for many residents. Does DHHS compile data and advocate to Pepco for energy costs to be reduced?** DHHS does have funding and programs available for utility assistance. Dr. McGhee suggested having a further discussion offline.

Establish Commission on People with Disabilities Priorities for the FY27 County Operating Budget

- Developmental Disability Supplement – Providers who receive the supplement have a contract with DDA serving people with developmental disabilities. The current supplement of \$22 million is split between 30 to 40 providers using a complicated formula based on the number of people they serve and the amount of revenue received from the state. Montgomery County also has a higher minimum wage and the cost of doing business may be higher than in other counties. DDA has also decreased the rate differentials for providers this year. Elected officials have given push back on funding the supplement as Montgomery County is the only county in the state that provides a supplement. It was suggest providing data and justification for the supplement in the Commission's priorities for the supplement with the overall goal of health and safety of individuals in the service system. It was suggested studying the implications of DDA cuts and the potential for more cuts at the federal level.
- Ask for additional respite care funds and additional hours.
- Recommend My Turn eligibility age increased to 21.
- Accessible housing and affordability. Support the Home Accessibility Rehabilitation Program (HARP) through the Department of Housing and Community Affairs, administered by Habitat for Humanity Metro Maryland. The goal of this program is to provide owner occupied homes with accessibility modifications. Betsy is meeting with the Department of Permitting Services tomorrow for an update on Design for Life. Suggestion to identify apartments that are accessible.
- Employment and job assistance for individuals with disabilities. There have been cut backs for employment services and programs.

Discussion regarding budget priorities will continue at next week's Steering Committee meeting. Priorities need to be determined by September. The Commission on People with Disabilities, Commission on Veterans Affairs, Commission on Aging and the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission will meet in September and identify joint issue.

Planning for the County Celebration Events for the 35th Anniversary of the Signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act – Jennene Blakely, Program Access Manager, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission and Matt Barkley, Montgomery County Government ADA Title II Compliance Manager

Montgomery Parks in collaboration with the Department of General Services – ADA Compliance Team and Commission on People with Disabilities will be hosting "Disability Pride Outside: Celebrating 35 Years of Civil Rights, Access and Belonging" on Saturday July 26 from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Black Hills Regional Park – Discovery Center. Participants will enjoy a morning in the park with adaptive outdoor activities including kayaking, pontoon boat tours, fishing, adaptive mountain biking demos, birding, self-guided hiking, and picnicking. This event is open to all. To allow for an accessible event, free kayak equipment and pontoon boat spots are available for people with disabilities on a first come, first serve basis. There are additional boat rentals available at Black Hill Boats. Advanced registration is required. Two wheelchair accessible shuttle carts and a van will be available as well as a sensory retreat tent. County officials and Montgomery Parks officials will be providing opening remarks and speeches for the event. History of the ADA including facts about the ADA will be available on signage throughout the park for the month of July.

A joint proclamation celebrating the anniversary of the ADA will be held on the morning of Tuesday July 22 with the County Council. Commissioners are invited to attend.

Chair and Vice-Chair Updates

Tabled due to time constraints.

Updates – Ex-Officio Members, Updates – Commission Members

Tabled due to time constraints.

Community Speaks

Tabled due to time constraints.

Adjournment

7:33 p.m.

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Azeb Adere; Shameen Anthanio-Williams; Jennifer Berzok; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Jamila Michael-Sobratti; Rebecca Murphy; Deborah Rozell; Mary Simons; Teresa Villani; John Whittle

Commissioners Absent: Felicia Brannon; Tria Gray; Leslie Green Lyles; Samuel Korper; Christian Navarro; Nina Russell; Christopher Sinsheimer

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Compliance Team, Department of General Services (DGS); Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation; Soumya Nukala, Office of Human Resources

County Staff Present: None.

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

Public: Lorena Baker, Sign Language Interpreter; Jenni Jackson, Sign Language Interpreter; Karen Morgret; Becca Block; Francie Gilman; Seth Morgan

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

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday September 10

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

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday September 17

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

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager