



**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 professionals 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 play out. 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

September 10, 2025

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

Welcome and Approval of June 2025 Meeting Minutes

Tonya Gilchrist, Chair, convened the meeting. Candace Groudine, Commissioner, reported the minutes noted her as attending the June 2025 meeting but she was absent. A motion was made to approve the June 2025 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the June 2025 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved with the attendance revision. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Montgomery County Parking Lot Design Guide: Project Introduction and Discussion – Jim Elliott, AICP, Senior Planner, TOOLE DESIGN, and Eli Glazier, Transportation Planner III, Montgomery County Planning Department

Please review PowerPoint presentation [Montgomery County Parking Lot Design Guide](#).

- Please note that the photos in the PowerPoint presentation do not suggest any future standards. They were only added for color.

The floor was opened to questions and comments.

- Has the deaf community been invited to provide input? The scope of the project does not currently include that element. Eli thanked the Commission for raising that issue and would like to connect with members of the deaf community as the project develops. Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that this Commission has people of all disabilities that serve and the Commissioner who is deaf will be asked for their input.
- Will safety and caution signage be installed in parking lots, particularly multi-use developments (residences and businesses in the same building)? During the preliminary phases, they are reviewing best practices. Guidance will be provided and multi-use developments will be taken into account as staff determine signage that can improve safety and wayfinding.
- It was suggested that pathways be installed in parking lots between rows of vehicles to provide more safety for pedestrians, given that some vehicles now do not make much noise and some drivers do not check for pedestrians before exiting their parking spot.
- Concern regarding the number of accessible spaces versus the number of users and placards that currently exist. Even meeting the minimum standard may be insufficient in some cases.
- The guide should also address minimum space requirements for van accessible spaces.
- The United Spinal association recently created a guide on accessible parking. The guide notes that there is not enough accessible parking and how the need has evolved since the ADA was enacted. The guide includes research and data that shows the number of individuals with placards far exceeds the number of parking spaces available.
 - Fairfax County, Virginia has a zoning ordinance amendment that became effective December 4, 2024, that establishes minimum accessible parking requirements for new developments and modifications to existing parking lots. The amendment increased the ratio of accessible spaces to one for every fifteen general spaces.
- More education and enforcement are needed relating to accessible parking. Tonya reported that people will park in van accessible aisles, blocking the person from being able to access their vehicle.

- It was suggested that more than one curb cut be installed as oftentimes the curb cut is blocked by a MetroAccess vehicle or a delivery truck.
- It was suggested that pedestrian crosswalks be installed that connect the pedestrian from the parking area to the building.
- During winter, snow tends to be plowed into accessible parking spots, obstructing their use. It was suggested that signage be installed to deter this practice. It was also suggested that an ordinance be enacted that would fine a snow plow driver if they put snow in an accessible parking spots.
- It was suggested that temperature resilient lane boundary markers, similar to the speed bumps installed by Arlington County, be installed in accessible parking spaces.
- Ricardo Lopez, Commissioner, shared similar observations of safety in parking lots. His inability to hear vehicles and vehicles that drive too fast are concerning.
- It was asked if Montgomery County would be implementing a standard space between vehicles. Some individuals who do not use mobility devices but still have difficulty getting in and out of cars require more space between vehicles. It was suggested adding additional space in terms of width.

Jim was invited back to future Commission meetings. Betsy will share his email address with Commissioners if they have further comments to share.

Establish 2 Priorities for FY 27 County Operating Budget

The Commission reviewed and discussed the draft top policy priorities for the FY27 County Operating Budget. The following suggestions were made:

- Retitle “Funding for Direct Support Professionals” to “Home and Community-Based Services”. Many families are still waiting for DDA approval of services. It was asked if the County could address that issue. Betsy reported that DDA funding is the responsibility of the state. Montgomery County is the only county in Maryland that provides a supplement to direct support professionals.
- Include a link to the existing property tax credit for people with disabilities.
- Recommend new and innovative assisted listening devices. AuraCast is the new Bluetooth technology standard that hearing aid manufacturers are moving towards supporting.
- Ask for response to Universal Design letter the Commission sent to County Council.
- The Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) has written a letter to the County Executive asking for a customized employment program that would serve only persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The County currently has a non-competitive hiring preference for a person with any type of disability. For the non-competitive hiring preference, the County accepts certification from DORS and must be considered to be severe with at least a 25% disability rating. This Commission will only recommend programs that include all disabilities.
 - David Rice, Recruitment and Selection Manager, Montgomery County Office of Human Resources, will present on employment for people with disabilities at the October Commission Meeting. David is a former Commissioner. Jade Gingrich, Director of Employment Policy, Maryland Department of Disabilities, will give an update on employment programs in November.
- Adults transitioning out of public schools who are not able to find employment have been enrolling in classes at Montgomery College Challenge Program. Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), agreed that it is becoming more challenging for students with disabilities to transition from school to get into the workforce. Montgomery College classes are filling quickly within days.
- Suggested that under the section for cultural brokers that marginalized populations be noted rather than specific ethnicities. Cultural brokers would assist underserved communities and students of non-English primary speakers. It is not specific to one language but allows access to all services and resources due to cultural stigmas. MCPS has a wonderful presentation on transitioning, but some communities do not

understand the concept. Patricia reported MCPS is working hard to navigate those barriers and asked to meet with Azeb Adere, Commissioner, to discuss this issue further.

- The Commission will know more about the County's operating budget in March when the County Executive releases their proposed operating budget.
- There is a caregiver crisis both in locating caregivers as well as being able to pay them.
- Section titled "Greater Community Engagement" allows the Commission to be more inclusive. This can include access to employment and access to caregiver services.
- Add the word "inclusive" to show that we are inclusive to any and all disabilities and services.
- The Commission does not have to support IDDC or Commission on Aging if the Commission does not agree with them.

The Commission will have a final vote at the next meeting.

Chair and Vice-Chair Updates

Tabled due to time constraints.

Updates – Ex-Officio Members, Commission Members

Tabled due to time constraints.

Community Speaks

Tabled due to time constraints.

Adjournment

7:38 p.m.

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Azeb Adere; Shameen Anthanio-Williams; Jennifer Berzok; Felicia Brannon; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Tria Gray; Leslie Green Lyles; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Jamila Michael-Sobratti; Rebecca Murphy; Deborah Rozell; Mary Simons;

Commissioners Absent: Christopher Sinsheimer; Teresa Villani; John Whittle

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

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

County Staff Present: None.

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

Public: Heather Hicks, Sign Language Interpreter; Aviva Levy, Sign Language Interpreter; Karen Morgret; Cynthia Abrokwa; Sammi Hampton; Alanis S.; Stacey Ibekweh, Loving Support Center

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

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday October 8

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

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday October 15

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