

CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 11, 2012 – 8:00 a.m.
6th Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building

Commission Members Present:

Molly Mahoney Matthews, Chair
Mark Feinroth, Vice-Chair
Diane Nash Dillon
Wendell Holloway
Guled Kassim
Thomas King
Pamela Mason
Albert Pearce

Commission Members Absent:

Jeannie Cho
Mariana Cordier
Jerry Pasternak

Staff:

Justina Ferber, County Council Staff
Marc Hansen, County Attorney
Marie Jean-Paul, County Council Staff

Guests

Trish Gallalee, Chair, Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD)
Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, CPWD
Jerry Godwin, Vice-Chair, Commission on Veterans Affairs
Mark Maxin, Commissioner, CPWD
Lu Merrick, Commissioner, CPWD, Ivymount employee & Project Search Director at NIH

Audience

Joseph Adler, Director, Office of Human Resources
Leslie Rubin, Office of Legislative Oversight
Karen Leggett, Transition Work Group
Betsy Luecking, Staff, CPWD
Kristen Wright, St. Luke's House

Commission Chair Molly Matthews called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. She welcomed everyone and asked Commissioners to introduce themselves to the guest speakers.

I. Administrative Items

The Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the December 14 meeting.

II. Presentation and Discussion of Disability Hiring

Trish Gallalee, Chair, Commission on People with Disabilities, shared her experiences with being hired under Schedule A and made these specific points:

- Those with disabilities should work with the County Office of Human Resources (OHR) because OHR is better at inquiring about and making accommodations for disabilities. (This is the practice followed by current County employees who become disabled.)
- Everyone's disability is unique to them. For instance, she is in a wheelchair and has a service dog but most people in wheel chairs do not have service dogs.

Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, Commission on People with Disabilities (CPWD), spoke about his experience certifying individuals for Schedule A. He made the point that knowing a person can do a particular function and allowing them to do that function is the goal of disability hiring.

Mark Maxin, Commissioner, CPWD, provided a written overview of Schedule A; how it works and how it benefits the employee. He made the following points:

- The federal government has had Schedule A hiring for over twenty years.
- Schedule A hiring takes about 30-90 days; routine federal hiring takes 100-200 days.
- A change in County hiring practices could come at a time when veterans are returning and the military is downsizing.
- The key to understanding Schedule A is that it does not require a manager to hire the individual under consideration. A County OHR Disability Manager would collect resumes of those qualified under Schedule A for review by hiring managers.
- To qualify under Schedule A, an individual must have a medical certification of a disability; must be job ready and qualified; and must serve a probationary period when hired.
- Schedule A employees stay in positions longer, are loyal, perform well, and have exceptional performance in comparison to their peers.
- A summary of how Schedule A works is outlined on pages 2 and 3 of his handout.

Mr. Maxin felt the County must take this unusual step to change the Charter due to the low penetration of disabled employees in County government.

Jerry Godwin, Vice-Chair, Commission on Veterans Affairs, commented in support of Schedule A hiring for County government. He stated that he served in Iraq and now assists disabled veterans seeking employment. He noted there are many disabled veterans at Bethesda National Naval Medical Center/Walter Reed and the average length of stay for a wounded sailor/soldier is 380 days. Many veterans will be coming back to the area/region to seek employment and a change in County disability hiring practices will be helpful.

Lu Merrick, Commissioner, CPWD, Ivymount employee and Project Director of Project Search, explained the Project Search program at NIH which hires disabled young people as interns and after serving an internship can be hired under Schedule A. Each intern volunteers for 3-10 weeks and must provide their own transportation. The Schedule A program goal is to assist qualified disabled individuals in seeking and maintaining long-term employment.

Commissioner Mason asked about training for managers and Commissioner Holloway asked about the costs of training and funding of accommodations. Mr. Maxin responded that managers

would not have to be formally trained as OHR would be responsible for evaluating and making accommodations. Managers would be aware of any special accommodations but would not have to be specially trained. He stated that it has been studied and documented that the vast majority of accommodations cost \$500 or less. He also noted there will not be numerous positions affected because of the current hiring freeze and the long-term outlook for a small number of vacant positions.

Mr. Crawford stated that the disability hiring issue has not been about budget or cost but about the person's ability to do the job.

Commission Chair Matthews asked if there was data that shows a return on investment. She referred to data that shows for every \$1 you invest in rehabilitation there is a return of \$4 earned by the individual.

Commissioner Kassim inquired why the previous Charter Review Commission did not act on this issue. Ms. Ferber responded that the previous Commission wanted to allow time for the County to implement and evaluate County job opportunities, policies and practices intended to promote and facilitate the hiring of persons with disabilities, including the recently enacted hiring preference for persons with disabilities.

County Attorney Hansen responded that the previous Commission was reluctant to support a broad change in Charter language without knowing how the program would be implemented. There was also concern that carving out a special hiring authority for just one class of chronically unemployed or underemployed individuals would overlook and possibly be discriminatory to other chronically unemployed or underemployed groups that are equally worthy of special consideration. He noted the rational basis for Schedule A hiring is the County's very low representation in disability hiring.

Commission Chair Matthews noted that the previous Commission was also under a time constraint to make a decision. She stated that she would like to hear from someone who has had recent experience in the Schedule A program

Ms. Merrick stated that she had invited the NIH interns to participate in today's discussion but they declined because they did not want to miss work. She provided a link to a short video in which the interns discuss their experience with Project Search and Schedule A;

This is the link to the "You Tube" video on Project Search; an intern program for people with intellectual disabilities and where eight people have been hired using Schedule A.
<http://youtu.be/gd6XjpzhkYw>

Commissioner Kassim asked if the guests were proposing a wholesale adoption of Schedule A concept by the County and if the State of Maryland had a similar program.

Mr. Maxin responded in the affirmative about the Schedule A proposal and expressed the view that Schedule A was a well established Federal program the County should replicate. He advised that there was no program at the state level and the County could be a model for others and the state.

Mr. Crawford suggested that implementing the program will not create floodgate of people because few would be qualified.

Commissioner Dillon noted that the Veteran's Preference is a strong preference and asked if disability hiring created a double-heavy requirement on managers.

Mr. Maxin did not feel there was a double-heavy requirement because managers would not be obligated to hire an individual under Schedule A.

Commission Chair Matthews thanked the guests for their testimony and their time and suggested the Commission discuss the disability hiring issue at its next meeting and confer about any questions to send Mr. Maxin for response.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 A.M.