

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES

LIBRARY ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

September 12, 2023

MEETING MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

Francie Gilman, chair (individual)

Jane Carona, vice-chair (American Council of the Blind)

Debbie Brown, Secretary (National Federation of the Blind)

Nadia Abouraya (individual)

Jonina Duker (individual)

Wendalyn Hovendick (individual)

Richard Bell-Irving (Learning Disabilities Association of Montgomery County)

Barbara King (individual)

Elizabeth Lang (Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager and ADA Coordinator)

Janice Levin (Library Board)

Monica Martinez (XMinds)

Betty Thompson (consultant)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 15, 2023 meeting were approved as circulated. They will be placed on the website.

UPDATES SINCE THE JUNE 15 MEETING — Francie Gilman

Francie gave reminders of what has happened since the last meeting, which led to some discussions:

We discussed the change to our meeting day and time. Most of our members think Tuesday at 6:30 is fine, but we would like to shorten our meetings.

Tim Lighter sent information about the Maryland Open Meetings Act, which Francie sent to members.

The AAC has a webpage, linked from the Accessibility and Inclusion page. Let Francie know if there is trouble with the website.

Francie summarized our activities. We promoted sensory storytimes at Germantown.

We had an information table at a library, and in the future we think it would be more effective to have an information table at a larger scheduled event.

We have no news about making the events calendar more accessible. The vendor, Communico, is going through personnel changes. Maddie Hines is aware of the digital accessibility issues and is on top of it..

Betty has written a one-page overview of the AAC. We are wondering about how to use it. Richard Bell-Irving has put it on his organization's website. Elizabeth thinks it is OK to put it on organization websites.

Jane and Francie went to a Library board meeting and spoke about the AAC.

Francie sent Anita Vassallo suggestions from Monica and others to help staff understand options on handling situations with people with autism or those who are overwhelmed at the library.

Jill Lewis facilitated a new member mentoring meeting with Nadia, Joyce, and Wendalyn.

MCPL is participating in Project Enable, an effort to build capacity in public libraries for services for people with disabilities. AAC members are invited to listen in because we have experience as people with disabilities.

Elizabeth is presenting to the group in January.

REMINDER ABOUT ELECTIONS — Francie Gilman

We will elect officers at the December 12 meeting. Current officers are Debbie Brown, secretary; Jane Carona, vice chair; Francie Gilman, chair.

Elizabeth said Regina could answer questions about procedure for elections. We can find out if elections may be secret. Jonina said elections in person or virtual were not secret for LACs. (Update: Elections may not be secret). If more people want to run for office than there are offices, we can find work for them.

GOALS AND PRIORITIES

In this discussion we listed what each of us feels is important.

Jonina: Ensure that we support Elizabeth and Matt in any way we can. Connect with Library regional managers about who we are and our priorities.

Nadia: Outreach to young adults. Start young adult books groups to get young adults into the library to read and discuss books. This would promote young adult books and listening and reading together.

Debbie: Suggested the theme "More than one way to read a book" for events and programs.

Richard: With Elizabeth as point of contact, go to library managers to offer them our assistance: "How can we make your jobs easier?" Make it easy for them to ask questions, state issues.

Jane: Develop programs either virtual or in person for people who don't think they need the public library. (Barbara joined in this). Also address the problems with digital accessibility.

Francie: Interested in the goal of making sure that AAC has connections and credibility within MCPL, such as going to Board meetings, which is a role of the AAC chair. Also the value of aligning our energy with the Strategic Plan.

Wendalyn: Improving digital accessibility and accessibility of library facilities. Silver Spring is the most glaring example of an inaccessible facility because getting into the library is so difficult.

Barbara: Agree with accessibility of libraries. The reading machine is at Silver Spring, which is not very accessible. Also keep the Rockville Talking Books book discussion group going. Get it announced where people with disabilities will find it (Washington Ear and other places).

Elizabeth: She needs us to have our recommendations. She appreciates our expertise and wants to be able to give feedback to our priorities.

Janice: Goal 4 from the Strategic Plan: residents with limited access to technology can get what they need.

Monica: Agrees with Jonina on supporting Elizabeth and Matt. She can help form connections with other organizations. She would like to find ways to promote local autistic authors. Continue the sensory story times. Have a Readathon for people with autism.

Joyce: Would like to have a disability awareness day with tours, talks, and activities to raise awareness and to engage with people with disabilities, families and caregivers. It could take place during Disability Pride month. The day could include morning activities that bring in students in summer programs. In the afternoon have coordinators from day programs. Could have a tour and feature the website later in the day. It could happen at different branches in different months.

Yasmin: Agree with the importance of digital accessibility. Also, we can go where the library Outreach team goes. Someone from AAC should be going with the outreach team to senior centers, etc.

Betty: We should be able to coordinate with Jaime on outreach.

Francie: We do not have members who are deaf or hard of hearing. Elizabeth has put the call out to the Deaf Cultural Digital Library. We need to look at our membership and make sure we represent many disabilities. We have 3 openings.

[LIBRARY REPORT — Elizabeth Lang, Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager](#)

Liz Bowen has returned to the library as staff development coordinator. She had gone to another job with the County. Elizabeth has not had time to talk to her. There have been several hundred views of our video by existing staff. We do not know about new hires.

New hires receive training about customers with disabilities which Elizabeth provides. It is virtual training; she tells them where they can find information on websites, services that are provided, assistive technology workstations,

or whatever each person needs. She is often asked questions about service animals and bringing animals into the library. She describes the Books at home services. Library staff are generally speaking to friends and caregivers of the person with a disability. This training also helps staff know who Elizabeth is. That was a recommendation of the AAC.

Large print copies of the Assistive Technology Workstation tip sheet are almost done, and there will be braille copies as well. There is also a cheat sheet for staff members.

Disability training is mandatory for heads of kids' services.

The service dog tip sheet was sent out again.

The staff are getting a few hours of training by an expert on autism and neurodiversity issues. We probably cannot go to this, but Francie is glad it is happening.

There is a new human resources manager, Elana Robinson. She reports directly to Anita. Our training goals need to wait until she has been there a few months.

The Maryland Deaf Cultural Digital Library, which is a statewide digital library, is administered by Montgomery County and supervised by Elizabeth. She has consulted with them about someone who is deaf or hard of hearing for the AAC.

Elizabeth worked with staff to create a disability services flyer—asking for accommodations; books at home service, etc. It is a general information document. Hopefully it will be out during the wintertime. It needs fine tuning.

Facilities:

Damascus is under renovation. Charles McGee (Silver Spring) is due for renovations. We would need a different building designed to remedy the accessibility problems with that library.

There is one sensory story time a month at Germantown.

Project Enable is part of the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled. One event in December is about disability law and policy. Elizabeth is doing a presentation in January about creating an accessible library. She will talk about how to take steps that are easy, quick and free.

March will be about assistive technology with someone in the assistive technology program in the Department of Disabilities. The one in April will be on autism. There are teams from each county. Elizabeth does not know who is attending from Montgomery County, she will find out. It's train the trainer approach: the staff person who is attending the modules should be able to come back to their library system and teach.

BOARD REPORT — Janice Levine

The last library board meeting was in July. Their next meeting is tomorrow.

There will be mandatory online training for basic trauma care.

In October they are having an in-person joint meeting with FOLMC. They were trying to get Carla Hayden but are looking for other speakers.

Janice is part of the LAC Handbook work group. She wants to know what should be mentioned in the LAC handbook about the AAC, which is not an LAC. This is a use for the AAC one-pager. The new version should be out by February.

The County fiscal year 2025 operating budget forums are starting again. Ten forums start in two days and go until December 11. The schedule came from Ari Brooks of the Friends of the Library.

Janice will check on why you do not get a confirmation after signing up for monthly newsletters.

ADA COMPLIANCE MANAGER REPORT — Matt Barkley

Matt Barkely is not present.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Check who is representing Montgomery County at the Project Enable trainings. (Elizabeth)
2. Get us a copy of the MCPL disability flyer. (Elizabeth)
3. Write up a quick summary of goals (Betty) (done)

4. Take time in a meeting to describe Elizabeth's interactions with staff so that we can better help her achieve our goals. (Francie and Elizabeth) (scheduled for December 12 meeting)
5. Develop a plan to meet with library managers. (Francie, Jonina, Richard and Monica)
6. Find out how to get involved with the library's outreach team (Elizabeth and Francie)
7. Find out from Regina about procedures for voting for AACs. (Francie and Jane (Done))
8. Find out whether or how we can get confirmations when we sign up for electronic library newsletters. (Janice, Elizabeth and Francie) (done - this will be an ongoing vendor issue)
9. Include something in the new LAC handbook to introduce LACs to the AAC, which is not an LAC. (Janice)
10. Complete the large-print and braille versions of the tip sheet for the assistive technology station. (Elizabeth)
11. Increase the range of disabilities represented on the AAC. Follow up with Elizabeth about recommendations from the Deaf Culture Digital Library. (2024 Vice Chair)

NEXT MEETING

The next LAAC meeting will be on December 12. We will focus on elections and on understanding more about Elizabeth's work.