

Montgomery County Public Libraries

Accessibility Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

December 10, 2024

ATTENDEES

Francie Gilman, Chair

Jane Carona, Vice Chair (American Council of the Blind)

Tim Lighter (Library Board)

Cindy Buddington (Independence Now)

Wendalyn Hovendick

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

Joyce Plaxen

Yasmin Reyazuddin

Betty Thompson (Consultant)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES—Debbie Brown

The minutes were approved as submitted to the committee.

COMMITTEE UPDATES--Francie

- Darcell Graham started as director in November. She would like to meet with us at another time. On Tuesday nights there are our meeting, a board meeting, and sometimes a commission meeting. Sometimes they are occurring at the same time. We will try to schedule Darcell for another time.
- There was a joint meeting on October 9. Tim may be speaking about this.
- Francie suggested we fund updating of the braille collection and involve AAC in strategic goal planning.
- The election slate has been determined.
- Francie has sent Elizabeth suggestions about how branches can handle accessibility workstation tip sheets.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS—Nominating Committee

- Jane gave the nominating committee report. For chair the committee nominated Richard Bell-Irving. For vice chair the committee nominated Debbie Brown. For secretary the committee nominated Yasmin Reyazuddin. All those nominated were elected.
- Richard spoke about his goals for the committee.

LIBRARY BOARD REPORT—Tim

- The joint meeting was October 9. Tim is getting out information from that.
- Darcell Graham was at their meeting last month.
- Francie mentioned that she stated our interest in participating in the 'strategic plan.
- The next joint meeting will be January 15 at 7:00 at the Wheaton library. It will be hybrid. Darcell will be introduced to the library community.
- They invited Mr. Elric and council members.
- Tim missed the last meeting. They had regional managers give reports.
- The chair talked about the letter the Board wrote to County Executive Elric. The Pharsi, Amharic and some other collections have been removed from the library.
- They asked for transparency.
- The chair and vice chair of the Board left suddenly. Tim was elected chair and Grace Manubay vice chair. For the benefit of future board members they need to create documents. Each workgroup would come up with a work plan. Grace and Tim were elected to one more year in office until July of next year.
- Francie asked how we could participate in the budget. Because Director Graham was at the joint meeting, they will do the advocacy efforts online.
- Francie said our next meeting would normally be in March. If we want to think about line items, we should think about them in the next month or two.
- Debbie testified last year.

LIBRARY REPORT—Elizabeth

- Elizabeth got suggestions about the tip sheets in late September.
- Elizabeth wants to sit down with Angelisa and the new director. We want to wait for the new director to give her input.
- Elizabeth will send the recommendations again. Some things may work differently in different locations. There are different numbers of floors and different numbers of service desks. There is a marketing manager, Christine, who is working for Jaime, the assistant director of outreach and programs. She is looped into a lot of the branches and working on how staff can communicate things.

- The recommendation is for tip sheets to go to library managers. The reason accessible workstations are not used is because there are no tip sheets. Elizabeth is sending them to branch managers.
- Elizabeth is pleased with Darcell and is looking forward to meeting with her.

Renovations

- Damascus has been underway for awhile. We are at the end of design; the library will close as of February 1. The senior center in the same building will close later. Construction is scheduled to begin April 1. It will probably take about 15 months because both entities in the building are being renovated.
- Brigadier General McGee Library is in the design phase. That is expected to take about a year.
- Tim asked about a temporary place for Damascus during construction. There will be a return unit at the recreation center. There will be another meeting about what other services can be provided. They are working with organizations in town. The rec center is taking the senior center programs so they cannot do the library. Senior centers and recreation centers are not the same department. They have contacted a few churches and local organizations. They will have a meeting tomorrow afternoon about placing programs and services.
- People can return a book to any library. The budget does not include funding for operating alternate units.
- Noyes is on hold again because the bids came in very high. This is not up to the library.
- Clarksburg is still in design.

Trainings

- In the past three months they have had several trainings related to disability.
- In October there was a training about active aging; a series of four trainings about accessibility IT—one on intellectual disabilities; one on disabilities; one on Deafness, Deafblindness and hard of hearing services; and mental health.
- In November and December there were trainings on youth mental health; behavioral mental health; and teen mental health.
- Liz Bowen can possibly tell us how many people are taking these courses. She may not be able to tell about all of them. Some were virtual; some were in-person; some were hybrid.
- Betty asked what the IT training involved. Elizabeth does not know the content of the training. These courses were special topics; Elizabeth is not mentioning courses they can take at any time—inclusiveness, diversity, empathy, etc.
- Cindy would like to know if there are gaps in certain training. The trainings have to be traveled to; it is difficult to identify who has taken training. We

suggest that they keep track of who attends training. Elizabeth wants a written recommendation. We would also like feedback about what people are asking about—questions or requests for more information.

- We should invite Liz Bowen to talk with us. Liz Bowen is the training specialist. She trains new hires and does other training.
- The Library does not have a human resources department. They have to go through the county.
- Alana Robinson is in charge of human resources for the library and works for the county and is Liz's boss.

Early Childhood and Communication Issues

- Miranda, in administration, deals with early childhood literacy. She wants to work on a communication board. She works with children's librarians on early childhood. A communication board is for nonverbal and preverbal children. She is aware we might use these services. She is also interested in English as a second language. A communication board has images on it that stand for words. Elizabeth is working on getting this communication board designed. They hope to have one in every location by late winter. It should be portable and used in storytimes but at other times be at the service desk. It would be available for patrons who wanted it. There is a standard arrangement that groups words by topic. There is also color coding. Miranda has done the research. Joyce Plaxen has worked on putting together boards since her child was born. When she goes to McDonald's she uses these boards. Joyce will work with Elizabeth on this. Joyce's daughter uses a communication board when she goes to McDonald's.
- They are also thinking about a digital version.
- **Services for people with intellectual disabilities**
- we talked about dealing with groups of adults with intellectual disabilities that were dropped off at the library unattended. This discussion began several years ago. Since then there has been a committee
- reviewing services and developing programming to keep them active. It is difficult to have them in regular children's programming, but for some of them some children's activities may be appropriate. Joyce will be leaving and would like to continue this conversation. She is with a day program and has talked to several libraries talking about a book on tape activity. She has a whole program with suggestions. Shall we meet at another time after Elizabeth learns about the committee? This needs to be specifically about disabilities. That is part of this committee.
- Betty would like our officers to stay in touch with Joyce. Elizabeth will talk with Joyce. She has experience.
- Nadia would like a book group. Nadia and her mother will work with Elizabeth.

ADA REPORT—Matt

- On the topic of groups of people with developmental disabilities, He had not heard recently about the groups of unattended people. They are supposed to spend 51% of the time in the community. The point of that is to interact. Those programs are Medicaid-funded and will not pay for many things.
- The Problem with Noyes: DGS was supposed to fund it; there was no money in the budget. There was a budget addendum; DGS put it in.
- Long Branch was putting up a canopy for two weeks.
- Matt's department is busy doing trainings on the Ada. They do trainings for all staff. They are revising self-paced learning. The library is ahead of other agencies on this. They do it on request.

Web and digital accessibility

- Digital Solutions: The new requirements require accessibility by April 2026. The plan will be done by December 2025. They will be working on all websites. They are working with stakeholders. Matt is not involved with the group. The people training must have the expertise to make a website accessible. They hope to be ready when the new law comes in.
- Nancy Greene, his predecessor, planned ahead projects for many years.
- How could libraries, rec centers, and senior centers be prioritized?
- MetroAccess is having problems finding the front entrance of Rockville library. Matt said file a federal complaint about MetroAccess. They say there are no complaints. Complaints should go to the Federal Highway Administration. Talk to Christiaan Blake. MetroAccess is funded by WMATA. Montgomery County provides funding.
- About problem issues, Richard said we are to advise. Elizabeth said we should provide solutions. We are an advisory committee. We are like expert witnesses. The library should be calling on us to give testimony. We cannot provide solutions.
- We have multiple focuses. There is a limit to what we can do. We can only handle so many things. We should do these things; if we notice something, we should notify Elizabeth. If a problem is safety-related, it should go to Elizabeth. Otherwise, we should be here.

Action items

1. Recommend funding of updating of braille collection and participating in strategic plan. (Presentation to County Council?)
2. Send tip sheets to branch managers (Elizabeth).

3. Send information about disability-related course content for library staff. (Elizabeth)
4. Give information to the Committee about how many staff and some information relating to representation of particular branches and staff positions for those taking disability-related courses and let us know what kind of feedback they give, including questions and comments. (Elizabeth)
5. Joyce will participate in development of communication boards (Elizabeth, Joyce and Miranda)
6. Planning activities for adults with intellectual disabilities. (Joyce with Elizabeth)
7. Book group for young adults (Elizabeth and Nadia)
8. Invite Liz Bowen to a meeting (Elizabeth)