



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
January 11, 2023**

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

Welcome and Approval of December 2022 Meeting Minutes

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. Michael Greenberg, Commissioner, made a motion to amend the minutes to include language that the during the December meeting it was discussed that the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee (DDAC) meetings be “halted” and “suspended”. The motion was seconded. A motion was made to approve the December 2022 Meeting Minutes as amended. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the December 2022 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Planning Department’s University Boulevard Project – Nkosi Yearwood, Community Planner, Montgomery County Planning Department

University Corridor Plan: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/corridor-planning/university-boulevard-corridor-plan/>

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/MPUnivBlvdCorridorPlan.pdf>

Please review PowerPoint presentation.

The plan area is centered on a three-mile stretch of University Boulevard (MD 193) from the edge of East Indian Spring Drive, just south of I-495, to Amherst Avenue in Wheaton. The project will be completed in several phases.

University Boulevard is a state-controlled roadway and the project will involve the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (SHA) in addition to Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). Several years ago, SHA lowered the speed limit on University Boulevard. The majority of sidewalk infrastructures are located next to the roadway. A temporary bike lane was installed for approximately six months in 2021 by SHA. Existing public transportation includes Ride On and Metrobus routes C2 and C4. Corridor plans are linear oriented specifically towards a form of transit. For the University Corridor Plan the focus is on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

The floor was opened to questions.

Trish asked how the Commission can assist in the process and if the plan includes the Purple Line. Nkosi reported it does not as the Purple Line will be located on New Hampshire Avenue hearing north of University Boulevard and right at Piney Branch Road. Nkosi asked the Commission to provide their thoughts on input. He is aware that Inwood House is located along this corridor and where a BRT stop has been proposed. MCPD has reached out to Inwood House about setting up a meeting for those residents to discuss the corridor plan and to receive their feedback and input. Trish noted that this Commission has provided feedback to the County regarding the issues of bike lanes and the safety and accessibility of pedestrians with disabilities. This Commission is very concerned with the installation of designated bike lanes as well as the accessibility of dedicated parking lanes. Trish noted that residents of Inwood House would be using MetroAccess or other wheelchair accessible vehicles

for transportation that require a curb cut in order to lower the ramp. It is a concern that if a curb cut is not closely available the individual may need to be dropped off one or more blocks away from their residence.

Tonya Gilchrist, Commissioner, asked if dedicated bike lanes would be installed along the corridor similar to what has been installed in downtown Silver Spring. One of the issues with dedicated bike lanes is the inability for an individual who uses a wheelchair accessible vehicle to safely lower their ramp and exit their vehicle. Tonya approved of the inclusion of wider sidewalks in the corridor plan and asked if parking for e-scooters would be made available as oftentimes e-scooters are left in the middle of the sidewalk. Nkosi reported MCPD does not anticipate allowing permanent on-street parking along University Boulevard. The only exception currently is Sunday parking for churches. MCPD is trying to determine public right of way which could include sidewalks that can accommodate between six to eight feet. MCDOT is the operator of the e-scooter program and MCPD would need to work with them regarding designating areas specifically for parking e-scooters.

Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, asked how many lanes of traffic will be for just cars. Nkosi reported that for the BRT there will be either be a dedicated bus lane or a shared lane for buses and cars. There will still be three lanes east and three lanes west. There is potential for buses to operate in the center of the roadway which is also being explored.

Nkosi reported MCPD will provide progress briefings before the Commission and solicit further feedback as they work on recommendations. Comments can be emailed to nkosi.yearwood@montgomeryplanning.org.

Establishment of a Commission on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Trish reported Dr. Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging and Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services, shared the news today that County Executive Marc Elrich supports the creation of a new Developmental Disability Advisory Committee as part of the FY24 budget process, which will include staff support. A meeting is scheduled for Wednesday January 25 for DDAC to make recommendations for the establishment of the new group. Trish reported she is happy discussions have led to positive movement on this issue as it has been her goal from the beginning to have a formal committee established and not to cause a disruption or to stop any of the work being done by DDAC, but to facilitate the best way to get that work done.

Ken Hartman, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive, reported County Executive Elrich understands the needs of the I/DD community and that they require a special focus. Ken reported creation of a commission/committee/council will be done through a resolution passed by the County Council which can be completed in a matter of weeks. The County would like to provide the Council with an advance list of candidates for nominations in order to fast track the process. Ken spoke with Dr. Brunetto regarding the need for staff support. He will work with HHS in the interim to ensure the committee is support during the interim and the Council budget process. Ken will be working with all interested individuals in the community and will make sure this committee moves forward. Betsy Luecking, Staff, noted that it could be included in the resolution and enabling legislation that the new committee can advocate directly with the state and federal government. Many former and current Commissioners have informed Betsy they are interested in serving on this new commission.

Jeneva Stone, Commissioner, asked if Montgomery County Public Schools representation would be included. Ken reported that MCPS involvement would be voluntary as Montgomery County Government does not have authority offer MCPS. Authority is managed by the County Board of Education.

Dr. Greenberg asked that the current DDAC continue to meet until a formal group is established. Karen Morgret, Vice-Chair, reported DDAC will continue to meet moving forward.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

The chat feature has been disabled for meetings moving forward so that all Commissioners can participate in meetings and to limit distractions. In Trish's experience as a professional trainer within the federal government, chat features are not enabled. She has also been researching best practices Dr. Greenberg asked if the Commission could reconsider removing the chat feature. He said he regularly attends meetings with several hundred individuals and the chat feature is not a distraction. Cindy LaBon, Commissioner, is blind and reported

that when a message is entered into chat her screen reader immediately reads the chat message and she is unable to hear the presentation or discussion being held by Commissioners. She frequently needs to turn off the chat feature as it does cause a distraction during meetings, and she is unable to fully participate. She stated that as a doctor, you should be aware of the accessibility issues of persons who are blind, who have low vision, who are deaf and who are hard of hearing. Lisa Quinn, Commissioner, said chat continues to privilege speech as the only acceptable means of communication. She asked that the Commission establish chat guidelines to limit distractions. Cindy agreed. Trish suggested discussing guidelines at the upcoming Steering Committee. Meetings need to be accessible to all Commissioners.

The Steering Committee will meet on Wednesday January 18. Commissioners will discuss the role of this Commission in supporting persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), outcomes and expectations. Commissioners who are parents of individuals with I/DD and providers are strongly encouraged to attend. Trish noted that the Commission needs to address issues that are inclusive of all types of disabilities. Betsy added that this Commission typically has identified broader county issues such as housing, employment and transportation and how it impacts persons with any type of disability: physical, sensory, developmental and psychiatric.

Ex-Officio Member Updates

Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation, reported it is almost time for summer camp registration. Recreation does offer summer camp programs for individuals with disabilities up to age 21.

Denise Isreal, MCDOT, reported MCDOT is actively recruiting community members for focus groups for Ride On Reimagined, which is a comprehensive review of Montgomery County bus stops. The first group session will be held January 12 at the Gaithersburg Library and a second group session will be held January 19 at the Germantown Library. MCDOT is working with WMATA to provide travel training to students with disabilities that transitioned to Montgomery College. Training includes rides on Ride On, Metrobus, and Metrorail. Students will also be given their reduced fare cards. Denise reported bus riders should tap the farebox using their SmarTrip® card so that accurate data regarding useage by older adults and persons with disabilities can be documented.

Bob Green, MCPD, reported work has begun at the Riley's Lock boat ramp. They are also reviewing additional funding avenues for projects due to increased construction costs. MCPD is currently working to update between 10 to 15 parks. He will report on summer camp programs at the next Commission meeting. MCPD has been approached by a group of parents of children with Autism and they are looking to locate and upgrade some playgrounds that are best suited for children with Autism.

Angelias Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported MoComCon will be held this Saturday January 14 from 10:30am to 4pm at the Germantown Library. The event celebrates comics, graphic novels and fandoms. MCPL is hosting a winter reading program until March. The Potomac Library, which has been closed since May 2022, will reopen soon. MCPL will soon be announcing a closure date for the Noyes Library for Young Children which is scheduled to be renovated. The renovation will include adding a floor above and below as well as an elevator and accessibility features.

Candance Groudine, Human Rights Commission (HRC), reported HRC is currently drafting its priorities. In the past they have focused on affordable and accessible housing as well as accessible voting challenges within Montgomery County. She asked Commissions for suggestions.

Susan Smith, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), reported all HOC offices are open to the public as of this past Monday January 9. HOC meetings will also return to in-person meetings.

Announcements

Jenn Lynn, Upcounty Community Resources, reported UCR will be celebrating it's ten year birthday on January 20 with an event at a local restaurant.

Public Comments

Two public members signed up to give comments regarding their support of the Developmental Disability Advisory Committee.

Meeting Adjourned

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Myra Coffield; Kaylee Davis; Patricia Gallalee, Chair; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Michael Greenberg; Sammi Hampton; Karen Herson; Angela Hughes Byrd; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Mandy McCarthy; Karen Morgret, Vice Chair; Coni Nepomuceno; Lisa Quinn; Eric Salzano; Avner Shapiro; Richard Shermanski; Jeneva Stone; Teresa Villani; John Whittle; Najla Wortham; Melissa Wyman

Commissioners Absent: None

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Simone Geness, Montgomery County Public Schools; Bob Green, Montgomery Parks; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation; Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation; Susan Smith, Housing Opportunities Commission

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: None

County Staff Present: Nikosi Yearwood, Montgomery County Planning Department; Ken Hartman, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Public: Jenn Lynn, Upcounty Community Resources

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities February 2023 Meeting Calendar

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday February 8

6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday February 15

5:15pm to 6:15pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced