



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
June 14, 2023**

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

Welcome and Approval of May 2023 Meeting Minutes

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the May 2023 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the May 2023 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

Parks Playhouse – Saron Tewelde, Inclusive Programs and Events Assistant, Program Access Office, and Ashlyn Thompson, Inclusion and Community Outreach Specialist, Montgomery Parks

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/CPWDPresentationJune2023.pdf>

Inclusive Special Events and Programs: <https://montgomeryparks.org/about/parks/accessibility/inclusive-special-events-and-programs/>

Taron reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

Montgomery Parks strives to promote access and inclusion within the public places, facilities, and programs the department manages. The Program Access Office (Inclusion Services) has made a variety of adaptive equipment available throughout the county for people at no additional cost to the user. View for a full list of adaptive equipment: <https://montgomeryparks.org/about/parks/accessibility/adaptive-equipment/>

The floor was opened to questions.

Betsy Luecking, Staff, said the Commission will help promote the program.

Lisa Quinn, Commissioner, asked if it would be possible for persons with disabilities to have priority access for registration or a faster way for them to sign up for programs as the more popular events and programs tend to fill up very quickly. Ashley reported Montgomery Parks is working on this issue including targeted registration announcements to specific groups. She encourages local organizations and this Commission to send out save-the-date registration notices. Montgomery Parks is working with nature centers and larger special events to determine a compromise for priority registration. Currently, the system is open for everyone to register at the same time. It was recommended that individuals can add programs and events to their cart prior to open registration and then quickly register once the registration date is available.

Sammi Hampton, Commissioner, asked if individuals can rent out equipment at any time and not just for a registered event. Ashley said individuals can rent equipment whenever. Let staff know the time, date and location and they will deliver the equipment.

Affordable and Accessible Housing Options in Montgomery County - Rebecca Grayson, MSW, Coordinator, Services for Persons with Disabilities, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC)

Rental Programs: <https://hocmc.org/rental-programs/rental-programs.html>

Housing for people with disabilities: <https://hocmc.org/extra/159-housing-for-people-with-disabilities.html>

Mainstream Vouchers are simply Housing Choice Vouchers (previously known as "Section 8") that have been set aside specifically for people with disabilities. The Mainstream program applicant uses the voucher to find private market rental housing of his/her choice, provided the unit meets the Housing Choice Voucher program requirements. Once a rental unit is selected and approved, the Mainstream program applicant pays a limited percentage of his or her income (generally 30% to 40%) as rent. Participants who receive vouchers search for their own housing, which may include single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments, or even the family's present residence. Housing Choice Voucher assistance is portable anywhere in the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands. Provided the housing they select meets the requirements of the program, the housing subsidy is paid to the landlord directly by the Housing Opportunities Commission on behalf of the family. Rebecca encouraged individuals to apply for the voucher program when they turn 18 as the current waitlist is approximately 6 ½ years. The voucher program is for individuals with incomes of \$0 to approximately \$50,000 for one person. Income limits: https://hocmc.org/extra/662-hcv-faqs.html#income_limits.

Moderately Priced Dwelling Unit (MPDU): www.montgomerycountymd.gov/DHCA/MPDU/index.html

The MPDU program markets units to renters and first-time home buyers with incomes up to 70 percent of the Washington Metro Area Median Income (AMI), which is approximately \$79,500 for a family of two or \$99,500 for a family of four. The Program requires that a percentage of housing units in residential developments be made available for low- and moderate-income households for a certain timeframe ("control period.")

Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides permanent supportive housing along with case management services for individuals experiencing homelessness. Sheppard Pratt provides permanent housing and support services for individuals experiencing housing difficulties due to mental health needs.

[Maryland Homeownership Program for Individuals with Disabilities](#) is a home loan program through the Maryland Department of Housing that is available to individuals with disabilities and their caregivers who meet the program's eligibility criteria.

The floor was opened to questions.

Matt Barkley, Department of General Services (DGS), asked about incentives for multi-family housing to include accessible features beyond what is required in the Fair Housing Act and how to increase the stockpile of affordable and accessible housing to alleviate current issues.

Rebecca reported HOC does install accessibility modifications in units based on an individual's needs, regardless of cost. HOC has recently acquired senior housing and the new Executive Director for HOC is reviewing taking on additional properties. Rebecca noted that there is not a list of accessible MPDUs or HOC properties. She suggested it would be helpful if there was a requirement for a certain percentage of MPDUs be accessible to persons with all types of disabilities and not just for mobility. First floor units that are accessible is also important. Betsy said it would require County legislation to change the regulations and requirements for MPDUs. Trish suggested organizing a workgroup to look into this issue further. Jeneva Stone, Commissioner, asked how visitability legislation or regulations could be used to make more accessible units.

Update – County's Early Intervention Screening Initiative – Avner Shapiro, Commissioner

Developed by a coalition of area stakeholders that included Commissioners, parent advocates, providers and pediatricians - the Montgomery County Coalition to Improve Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers with Developmental Delays – worked to significantly improve efforts to identify and provide appropriate evidence-based interventions to children under three years of age who do become diagnosed as having a developmental delay. The Infants and Toddlers program reports that pediatricians do not always do early enough screenings, and some do not even know about the program and do not make referrals. A foundation invested in the pilot program which provides the screening software at a discount to pediatricians. The goal is for pediatricians to improve screenings and link children to needed County services by age 2. Further funding for the program was supported and approved by the County Council. DHHS has hired a contractor to staff the program and the County will be having a bid open for software. Avner noted that while issues with screening occur across the board, it is most severe among providers serving low-income communities and certain language minority groups. DHHS

Infants and Toddlers will be reaching out to pediatricians and clinics that serve low-income families over the coming months to promote improved screenings.

DDAC Update and Applicants for the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – Karen Morgret, Co-Chair, Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee (DDAC)

DHHS has received applications for IDDC and will be moving forward to schedule interviews this month and into July. Interviews will occur virtually unless an in-person interview is requested. The process is confidential. Applicants are interviewed, the selection committee will make their recommendation to County Executive Elrich who will then make his recommendations to County Council for appointments. There is no firm start date for IDDC.

County Executive Elrich and the County Council approved in the FY24 operating budget a part-time staff manager position to work with IDDC. It is estimated it will take six months to establish the new position, recruit and hire an individual. DHHS has been given approval to hire a temporary contractual individual to assist with IDDC in the meantime.

Legislation for IDDC membership includes a liaison from this Commission. Trish asked Commissioners who would like to be considered for appointment to email her or Betsy Luecking, Staff.

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the DDA Waiver Renewals for the Family Supports, Community Supports, and Community Pathways programs. The renewal changes go into effect on July 1, 2023.

DDAC heard a presentation on the Hidden Disability Sunflower Program. There are 80 airports throughout the United States participating in the program. Travelers can ask customer service desks for a free sunflower lanyard or order one online. The lanyard can notify staff that the individual has a hidden disability and may require assistance.

Chair and Vice-Chair Report

Steering Committee will not meet in June or July. A date will be determined to meet in August.

Ex-Officio Member Updates

Denise Isreal, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), reported [MCDOT awarded \\$800,000 in funding to 23 community-based nonprofits](#) to expand access to transportation to disabled, senior and limited-income residents through the Targeted and Specialized Mobility (TSM) Grant Program. The TSM Capital Grant program awarded \$640,000 for capital projects to a total of 17 nonprofit organizations that serve priority populations within their communities. The grants will fund capital investments to increase access to transportation services for vulnerable community members. With the grants, organizations will be able to purchase or modify vehicles to accommodate wheelchairs or other specialized medical equipment or to deliver food, medicine and other critical supplies to residents. Funding for the first-time grants comes from the Transportation Services Improvement Fund. The grants were authorized by the County Council in the Fiscal Year 2023 operating budget. MCDOT also received \$140,000 for two technical assistance awards from Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (MWCOC) Transportation Planning Board. Part of the funds (\$60,000) will be used to study the County's Ride On Flex service and will evaluate travel behaviors and conditions, market opportunities and service delivery options to improve ridership and expand Flex service or the future. The study will involve public outreach, data collection and will review and coordinate with recommendations from MCDOT's county-wide Ride On Reimagined study. The rest of the funds (\$80,000) will be used a comprehensive assessment and design study for safety improvements along Bel Pre Road in Aspen Hill. Bel Pre Road was selected for being a high-incident network that is heavily traveled. The project is in a Transportation Planning Board Equity Emphasis Area and has a high concentration of low-income and minority populations. Denise reported Ride On has a new [Trip Planner App](#) available for Download on both the Apple and Google Play app stores. This new, innovative app allows riders to plan their next trip and to tell how crowded a Ride On bus is – before it arrives – with the crowdedness indicator on the app riders can choose if they want to get on the bus arriving, wait for the next bus depending on how many people are on the bus, or choose another travel option, such as other local transit services, bikeshare, and scooter.

Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources (OHR), reported that through a collaborative effort between DHHS and OHR, a two-year term position for a person with a disability has been created. The position is for an Administrative Specialist I and requires one year of administrative support and a bachelors degree or four years of additional experience as a substitute for the education requirement. Karen anticipates the position to be posted by OHR within the next two to four weeks. Applicants must submit a Schedule A letter from the Maryland Department of Education Division of Rehabilitation Services or by an equivalent out-of-state vocational rehabilitation agency.

Bob Green, Montgomery Parks, reported the second phase project of Riley's Lock – a second accessible dock located next to the boat launch – has recently been completed. Montgomery Parks received approximately \$1,000,000 from the state bond program. The funding will be used for accessibility improvements in the parks. Montgomery Parks is currently coordinating with Department of General Services (DGS) on exterior improvements at Gwendolyn E. Coffield Community Center located at Rosemary-Lyttonsville Local Park. Montgomery Parks has been seeking citizen input on ADA improvements for the park. Another park renovation that is upcoming is at Wheaton Regional Park. Montgomery Parks has hired consultants to assist with the project. Bob would like to present at a Commission meeting this fall to receive input from Commissioners.

Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported MCPL's summer reading program "[All Together Now](#)" will run from June 17 to August 31. This year, MCPL is [partnering with local organizations](#) that embody kindness, friendship, and unity within our community.

Announcements

Cindy LaBon, Commissioner, reported she assisted the Maryland Judiciary Mediation and Conflict Resolution office with a Zoom simulation court case to assess accessibility.

Public Comments

None

Meeting Adjourned – 7:30pm

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

Attendees

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

Commissioners Absent: Kaylee Davis; Karen Goss; Angela Hughes Byrd; Coni Nepomuceno; Eric Salzano

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Margie Parrott, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; 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 (DOT); Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: None

County Staff Present: Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services; Saron Tewolde, Montgomery Parks; Ashlyn Thompson, Montgomery Parks

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

Public: Jenni Jackson (Sign Language Interpreter); Brittany Spangler (Sign Language Interpreter); Seth Morgan; Francie Gilman

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
September 2023 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday September 13

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

Steering Committee Meeting – Cancelled