



**Commission on People with Disabilities
Meeting Summary Minutes
March 13, 2024**

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

Welcome and Approval of January 2024 and February 2024 Meeting Minutes

Karen Morgret, Acting Chair, convened the meeting. A motion was made to approve the January 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the January 2024 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. A motion was made to approve the February 2024 Meeting Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the February 2024 Meeting Minutes were unanimously approved as written. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd.

MCDOT Accessibility Design Guide - James Elliott, Consultant, Senior Planner, Toole Design, and Matt Johnson, Bikeways Coordinator, Montgomery County Division of Transportation Engineering

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

The PowerPoint presentation was reviewed.

The floor was opened to questions.

- **Will the guide address traffic calming circles including the issue of electric vehicles emitting no noise for persons with hearing disabilities to detect?** The guide does address roundabouts as it relates to persons with vision disabilities and that it may be important to include an acoustical treatment to make cars more audible as they traverse the roundabout. The noise issue with electric vehicles is mentioned in the guide but not addressed directly.
- **Does the guide address curb cuts and the maintenance of curb cuts?** There is guidance on how to design curb cuts and how curb ramps should be aligned with each crosswalk rather than a diagonal curb ramp that leads the pedestrian into the middle of an intersection. Detectable warnings are installed at a specified slope. Maintenance is discussed but is not heavily incorporated into the design guide. Particular locations that need maintenance should be sent to Matt (matt.johnson@montgomerycountymd.gov).
- **Does the guide address accessible parking, access aisles, signage and enforcement specifically regarding cars being parked in access aisles?** The guide focuses on accessible parking in the right of way of streets in terms of dimensions of accessible parking spaces, frequency given the number of spaces on a block perimeter and how to design adjacent bike lanes. Enforcement is not a key focus. The U.S. Access Board's Public-Right-Of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) requires that 50% of a parking space or passenger loading zone be completely free of obstructions. It was noted that when businesses place planters outside of their business or if there are tree roots, these can limit parking for individuals who use accessible vans and need access to a curb. Some people also do not understand that access aisles are not parking spaces. James said they will review this section and try to strengthen it to avoid the issues mentioned.

When the next draft of the guide is available it will be presented to the Commission for further comment.

Montgomery Parks Upcoming Adaptive Programs and Some Great Accessible Trails! - Jennene Blakely, CTRS, CPRP, Program Access Manager, Montgomery Parks, The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

PowerPoint presentation: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/AccessibleSpringtimeActivities!CWPDMarch2024.pdf>

Website: <https://montgomeryparks.org/about/parks/accessibility/program-access/>

Jennene reviewed the PowerPoint presentation.

The floor was opened to questions.

- **Can communication boards be placed closer to the play area?** When the initiative was new, communication boards were installed in parks that were already in the design process. Park planners are now incorporating communication boards into the design of the playgrounds. The boards also now have English and Spanish on the same side and images of sign language on the back.
- **How often are Park Police patrolling areas and how does one reach Park Police if there is an issue?** Jennene cannot answer the question regarding patrolling of parks but will get that information to share at a later time. Park Police are always on standby. Typically, when Montgomery Parks hosts larger walks, they notify Park Police ahead of time. It was noted that Park Police have received some training on how to communicate with persons with disabilities and understanding the difference between someone who may be dangerous and someone who may not be able to communicate effectively. Park Police can be contacted at 301-949-8010. It was suggested that individuals never walk alone.
- **Comment that the Commissioner has greatly enjoyed using the accessible launch at Seneca Landing Special Park for kayaking.** There will be a second accessible launch installed at Black Hill Regional Park in Boyds this year.
- **Comment that parents and grandparents who use wheelchairs tend to use the accessible features at Hadley's Park more than children.** This Commission worked to get bond funding from the state for Hadley's Park.

Review of Commission County Budget Priorities for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) for County Council Testimony in April – Karen Morgret

Betsy sent via email the Commission's budget testimony that was given in October 2023 for Commissioners to review prior to the meeting. The Commission will be testifying in April with their budget priorities for FY25.

Recommendations from Commissioners:

- Thank the Council for the establishment of the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission.
- Asking the Council to continue supporting the Early Intervention Screening Program including funding for the program. Asking the Council to hold a hearing where staff from Early Childhood Services can report on the current state of the program. Unclear the amount of funds used by the program. Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, is meeting with Beth Shuman, Aide to Councilmember Gabe Albornoz, and he will try to obtain more information then. As this is a statewide federally mandated program through the public education act, need to determine if further funding is required.
- Accessible and affordable housing. Betsy Luecking, Staff, reported Council President Friedson will be speaking at the May Commission meeting to address accessible and affordable housing as well as enforcement of accessible parking.
- Ask County to amend Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs) to have 20% be accessible. Noted that MPDU's are not federally subsidized and are not required at the state level. A change in current MPDU law would require legislation. Tonya Gilchrist, Commissioner, will research this issue more along with Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC).

Chair Report

Karen reported on the following legislation that has been introduced into the Maryland General Assembly. Commissioners may comment on state legislation as private citizens and not on behalf of the Commission.

- **House Bill 98 – [Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing – Deafblind Co-Navigation Services Program – Established](#)**
 - Hellen Keller Institute estimates that 32,000 people who are deafblind live in Maryland. The U.S. Census Bureau does not have data for individuals who are deafblind.
 - Betsy had to review this bill for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). She contacted Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind about their program that assists people who are

deafblind and they are not currently serving anyone in the program. She suggested that if a program is established it should be done statewide rather than county by county to demonstrate the need.

- **Senate Bill 790** – [Maryland Medicaid Assistance Program – Employed Individuals with Disabilities](#)
 - Betsy also submitted comments for this bill on behalf of DHHS.

Update – Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC) – John Whittle, Commissioner and Liaison to IDDC

The Councilmember Gabe Alborno and County Executive Marc Elrich presented a proclamation on March 12 to commemorate March as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

IDDC will be writing a letter of support for Senate Bill 790. Due to its enabling legislation, IDDC is able to advocate at the state level. IDDC is also reviewing Senate Bill 797 – [Education – Access to Attorneys, Advocates, and Consultants for Special Education Program and Fund](#), House Bill 987 – [State Bill – Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency – Modifications](#), and House Bill 981 – [Principal Departments – Individuals with Limited English Proficiency – Access to Public Services](#).

IDDC sent a letter to the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) about individuals losing Medicaid eligibility due to the unwinding of certain exceptions made during the pandemic. MDH decided not to apply for federal exceptions. Legislators and advocacy groups have also approached MDH about this issue. MDH has agreed to meet with IDDC. Individuals must reapply for Medicaid every few years and thousands of individuals have lost their Medicaid status. It is impacting the Autism Waiver and Transitioning Youth in the school system. Some individuals are not finding out they lost Medicaid until they visit their doctor. IDDC has asked the Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) how it is impacting this region. The issue is complicated and happening nationwide.

Ex-Officio Member Updates

Tabled due to time.

Commissioner Updates

Tabled due to time.

Public Comments

No member of the public signed up to speak.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:32pm

Attendees

Commissioners Present: Myra Coffield; Kaylee Davis; Tonya Gilchrist; Karen Goss; Sammi Hampton; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Karen Morgret, Acting Chair; Lisa Quinn; Avner Shapiro; Richard Shermanski; Teresa Villani; John Whittle; Melissa Wyman

Commissioners Absent: Coni Nepomuceno; Jeneva Stone

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present: Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Jennene Blakely, Montgomery Parks; Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Candace Groudine, Office of Human Rights; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent: Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation

County Staff Present: Matt Johnson, Department of Transportation; James Elliott, Consultant, Toole Design

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Public: Carl Prather; Marybeth Cleveland; Seth Morgan; Pat Sheehan; Cindy Buddington

**Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities
April 2024 Meeting and Events Calendar**

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday April 10 from 6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday April 17 from 5:30pm to 6:30pm to be held via Zoom

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II; Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Staff Liaison