



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

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

**Welcome and Approval of September 2023 Meeting Minutes**

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

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cpwd).

**Employment Programs Promoting the Hiring of People with Disabilities Including New Federal Funding and Enhanced Services – Beth Lash, Regional Director, Division of Rehabilitation Services, and Anthony Featherstone, Executive Director, WorkSource Montgomery, Inc.**

DORS Website: <https://dors.maryland.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Beth reported the following updates for the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS):

- Two additional counselor positions have been added to Montgomery County this year – one transitioning counselor position and one contractual adult counselor position. DORS is in the process of hiring for both of these positions.
  - Transitioning counselors can now reduce the age limit on their caseloads to move consumers on to work with adult counselors earlier.
- Special education population in Montgomery County is larger than in any other Maryland county.
- Montgomery County is nearly fully staffed at this time and the workforce has stabilized in Montgomery County and Prince George's County.
- Consolidated the counselors for the deaf into one statewide unit.
- Eliminated financial contributions this year. DORS no longer collects financial information or applies a sliding scale. Household income can be any limit and the individual can receive the full scope of DORS services without financial contribution.
- New funding to provide room and board support at local four-year schools with no restrictions on commuting distance from school.
- No longer subtract need-based grants and scholarships from tuition and fees for out-of-state or private schools. DORS does not pay the full out-of-state or private school rates but does pay at the University of Maryland College Park rates. The first 60 credits are also no longer paid at community college rates.
- Will begin offering adult learning experiences similar to the work-based learning model for the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program which provides students with disabilities the opportunity to experience and explore the world of work. Adults will be able to participate in paid internship programs and authorized community rehabilitation programs to help build their resumes as well as connect with employers. This new service will be available in the next few months.
- Expanding services to permit earn-and-learn or interim jobs and will provide job coaching support for individuals while they are still attending school to help build work experience and their resume even if it is not their overall employment goal.
- DORS continues to more aggressively move through the waiting list as these additional resources have been made available. DORS is still limited in serving large numbers due to the overall number of counselor positions.

- The Maryland State Board of Education voted unanimously today to appoint Dr. Carey Wright as the interim State Superintendent of Schools for the remainder of the current term through June 30, 2024. Dr. Wright will begin her service as State Superintendent by October 23, 2023, pending the completion of onboarding logistics.
- DDA that provider rates were increased in January. Providers are now paid \$70 per hour.

The floor was opened to questions.

- Does DORS provide assistance for persons with disabilities who want to set up their own business? Self-employment services are provided through RISE, which is designed to promote and facilitate self-employment for individuals for whom it is appropriate. RISE Program staff provide technical assistance to support the consumer in exploring market information, business funding resources, developing a business proposal and business plan, and other pertinent information. DORS also provides benefits counseling.
- Why did DORS funding increase? Funding is based on a funding formula that the federal government uses to determine what each state receives. Beth will report back on with more information on how these funding levers are determined.

WorkSource Montgomery website: <https://worksourcemontgomery.com/>

Anthony reported the following updates and services available through WorkSource Montgomery (WSM):

- Works closely with DORS to create warm handoffs to integrate services to help County residents and job seekers with disabilities.
- Trained staff assist qualified job seekers as they integrate into the full range of services and incentives offered through American Job Centers (AJC). Such services include but are not limited to: enhanced case management; job search workshops; Linkage to Ticket to Work assistance and benefits counseling; and job placement assistance.
- Individuals with disabilities are automatically eligible for services.
- Six AJCs are located throughout the County (<https://worksourcemontgomery.com/job-seekers/where-to-find-us/>) including a large comprehensive center in Wheaton, a mobile job center and a virtual job center.
- Workforce unemployment rate is 1.54%. The County is still down 20,000 jobs from the pre-pandemic level and there are two jobs for every one job seeker. Based on research potential workers include people with disabilities, youth and returning workforce.
- Grant Relief for Onboarding Workers (GROW) assistance is intended for business entities, both for-profit and not-for-profit, negatively impacted by the pandemic, including but not limited to, hospitality (hotel and food service), transportation, retail, travel, cosmetology, dependent care, and other industries with front-line workers, and particularly for small businesses. WSM will award grants in two tiers: one flat rate for part-time workers (from \$2,500) and one for full-time workers (from \$5,000); meant to cover the cost of the first few weeks of onboarding training upon hiring. Program is used to promote the hiring of untapped demographics.
- Operate training programs directly and indirectly. Designate \$5,000 for every County resident to attend Montgomery College or local training providers and provide support services along the way. Funding can be used for books, uniforms, transportation and vehicle repairs.
- Work with providers such as SEEC, DORS and Sunflower Bakery who can assist individuals with significant disabilities.
- New Young Adult Work Experience Program provides individuals with a weekly \$450 stipend for the first 14 weeks of participation. Participants can work on professional skills, determine a plan and engage with local employers. Individuals with disabilities automatically qualify for this program.
- New initiative to provide career counseling to every student grade 6 through 12 in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

The floor was opened to questions.

- Will Montgomery County receive grant funding from the Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF) and the Rural Maryland Prosperity Investment Fund (RMPIF)? No, that grant has been set aside for rural areas.
- Does WSM provide transportation for persons with disabilities? Assistance is provided by determining available public transportation, providing gas or Ubers until the individual receives their first paycheck. DORS offers adaptive driver education as well as funding for adaptation of vehicles.
- What is the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities in the County? According to the U.S. American Community Survey for 2022, the unemployment rate of persons with disabilities aged 16 and older in the labor force is 12.1%. The unemployment rate of the total population is 3.9%. It was noted that this data depends on individuals self-identifying as having a disability and the actual number may be much higher.

### **Introduction – Dr. Patricia McGhee, Chief, Aging and Disability Services**

Betsy Luecking, Staff, introduced Dr. Patrice McGhee, recently appointed Chief of Aging and Disability Services.

### **Chair and Vice-Chair Report**

Trish reported October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Karen Morgret, Vice-Chair, represented the Commission at the County Council's proclamation recognizing NDEAM on October 3.

Trish will be attending the County Council's Health & Human Services (HHS) Committee Meeting tomorrow to present the Commission's FY25 operating budget priorities.

Karen reported she attended the HHS Boards, Committees, Commissions (BCC) Quarterly Meeting on September 21 with Director Dr. James Bridgers. Commission on Aging noted that they would like to work with this Commission in the upcoming year. The County is also trying an electronic application pilot program for food stamps and other services. Homeless Resource Day is being held on Thursday October 19. Councilmember Glass has introduced [Bill 36-23, Sale of Firearms or Ammunition – Suicide Awareness and Firearm Education \(SAFE\) Act](#).

The Commission's 2023 Annual Report is now available: <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/CPWD2023AnnualReport.pdf>

The Commission will be advertising for vacancies soon. Both Trish and Karen have terms expiring and a new Chair and Vice-Chair will need to be elected once new Commissioners are appointed.

Steering Committee will meet next Wednesday October 18 from 5:30pm to 6:30pm via Zoom.

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

After an open nomination process and interviews, the IDDC members voted on officers in accordance with the enabling legislation. As a result, the first officers of the IDDC are: Chair - Michael Greenberg, Vice-Chair - John Whittle, and Secretary - Jake Didinsky.

A preference survey was taken of the Commission members and the first meeting is scheduled for October 18 and will be held virtually. One major agenda item for the first meeting the IDDC will be reviewing Montgomery County Council [Bill 33-23 Voluntary Registry for Emergency 911 Calls](#). The Bill would establish a program so that people with disabilities can voluntarily provide information about their disability to a Montgomery County Police Department 911 Emergency System. The IDDC is planning to weigh in on the Bill with the Montgomery County Council. At the first meeting the IDDC will also be discussing organizational topics to include a meeting schedule for the year, commission priorities, and sub-committee structures and protocols.

### **Ex-Officio Member Updates**

Matt Barkley, ADA Compliance, Department of General Services, reported the County continues renovations at the Avery Road Treatment Center and the Gwendolyn E. Coffield Community Recreation Center. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued a notice of proposed rulemaking under Title II of the ADA that aims to improve web and mobile applications (apps) access for people with disabilities and clarify how public entities, primarily state and local governments, can meet their existing ADA obligations as many of their activities shift online. The DOJ's

new rule will explicitly require state and federal websites to conform with WCAG 2.1 Level A/AA. On October 4, 2023, the Supreme Court of the United States heard oral arguments in a case over whether a self-proclaimed “tester” plaintiff has standing to bring ADA claims against a hotel when the tester did not intend to stay at the hotel. A decision is expected by the close of the Court’s current term in early summer 2024.

Pat Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), reported MCPS is hosting an apprenticeship fair with WSM on November 14 from 10am to 2pm. The fair will be targeting high school age students from 10am to 12pm with 12pm to 2pm open to the broader population. Pat will share more information as it becomes available. MCPS is also rebuilding their relationship with DORS so students have access to services sooner.

Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), reported the Gaithersburg Customer Service Center will be moving into an apartment building next to the Shady Grove Metro. The new location may open within the next 30 days. HOC is currently accepting recertifications via email. Rebecca encouraged consumers to request recertification paperwork instead.

Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation, reported the Silver Spring Recreation Aquatic Center opening has been pushed back to March 2024. Montgomery County Recreation fitness passes will continue to be free through 2024. The free pass provides access to fully equipped fitness rooms, open gym (drop-in) activities, and game rooms at any Community Recreation Center during regularly scheduled hours.

### **Commissioner Updates**

None.

### **Public Comments**

Roselie Bright, Public, expressed her concerns about COVID and asked the Commission to support reinstating COVID-19 masking, air ventilation and air filtration requirements.

### **Meeting Adjourned – 7:30pm**

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Program Specialist II  
Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

### **Attendees**

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

**Commissioners Absent:** Coni Nepomuceno

**Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present:** Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Bob Green, Montgomery Parks; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Angela Luskey, Department of Recreation

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

**County Staff Present:** Dr. Patrice McGhee, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services

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

**Public:** Tracy Grant (Sign Language Interpreter); Andrea (Sign Language Interpreter); Danielle Bustos; Seth Morgan; Francie Gilman; Roselie Bright; Beth Lash, Regional Director, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services; Anthony Featherstone, Executive Director, WorkSource Montgomery, Inc.; Justin Hack, WorkSource Montgomery, Inc.

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

Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday November 8  
6pm to 7:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced

Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday November 15  
5:30pm to 6:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced