



**Commission on People with Disabilities**  
**Meeting Summary Minutes**  
September 13, 2023

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

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

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

**Accessibility and Streetscapes in Silver Spring – Atara Margolies, AIA, LEED AP Planner III, Down County Planning, Montgomery County Planning Department**

PowerPoint: <https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CPWD/StreetscapesCPWDMtgSept2023.pdf>

Website: [www.montgomeryplanning.org/silverspringstreets](http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/silverspringstreets)

Feedback and input from the Commission:

- This Commission has previously worked on establishing standards for brick pavers. In 2009, the County Council passed a [resolution regarding the use of brick and other pavements in the public right-of-way](#). Pavers can create barriers for people with mobility and visual disabilities. They are also more difficult and costly to maintain. Atara asked for suggestions on other materials to use instead of pavers. Consider planting tree types like dogwoods that will not uproot pavers, if pavers are used.
- How do existing plans like Vision Zero and Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) work with other plans like this Streetscapes? Master plans are countywide plans that develop high level policies that impact development but does not decide materials to be used. Sector plans review particular areas for issues such as zoning, housing, parks, environmental considerations, historic entities, transportation, and growth potential. Sector plans are developed every 20 to 25 years. Atara reported there is an internal coordination group to ensure all plans remain aligned.
- Restaurants with outdoor seating need to have restrictions in place as often seating is placed on sidewalks in the pedestrian path of travel. One solution may be to install a barrier between the sidewalk and the restaurant. Sidewalk area needs to be wide enough to accommodate larger wheelchairs.
- There is an angled crosswalk near the Silver Spring library that some individuals who are blind have difficulty navigating as it is not a straight crosswalk. It was suggested that this crosswalk have some tactile markings installed. It was also noted that it is important to have universal design across the county and throughout the state.
- Suggested that the area on Ellsworth that is closed to vehicular traffic have curbs removed to allow individuals using mobility devices easier access to cross the area than have to travel to either end of the street to cross. Atara reported that this area is privately owned and managed. She advised all comments should be directly to Silver Spring downtown management.
- The County will be consulting the federal [Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines](#). The Access Board published a final ruling in August 2023.

- Street parking will remain in downtown Silver Spring. There are a few identified streets where on street parking will be removed in order to increase the sidewalk width.
- It was suggested that Montgomery Planning review the City of Rockville's sidewalk plan.
- The Commission offered to attend a walking tour of the area to provide further input.
- Atara reported she would like to present to the Commission later this year with updates. Once standards are implemented changes will occur slowly and incrementally as development occurs and when project improvements are approved. She

### **Establish Priorities/Goals for Upcoming Year – Discussion led by Patricia Gallalee and Karen Morgret**

Trish reported the Commission has used three overarching topics in the past to determine priorities – transportation, housing and employment.

John Whittle, Commissioner, sent out the [White House policy initiatives for people with disabilities](#) via email prior to tonight's meeting.

Sammi Hampton, Commissioner, also sent their suggestions out via email which included: subsidy for personal care attendants for all persons with disabilities; working with the County's Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to prepare the disability community for upcoming climate change emergencies and ensure shelters are accessible; affordable and accessible housing; and a disability pride parade or festival for next year.

Trish said it will be important to continue to monitor the County's Transportation Services Improvement Fund (TSIF). She also reported there have been new challenges and issues for riders of MetroAccess. Bong Delrosario, Maryland Department of Disabilities, asked that comments be sent to him to address these issues with WMATA.

Tonya Gilchrist, Commissioner, recommended that a percentage (10% to 20%) of Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDU) be built according to Fair Housing Act standards. No standards currently exist. Betsy Luecking, Staff, suggested asking Jackie Simon, who is the sole realtor for MPDUs, speak to the Commission on this topic. She reported that the Commission worked on legislation years ago for accessibility standards in MPDUs, but it was not received well and was never passed.

Richard Shermanski, Commissioner, reported he will continue to address the issue of accessibility in courts for those with visible and invisible disabilities with the communication workgroup.

Trish suggested discussing employment opportunities in the private sector. Betsy reported October is National Disability Employment Month. The Commission will have a presentation from Beth Lash, Regional Director, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), who will provide an update on services. DORS recently received federal funding that will pay for four years of Montgomery College including room and board.

Jeneva Stone, Commissioner, agreed that there is a caregiver crisis. The County currently provides a subsidy to developmental disability providers. Jeneva reported that individuals with I/DD that are in self-directed services do not receive the County subsidy. She suggested inviting Caring Across Maryland to address home care supports for persons with disabilities and how these services are administered to better prepare a plan going forward. Jeneva reported there are 30,000 individuals waiting for homecare on Maryland's waiting list. Jeneva has written the following regarding the Maryland Medicaid and the medically complex and disabled community:

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

Avner Shapiro, Commissioner, suggested including the County's Early Intervention Initiative as a priority and asking Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) staff to present to the Commission on the program's progress.

Betsy reported Commission priorities will be presented to the DHHS Director next week and to the County Council in October.

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

Steering Committee will not meet this month.

Trish reported that several Commissioners have terms ending as well as three Commissioners are now serving on the new Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Commission (IDDC). The County Executive's Office of Boards, Committees and Commissions has not posted the vacancy announcement yet. It will be a long process. Trish and Karen Morgret, Vice-Chair, both have terms ending and a new slate of officers will need to be elected once new Commissioners are confirmed.

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

Avner reported the DHHS Infants and Toddlers Program, which administers the screening initiative, has developed written materials on how to reach pediatricians. Staff plans to meet with pediatricians this fall. The County is finalizing a bid for the screening tool which will be subsidized to pediatricians.

### **Update – IDDC – John Whittle, Commissioner and Liaison to IDDC**

John has been appointed to the IDDC to be the voting member representing this Commission. The IDDC is now operational and will be conducting a new member orientation later this week. No meeting dates have been set at this time and officers have not been appointed yet. John will report to this Commission on the initiatives of the IDDC and how this Commission can collaborate.

Trish reported that the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee will no longer be meeting and has been replaced by the IDDC.

The Commission submitted comments to the Maryland Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) regarding its nursing supports services policy last week.

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

Sharon Norcio, Montgomery County Department of Recreation, reported 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. The new aquatic center at the Silver Spring Recreation facility is scheduled to have programs operating beginning in January 2024. Fall recreation programs are also beginning and open for registration.

Denise Isreal, Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), reported the Ride On Reimagined Study will be hosting a virtual open house on Thursday September 28 at 6:30pm to share an overview of recommended proposed changes to the bus route network in Montgomery County, answer questions, and receive feedback. Two transportation programs ended September 1 – essential Delivery Services for Call-n-Ride participants and free taxi rides to COVID-19 test and vaccination clinics, and at-home test kit and mask pickup locations. Recently Ride On introduced Flex-Book & Go which gives riders the flexibility of not having a fixed stop or schedule. Currently, Flex operates in the Rockville and Glenmont/Wheaton zones. Curb to curb service is available for residents with disabilities. Effective July 2, 2023, Ride On re-introduced the Night-time Courtesy Stop Program. This program allows passengers to request to stop at any location during their ride. Limitations are: exiting only; must be regular route; location must be safe to stop; no intersection, highway, or freeway stopping; and express buses are exempt from this initiative. Connect-A-Ride offers Ride Smart Travel Trainings, a free half-day workshop that helps Montgomery County residents aged 50+ get confident and comfortable taking public transportation. Participants learn how to read the Metro map, understand digital schedule signs, load a fare card, and where to find a station's emergency and accessibility features. The workshop includes classroom training, a trip on a Ride On bus, a visit to a Metro station, and a one-station round-trip train ride. The workshop takes about three hours. Advanced registration is required. To register or for more information, call 301-738-3252 or email [ConnectARide@AccessJCA.org](mailto:ConnectARide@AccessJCA.org).

Sammi, Independence Now (INNOW), reported INNOW is hosting a health and wellness fair on October 13 from 2pm to 5pm at the Silver Spring location. A flyer will be sent to Betsy for distribution.

Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL), reported the Germantown Library is hosting sensory family story times. She noted that there have been COVID test kit shortages and residents should check the library's website to see which branches have kits in stock.

### **Public Comments**

Cassandra Perry, Public, suggested that Disability Pride Month be recognized in Montgomery County and honored in some way.

Meeting Adjourned – 7:38pm

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; Sammi Hampton; Samuel Korper; Cindy LaBon; Ricardo Lopez; Karen Morgret, Vice Chair; Coni Nepomuceno; Lisa Quinn; Avner Shapiro; Richard Shermanski; Jeneva Stone; Teresa Villani; John Whittle; Melissa Wyman

**Commissioners Absent:** Karen Goss; Karen Herson; Mandy McCarthy

**Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Present:** Patricia Cochrane, Montgomery County Public Schools; Rebecca Grayson, Housing Opportunities Commission; Bob Green, Montgomery Parks; Angelisa Hawes, Montgomery County Public Libraries; Denise Isreal, Department of Transportation (DOT); Sharon Norcio, Department of Recreation

**Non-Voting Ex-Officio Members Absent:** Matthew Barkley, ADA Title II Compliance Officer, Department of General Services; Candace Groudine, Human Rights Commission; Karen Hochberg, Office of Human Resources

**County Staff Present:** Odile Brunetto, Chief, Aging & Disability Services, Department of Health and Human Services; Atara Margolies, Montgomery County Planning Department; Tara Clemons Johnson, County Council

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

**Public:** Jac Terrio (Sign Language Interpreter); Addy Eubanks (Sign Language Interpreter); Seth Morgan; Francie Gilman; Bong Delrosario, Maryland Department of Disabilities; Larissa Klevan; Tyler Milam; Pat Sheehan; Cassandra Perry

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

### **Full Commission Meeting – Wednesday October 11**

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

### **Steering Committee Meeting – Wednesday October 18**

5:30pm to 6:30pm to be held via Zoom – link to be announced