

Accessibility Advisory Committee Meeting  
June 5, 2019  
Rockville Memorial Library  
6:30-8:00 pm  
Notes

**Present:**

Debbie Brown, Sligo Creek Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind; Cindy Buddington, Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, Independence Now, Equipment Connection for Children; Jane Carona, National Capitol Area Chapter of the American Council of the Blind; Amy Fier, EveryMind; Francie Gilman, Independence Now; Barbara King, Community Representative/Member, American Council of the Blind; Elizabeth Lang, Assistant Facilities and Accessibility Program Manager; Jill Lewis, Coordinator, Retired Director Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped; Dennis Pillsbury, Montgomery County ADA Title II Compliance; Betty Thompson, Consultant; Jane Williams, Library Board Liaison

**Library Update**

Branch Refresh and Renovation Projects

Elizabeth Lang reviewed the library branch renovation and refresh projects. Praisner Library closed for a refresh project on May 14<sup>th</sup> and will remain closed for five to seven months. The external ADA improvements have been completed, and the internal work is in process. Internal work includes, replacing entrance doors with sliding doors; restroom improvements; replacement of some thresholds; replacement of meeting room doors and counters. The meeting room audio loop is being replaced. Susan Cohen (Head of Adult Services, Germantown Library and coordinator of the Deaf Cultural Digital Library) is working on an inventory of audio loops in the branches.

A firm closure date for Long Branch Library is not available yet. Construction probably will commence in November. Community Use of Public Facilities will alert individuals if meetings are scheduled at a library due to be closed. A much-needed improvement at the branch is a family restroom that will be added to the first level of the library.

Parking will be improved at Long Branch with additional parking spaces added, including three ADA-compliant spaces close to the building with clear and appropriate pathways to the building. In addition, there will be some spaces in the side of the parking lot that leads to the community center. The ramp and the stairway to the community center will be replaced. Signage issues will be addressed with the County handling parking space signage, and the library responsible for signage related to the library.

Refresh work has begun at the Germantown Library. Extensive work is not necessary since the library is relatively new. New carpet, paint in some areas, and some external work will be included in the refresh project. Spikes on exterior handrails (possibly to deter skateboarders) will be addressed. Dennis Pillsbury believes there are various ways to deal with the handrails.

The Chevy Chase branch has multiple external problems including, a book drop that is not accessible and issues with a lower-level patio. A report on this branch will be presented as the information on external and internal renovations becomes available.

The temporary Wheaton library will be closing but a reopening date of the permanent renovated branch is not yet available. September 7<sup>th</sup> is a scheduled date but not an official one. The newly-renovated library will be connected to a recreation center housing a pottery kiln, among other features.

AAC members agreed that it would be beneficial to revisit libraries previously toured to determine if refresh/renovations took care of problems. For example, the upstairs staff restroom at the White Oak branch should be checked for compliance. Committee members can revisit libraries on their own or in small groups. This is subject to further discussion among members. The AAC reports detailing problems should be referenced during the follow-up library visits.

Dennis Pillsbury would like feedback from the AAC members on the new Kensington Park Library garden. His email address is:  
[Dennis.Pillsbury@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Dennis.Pillsbury@montgomerycountymd.gov).

AAC members discussed the composition of pathways at branch libraries and recommended cement, not brick, for pathways. Members asked if a substance could be used that is ADA-compliant and permeable. At this point no library is using brick pathways.

## Inclusive Programming

Elizabeth continues to work with Monica Martinez on sensory story times and has conducted staff training for the story times at nearly all of the twenty-one branches. Successful sensory story times have already been held at the White Oak and Little Falls libraries. The goal is to offer the special story time training at every branch by September. Quince Orchard Library staff has expressed an interest in a sensory stay-and-play program, designed for children on the autism spectrum and their families.

All staff members conducting story times have learned the importance of sensory-friendly programs and have been provided with a kit containing noise-cancelling headphones, weighted lap blankets, and other items to assist participants. Each story time is limited to 12 participants. Elizabeth is trying to advertise in several places in the fall.

## Staff Training

Elizabeth is in the process of editing the AAC tip sheets and training documents. She is formatting them for consistency and creating one document for each tip sheet. The document will include the tip sheet, the training objectives, the scenarios, and expected outcomes. Elizabeth will have created drafts of the tip sheet documents in time for the September AAC meeting. She has created a “learning blueprint” which provides a detailed way of achieving the learning objectives. Additional tip sheets will be created as new members join the AAC.

## **AAC New Members and Future Projects**

### New Members

Monica is talking to a young woman to arrange a time when she can attend a committee meeting to see if she has interest in joining the AAC. The potential new member would represent adults on the autism spectrum.

Jill Lewis is in contact with Javier Valera, president of the county Down Syndrome Association, about his joining the committee, acting as a consultant, or marketing library programs, services, and collections to his organization.

Francie Gilman and Susan Cohen discussed new committee membership from the deaf and hard of hearing communities. Susan suggested Dana Mulvaney, an active member of the Hearing Loss Association of America and/or Al Sonnenstrahl, a nationally-known advocate for the deaf community. Committee members are recommended to the library director who is responsible for appointing new members. Jill and Francie will reach out to the recommended individuals, and Monica will continue to talk to the potential new member or look for another individual to represent adults on the autism spectrum. AAC members expressed the desire to include a new member with partial sight.

### Future Projects

Cindy Buddington and Francie are working on a very promising housing program to be held in September or October of this year. They are considering presenting the program either at the Gaithersburg or Bethesda branch libraries. Elizabeth recommended holding the program at the Gaithersburg branch as the best library for transportation options.

The program goal is to broaden the housing issue so that the program will appeal to individuals with or without disabilities and will cover the many questions all community members have about housing. The tentative program plan is to hold a panel of two or three speakers. At this point the panel will include Debra Potts of Independence Now and Susan Smith of the Housing Opportunities Commission. Information will include how to improve an individual's credit score, making a home accessible, how to find a good contractor, and the Design for Life program. Housing is a very broad topic, and there may be too much information for one program. It is possible that more than one program could be held to cover the many housing issues. Cindy and Francie discussed whether or not to include homelessness as a program topic and whether the program would be about homelessness, disability, or both topics. Many individuals facing housing problems are disabled and homeless. Independence Now conducts a housing program for people with disabilities, and the county has a homelessness outreach program. Francie and Cindy will report on their progress at the September meeting or via email before the meeting.

### **Miscellaneous Items**

A complaint was reported from an individual with low-vision who found the striped sidewalk near the Silver Spring Library to look too much like a crosswalk. These sidewalks will be removed as part of the Purple Line construction.

Beth Chandler is building the library system's collection of books on disability. AAC members should send their recommendations to Jill who will compile a list of these books for Elizabeth. Note: the library collection includes print/Braille books.

## Library Board Update

Library Board liaison Jane Williams emailed her full Board report and gave the following highlights at the meeting:

- Funding exists for extended hours at both the Long Branch and Damascus libraries.
- Will Jawando is the lead councilmember for libraries. Councilmember Jawando's first public "conversation" will be June 12th at the Silver Spring Library. The details are in Jane's full Board report.
- The library system is in the process of interviewing candidates for a permanent library director.

## Next Meeting

The next AAC meeting is the first Wednesday in September, September 4, 2019.

## **Action Items/Recommendations:**

1. AAC members will return to libraries they previously toured to determine if accessibility issues have been addressed. Libraries can be visited in an individual basis or in groups. Notes from the tours should be used during the return visits.
2. Dennis Pillsbury would like feedback from the AAC members on the new Kensington Park Library garden.
3. AAC members recommend cement, not brick, for pathways. Members would like a substance for library pathways that is ADA-compliant and permeable.
4. Elizabeth will create drafts of the staff training tip sheets in time for the September AAC meeting. She will edit the tip sheets into consistent formats and create one document for each tip sheet. The document will include the tip sheet, the training objectives, the scenarios, and expected outcomes. Additional tip sheets will be created as new members join the AAC.

Elizabeth created a “learning blueprint” which provides a detailed way of achieving the learning objectives. She will run the blueprint by the AAC.

5. AAC members will revisit their suggested programs and consult again with their organizations for additional suggestions.
6. Jill will continue to communicate with Javier Valera, president of the county Down Syndrome Association, about either committee representation from his organization or other ways he or a member of his organization can partner with the AAC.
7. Monica will continue to talk to the potential new member or look for another individual to represent adults on the autism spectrum.
8. Francie will follow up on Susan Cohen’s suggested new membership from the deaf and hard of hearing communities.
9. AAC members will look into their contacts for a recommendation for a new member with partial sight.
10. Monica will continue to work with Elizabeth on sensory story time marketing strategies.
11. At the September meeting, Francie and Cindy will report on their housing program progress or email information prior to the meeting.
12. AAC members will recommend disability-related materials for Beth Chandler. The recommendations can be fiction or nonfiction books, generic subjects, particular authors, documentaries, or movies. AAC members will send their recommendations to Jill who will compile a list for Elizabeth.

The Next AAC meeting is Wednesday, September 4, 2019, 6:30-8:00 PM at the Rockville Library.