

# MCPL ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Meeting Minutes

June 18, 2024

### ATTENDEES

Francie Gilman, Chair

Richard Bell-Irving, Vice Chair

Debbie Brown, Secretary (National Federation of the Blind)

Elizabeth Lang, Assistant Facilities Manager and ADA Coordinator

Matt Barkley, ADA Compliance Officer (virtual)

Tim Lighter, Chair, Library Board (virtual)

Nadia Abouraya

Cindy Buddington (Independence Now)

Jane Carona (American Council of the Blind) (virtual)

Jonina Duker (virtual)

Wendalyn Hovendick

Barbara King

Yasmin Reyazuddin

Guest: Lee (virtual, otherwise unidentified)

### INTRODUCTION/TEAMS TIPS: Francie Gilman

Francie read the Teams tips.

Jill Lewis, Betty Thompson, and Joyce Plaxen are unable to attend. Monica Martinez attended for a short time and announced that she would be stepping down from the LAAC because she is starting a business and her time is limited. She will try to find someone from the autism community to apply for membership. She enjoyed her time with us, and we wished her luck and success.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Debbie Brown

It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes from the March meeting as circulated. The motion carried with some corrections from Jonina.

#### BOARD REPORT: Tim Lighter, Chair, Library Board

County Executive Elrich put in \$360,000 for world languages, \$315,000 for digital media, especially Hoopla, and \$300,000 for professional development. There was no new (added) funding. The budget is \$53 million. There is a total of 384 employees. There will be no staff cuts. The foreign language funding will come up short.

Director Anita Vassallo is leaving as of July 1. Interviews for the new director are July 10 and 11. There may not be a confirmation hearing until September. Angelisa Hawes will be acting director after Anita leaves. The vice chair of the Library Board is on the selection panel and Eric Brooks from the Friends is also on the panel.

The Board has six vacancies; two are existing members who want to renew their membership. They will be submitted so that by the end of the summer there will be a full board.

In answer to a question of whether braille is included in funding for foreign languages: because braille is not a language, it does not fit into that category.

Jane asked about creating a subregional library for Talking Books. This can be an action item. Staff and space would be important considerations.

Someone asked about the status of Clarksburg Library. The Clarksburg library is being built and has been planned for at least 15 years.

### ADA REPORT: Matt Barkley, ADA Compliance Manager

Matt reported on the new ADA Title II requirements for state and local government. They were issued on April 24, 2024 and must be implemented in two years. Websites must comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1aa. It was effective 60 days after it was published. There are some exceptions, such as archival content, third party poster's content, content that cannot be made accessible, announcements about past events, and private and password-protected documents that are not available to the public. Having two versions of a website, one accessible and one inaccessible, is not allowed. In addition to websites, the accessibility rules apply to documents, apps, and social media. The initiative is being led by the County's technology department, TEBS. The County Council is aware of the new requirements and supports the initiative.

#### Questions:

- Debbie asked if it applies to government contractors? Yes, it will apply to contractors.
- Jane asked if this rule can be used to justify making more of the library book collections accessible, such as requiring an audio version, for example? This applies just to making digital formats accessible. If it's offered digitally it should be provided accessibly. Elizabeth said the Library is aware of accessibility issues, and brings it up with vendors. But if there is just one format of a resource and it is not accessible, they provide it and press the vendor to work on making it accessible. They are still working on Communico, the Library calendar software, and it has been two years. The law will encourage vendors to step up their game.
- Richard asked if anyone created a baseline analysis of the county's website telling us what percent we are at now? It would be good to have a way of measuring progress. TEBS would know for sure, and

Chris Daniels in TEBS may know the percentage of County digital holdings are not accessible.

## BRIGADIER GENERAL CHARLES MCGEE REFRESH TOUR — Committee

Francie hoped that everyone had read the draft report and recommendations, because this is important for all library users. We know that not all of our suggestions will be accepted.

Yasmin said she had heard about the need for a safe place for people to wait for MetroAccess or Lyft, etc., and that a canopy to protect against the elements would be a good idea. Wendalyn described the difficulties she had in finding the entrance. Francie said she would make sure those go into the final recommendations.

We asked about the status of the former Silver Spring library building. They may tear it down, in the process of turning it over to another entity.

Elizabeth commented on the draft and provided additional information. The Brigadier Charles McGee Library (BG) is not as large as Rockville (inaccuracy in the draft report). It does not have the most visits (it is eighth). The highest are Davis and Gaithersburg. We should check if the numbers are going down. They have a lot to deal with because of the populations with social problems like homelessness and drug addiction. The library does not have control of the streets around the building, but they can ask about things like parking spaces for people with disabilities. There is an overhang on Fenton but that is not available when there is construction. There is a bus shelter, but it does not have an address, and it is difficult to give directions. It will be even more difficult when the Purple Line opens. To help with wayfinding Richard suggested the possibility of a column outside, something eye-catching with standardized features that everyone could use as a meeting point. Elizabeth noted that suggestion.

MCPL is aware of the difficulty of wayfinding and the need for better signage inside and outside the building. It is already noted for the refresh.

We will not be able to have tactile markers on the floor because of the possibility of trip risks.

Is there a gold standard or best in class for accessible libraries? There are many needs and there is no one document to refer to for libraries, but there's many resources on accessible design and universal design. The ADA standards don't address everything. Richard asked if there is a library that has the physical characteristics we want to follow. There is one in northern Europe that is considered a model, designed on universal design principles. Elizabeth said she would look for it (an action item).

A member asked about adult changing tables. Elizabeth said this is being addressed by the Department of General Services. They will be put in the Damascus Library, and other buildings wherever feasible; some cannot be made to work because of the size of the room.

We had asked about the "monument" sign outside BG, and who controls the LED text there. Elizabeth said the staff has the software to control it.

We discussed the room known as the "Red Grill," between the third and fourth floors. It has a metal wall with holes, and sound travels through it, and children climb on it. They have covered it with plastic but they are looking for other ways to make it quiet and safe. It might have looked interesting on the architectural plan, but in practice, it doesn't work and will be fixed.

Jane said tactile underfoot will be more helpful than signage for blind people. Elizabeth said architects are limited in what they can do. While they can follow guidelines for visibility and including braille for regular signage, once larger wayfinding issues come up, it is much more difficult. Debbie said this is a problem everywhere, and suggested adding accurate and standardized directions on the MCPL website. Elizabeth said we could help by giving good directions that could be included on webpages. She said our suggestions would be good to have in the fall sometime, but emphasized that the design work has not yet started. Some of this was in the BG report, but what's needed is more details, and orientation landmarks.

Lee asked if apps like Hoopla is accessible, and if libraries have carrels, and if apps can be helpful in getting directions. Elizabeth responded: it depends on what accessibility features are needed for Hoopla, it can be

complicated; all branches have study carrels (collaboration rooms); about apps for wayfinding, the users need a device and it communicates with various points in the building. It's possible, and it's a budget factor. Debbie said it can help people who can use smart phones. Wendalyn had mixed success with one, and it didn't work well. Elizabeth has talked with a vendor, but the beacons require batteries and upkeep. A script and training for staff in that building would be good. Francie will add to the recommendations a suggestion that staff should be trained to be able to give verbal directions. Also, at Jane's suggestion, to find a way to make the library an Aira access point. Aira is an app that connects people who are blind with trained agents who can provide visual information by phone, using the camera of the user's phone to give guidance.

## FACILITIES REPORT—Elizabeth Lang

Angelisa Hawes will be interim director beginning July 1.

Elizabeth reported that there will be a statewide Inclusion Showcase on July 25 held by the Maryland Library for the Blind and Print Disabled with statewide participation. They will set up virtual locations, possibly a room in the Rockville library. Rockville will be a satellite location. Elizabeth will pass along more information when she gets it.

## UPDATES AND FUTURE EVENTS: Francie Gilman

We have submitted our input for the new MCPL director to the Board, as they requested.

On April 8 Debbie Brown testified for the MCPL 2024-2025 budget at the County Council.

Yasmin brought an APH catalog to Elizabeth so staff could find items helpful to children who are blind.

Staff toured the BG Library and are developing recommendations for the design.

Upcoming event: Joyce would like to work on a disability day in March. Joyce would like to meet with all interested members on July 21 or July 29.

An action item for Francie is to draft an addition to the AAC Overview to include a nominating committee in the election process.

We need to compile volunteer hours working on this committee and send to Regina to be reported to the State. This is for July 1 2023-June 30 2024. Francie suggested using the total of meeting times (two hours four times a year) and one hour a month for reading email, doing refresh tours, etc. Anyone who has more hours should let her know.

The MD Disability Awareness conference will be coming in 2025.

Several possible topics for the September meeting: Any budget items that we wish to suggest for next fiscal year. Also, the possibility of good tactile maps of branches; Jane suggested Map Labs, and Elizabeth said she had contacted them and didn't hear back, but Jane has a contact.

### ACTION ITEMS AND FUTURE TOPICS (those marked "done" are as of 9/1/24)

Bylaws need to be clarified on voting (Francie Gilman; must be done by December; done).

Volunteer hours need to be submitted by all members covering July 2023 to June 2024 (All should send to Francie; they will be submitted to Regina; done).

Add discussion about budget to the September meeting agenda (done).

Check for the model accessible library (Elizabeth, done but not able to get information).

Find places for tactile maps for branches (Elizabeth and Jane).

Attend the Inclusion Showcase (done, Francie and Barbara King attended).

How can we get more braille books in the Library? Future discussion about the possibility of a Subregional library.

Send the Powerpoint from Matt about the County's accessible digital initiative (Francie, done).

Email BG report notes (Elizabeth, done).