



Monday, February 22, 2021  
Public Meeting (Virtual) of the Howard County Commission on Disabilities  
6:30 – 8:30 PM

**PRESENT:** Nicole Czarnecki  
Ellicott Finkelstein  
Arthur Gold  
Joshua Hirsh  
Andrea Kolp  
Doug Lea  
Marian Vessels  
Mia Williams  
Karen Wood

**EXCUSED ABSENCE:** Heidi Burghardt  
Randy Murbach

**STAFF:** Erica Lewis  
Michelle Henry  
Terry Zeigler

**GUEST:** Jim Karantonis

**INTERPRETERS:** No interpreters requested for this meeting

**ABSENT:** Riffat Ashai

**I. Call to Order**

Roll Call  
Welcome

**II. Old Business**

A. Approval of Minutes for October 26, 2020

- Motions made (Karen, then Josh) to approve minutes as written.  
Passed unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes for December 2, 2020

Motions made (Josh, then Doug) to approve minutes as written. Passed unanimously.

C. ADA30 Video and Art Contest

- Artwork and video have been posted on the Commission's web page.  
The audio descriptions will soon be added.

- Discussion about displaying some of the artwork at the Patuxent Woods building.

#### D. Updates

##### 1. Provider Committee Chairperson

- Ande is the current chairperson of this committee; her term on the Commission is ending. Commissioners asked to contact staff if interested in serving as chair of the provider committee. Ande has agreed to remain committee chair until another Commissioner takes over the position.

##### 2. Commission Recommendation re Licensure of Sign Language Interpreters (SLIs)

- A Commission letter in support of exploring regulation and licensure of SLIs was sent to the Office of the County Executive in July 2020. There is no update regarding the letter. It was noted that there is proposed legislation currently being considered by the Maryland General Assembly (Senate Bill 431/House Bill 535) regarding licensure of SLIs.

##### 3. Accessibility of Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) 2-way Communication Systems

- Staff reported that HCPSS advised that it does not have the funding to post signage for 2-way communication systems, and that the communication systems are compliant with ADA regulations. Doug stated he would follow up with the school system regarding this issue.

##### 4. Proposed Legislation for Adult Changing Facilities in Public Buildings (Senate Bill 61/House Bill 321)

- Legislation currently being considered by Maryland General Assembly; passed in the House and now being reviewed in the Senate.

##### 5. Howard County Association of the Deaf Recommendation to Resolve Street Name(s) Issues in the County

- Discussion is tabled until the April 26<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting, at the request of Randy.

##### 6. Accessibility of Virtual Meeting Platform used by Howard County Government

- The WebEx virtual meeting participants who are deaf and blind have had difficulty using and navigating the WebEx platform. This issue was first raised on June 22, 2020 at the

Commission's first meeting held virtually via WebEx. Accessibility concerns include difficulty navigating the screen using a screen reader and difficulty "pinning" the sign language interpreters. A request has been made for a modification of the County's policy of using WebEx, to permit the Commission to utilize another virtual meeting platform. There is no update on the status of this request.

7. Request for Waiver of Plastic Bag Fee

- Discussion held. Motions made in support of not taking any further action regarding the issue at this time. Motion passed.

III. New Business

A. 2020 Annual Report

- The draft of the 2020 annual report was distributed for review and comments. Commissioners are asked to submit feedback and edits via email to staff by March 15.
- Staff proposed that approval of the finished report take place at the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. Motions made (Nicole, then Karen) in support of this proposal. Passed unanimously.

B. Meeting with the County Executive

- Staff reported that the County Executive is interested in another meeting with the Commission. Date to be determined.

C. Access Committee

- Staff reported the Access committee is currently looking for new members. Karen and Mia expressed interest in joining.
- Next meeting is scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup>.
- Proposed agenda items include exploring options for accessible virtual meeting platforms, virtual tour of the new courthouse, Ellicott City Main Street design guidelines update, and lakefront access/shared paths.

D. Recruitment to fill Commission Vacancies

- Currently waiting for County Executive's Office to send out a news release for recruitment of new members.

E. Accessibility of COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

- Staff reported that communications were received regarding physical accessibility of the vaccine clinic at the Health Dept.. There were questions regarding the mobile vaccine unit.
- An additional vaccine clinic site was opened recently at Howard Community College.

- F. Alliance of Disability Commissions
  - Marian provided an update; the group includes representatives from seven counties.
- G. Accessible Parking Issue
  - Jim Karantonis discussed his concerns regarding potential for misuse of accessible parking spaces by persons who may not have a qualifying disability but who, nonetheless, are able to obtain parking privileges, in the form of vehicle plates and placards, that are issued by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration.
- H. Provider Committee
  - Next meeting is March 17<sup>th</sup> and will feature a legislative update presentation by Ande.

#### IV. Announcements

- Staff asked Commissioners to report their participation in the following activities:
  1. COVID Vaccine Telephone Town Hall
  2. HoCo Active Transportation Virtual Open House

#### V. Adjournment

- Meeting adjourned 8:30 p.m.

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