



Monday, August 23, 2021
Public Meeting (Virtual) of the Howard County Commission on Disabilities
6:30 – 8:30 PM
Meeting Minutes

PRESENT: Nicole Czarnecki
Elliott Finkelstein
Marian Vessels
Karen Wood
Doug Lea
Heidi Burghardt

ABSENT: Arthur Gold
Mia Williams
Joshua Hirsh
Ande Kolp

STAFF: Erica Lewis
Michelle Henry
Terry Zeigler

GUEST: Michael Adekoya
Steve Towne

INTERPRETERS: Brenda Kelly-Frey
Becky Frey

I. Call to order and Welcome

Elliott Finkelstein, Chair, opened the meeting by welcoming commission members and guests.

II. Roll Call

The Roll was taken, and Elliott Finkelstein declared the Commission was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.

III. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

The Chair entered the August 23, 2021 minutes and opened them for discussion. A motion to accept the minutes as written was entered and seconded. A vote of Commission members was taken and approved without opposition.

IV. Old Business

1. Recruitment to Fill Vacancies

Michelle and Erica will be receiving applications submitted to the County Executive for possible appointment to the Commission. Elliott, Karen and Doug volunteered to assist with reviewing applications and making recommendations.

2. Meet and Greet Commission Applicants

Guests Steve Towne and Michael Adekoya introduced themselves and shared the reasons for their interest in joining the Commission.

3. 2020 Annual Report

Staff is awaiting approval from the department's administration so that the report may be distributed and posted on the Commission's website.

4. Public Service Announcement for Shared Use in the Public Right-of-Way

This recommendation was approved by the Commission on June 28, 2021. Michelle reported that the recommendation, which is included in the Annual Report, is for the Howard County's Public Information Office and the Office of Transportation to take the lead on that project since the Commission does not have the resources and capacity for the project.

5. Ideas for Fall 2021 Event

In place of its annual fall awards, members discussed framing and displaying the winning artwork from the ADA30 art contest at the DCRS building at Patuxent Woods, with a news release announcing the exhibit. Elliott made a motion in support of this, seconded by Nicole and Karen. The motion passed unanimously. Suggestion was made to display artwork during the October 7 Howard County Diversity Day event before the exhibition at Patuxent Woods. Michelle to follow up.

6. HCPSS 2-Way Communication Systems at School Entrances

Doug followed up with the superintendent of the school system. Michelle and Erica will draft signage suggestions to be reviewed by the Commission. Heidi suggested that former Commissioner Randy Murbach be included in this project.

7. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Conversation with HCPSS

Commission to formulate discussion points, before scheduling a meeting with HCPSS leadership.

8. Presentations for Upcoming Meetings

Suggestions include receiving information regarding training of law enforcement in handling situations involving mental health crises, and accessible parking initiatives.

9. Activities for 2021 Annual Report

Commissioners were asked to notify Erica and Michelle of their participation as commission members, in disability-related activities, for inclusion in the 2021 annual report.

IV. New Business

1. Zoning Regulations Amendments

Commissioners expressed interest in pending zoning regulations. Question was raised as to whether members could appear before council to provide testimony. Members were advised that the Commission as a group could draft an advisory memo, to be submitted via the department's director to the County Executive. Commissioners may testify as private citizens before the County Council.

2. Committee Updates

a. Access Committee

Next scheduled meeting is September 14, 2021. Access Committee members are also encouraged to participate in a September 2nd virtual meeting of the Historic Preservation Board.

b. Provider Committee

Reviewed purpose of this committee and discussed whether revamping or re-naming is appropriate. Commissioners are asked to submit suggestions to Michelle and Erica.

3. Review of draft Rules of Procedure

The draft Rules of Procedure were distributed. Commissioners are asked to review and send comments to Erica and Michelle by September 17. The proposed Rules of Procedure will then be forwarded to the Office of Law for review.

4. Howard County Association of the Deaf (HCAD)

Heidi provided a presentation on the mission, activities, and current priorities of HCAD. Current priorities include advancing legislation to regulate sign language interpreters and renaming a local street to honor a deaf person who has advanced the rights and inclusion of deaf individuals. Heidi will provide updates at future meetings, for review and potential support by the Commission.

IV. Announcements

Doug reported on his participation in fundraising activities to support Special Olympics.

V. Adjournment

At 8:30 p.m. Elliott closed the meeting and directed the Commission to stand in adjournment until the Commission's next meeting.

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