

# **Frederick County Commission on Disabilities (COD) Minutes**

**Monday, March 11, 2019**

## **Attendance**

The following members were present: Nadine Autry, Karen Duffy, Marsha Flowers, Amy Crehan, Barb Trader and Steve McKay, County Council liaison.

Rick Harcum, Frederick County Acting Chief Administrative Officer; Monica Bearden, Director of the Frederick County Citizens Services Division; and Miles Ward, County staff liaison, were present.

The following members of the public were present: Lisa Sewell, Evan Evans, Theresa Posthuma, James Schiller, and John Gretz. Sign language interpreter Pearl Sims was also present.

## **Public Comment**

John Gretz expressed concerns about the COD's adherence to some requirements of the COD Bylaws and the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

Monica Bearden welcomed the members of the COD to the Citizens Services Division, where it now resides in the County's organizational structure. Dr. Bearden expressed her thanks to each member for their service, and explained her decades of personal and professional involvement, working on behalf of people with disabilities.

Steve McKay stated that the COD needed quarterly updates from the County Division of Public Works on its progress under its transition plan to mitigate accessibility barriers including ramps, sidewalks, and other pedestrian facilities. Rick Harcum, Frederick County Acting Chief Administrative Officer, said that this would be done.

## **Report from the Chair**

Chair Nadine Autry encouraged everyone to be aware that funding for the Money Follows the Person program in Maryland may go away. This is a project under the

Maryland Department of Health. Funding reductions could negatively impact the ability of people with disabilities to transition from institutions to residences.

Chair Autry also encouraged COD members to become familiar with the work now being done by the Willing to Work campaign, a recently formed initiative. It is trying to improve Maryland's Medicaid buy-in program, which is called Employed Individuals with Disabilities (EID) and serves people who are willing and able to work. Willing to Work hopes to expand EID in order to better support persons with disabilities and help them reach their full potential and capacity in a career field of their choice.

### **Guest Speaker**

Lisa Sewell described her experiences as an amputee who counsels and advocates for others in a similar situation. She is a certified peer visitor with the Amputee Coalition and has started a monthly support group for amputees in Frederick County. Ms. Sewell said that she started out on Google and found there were few support groups for amputees in this area. Now doctors refer people to her, and she actively looks for opportunities to help other amputees at clinics. She handed out a flyer with her contact information and details about her support group that meets at the C. Burr Artz Public Library on the third Tuesday of each month, where local amputees can learn from one another, share stories and ask questions about resources. Several COD members suggested that information about her support group be added to the next edition of the COD's Keys to Independence community resource guide.

### **Business:**

Upon motion by Karen Duffy, and second by Amy Crehan, the meeting agenda was approved unanimously. After review of attendance, Chair Nadine Autry stated that a quorum was established.

A) A motion was made and seconded to approve the COD minutes for its meetings on November 13, 2017; February 12, 2018 and February 11, 2019. Discussion took place about whether the minutes for February 12, 2018 meeting needed further revision. Barb Trader made a motion and Karen Duffy seconded that the minutes for February 12, 2018 be corrected to reflect the discussion at

that meeting and be brought to a future meeting for approval. The motion was approved. Karen Duffy moved, and Barb Trader seconded, that the minutes for the November 12, 2017 and February 11, 2019 meetings be approved, and they were unanimously.

B) Upon motion by Amy Crehan and second by Barb Trader, the following nominations for COD officers were made for terms to expire on June 30, 2019: Nadine Autry, chair; Karen Duffy, Vice Chair; and Marsha Flowers, Recording Secretary. The nominations were approved unanimously.

C) A general discussion took place among the members about where the COD is going, and what it should be doing. Some members expressed interest in finding out what previous CODs had done, and suggested inviting the two immediate past Chairs to the April COD meeting, and find out from them what they thought worked and didn't work.

Other members suggested getting in touch with the CODs in neighboring counties and find out what they are doing, and get someone to come speak at a COD meeting soon. It was suggested that the COD should consider doing a community survey of needs and challenges that are experienced by people with disabilities in Frederick County. One member expressed hope that the COD will include mental health and behavioral health, in addition to physical health when considering the scope of people with disabilities.

D) Three applicants for appointment to the COD were invited to introduce themselves and make brief comments about their backgrounds and interest in serving. James Schiller said that he has a longstanding interest in disability policy and advocacy, along with client's rights and privileges. He is a therapist at Brook Lane Health Services, holds a Ph. D. and LCSW-C, and is the father of an adult son with multiple disabilities. Evan Evans said that his is an activist, and is on the autism spectrum. He is passionate about not letting his disability define him, and has practiced therapy and self-help techniques that he hopes to share with others. Theresa Posthuma is a certified American Sign Language interpreter with Frederick Regional Health System. She has a son who is deaf, and is deeply committed to equality.

E). Chair Autry explained that the deadline had passed for the COD to get a table at the Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee Resource Fair on March 16,

2019 at Rock Creek School. She will be there with the Freedom Center and will try to wear both hats and answer questions people may have. She encouraged the COD members to be there if possible.

F) Progress on updating the COD's *Keys To Independence* disability resource guide was discussed.

Barb Trader suggested that a discussion of the Livable Frederick Plan should be added to an upcoming COD agenda. She and several other COD members expressed their interest in this plan and hoped that all COD members would take some time to review it.

Marsha Flowers explained the needs for a Deaf Community Center in Frederick due to the fact that there are approximately five thousand Deaf/Hard of Hearing people living in Frederick County/City. There is no place for them to go and find needed information to live in Frederick. She is on a committee that is working on this.

**Announcements, upcoming events and brief member comments:**

Steve McKay brought to the COD's attention a bill that is under consideration in Annapolis regarding disability issues. He strongly encouraged the COD to contact their representatives and express their support or concerns. Miles Ward said that members of the COD could write a letter to support this bill.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm.