

Frederick County Commission on Disabilities (COD) Minutes Monday, May 13, 2019

At the beginning of the meeting, Chair Nadine Autry recognized the existence of a quorum and asked for a motion to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Upon motion the vote to approve the meeting agenda was unanimous.

Attendance

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

Miles Ward, County staff liaison, was present.

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

Public Comment

John Gretz said that the proposed changes to the Commission's minutes for its September 2017 and February 2018 meetings were correct, and that he hoped they would be approved.

I-270 Expansion

A brief discussion took place about the proposed

expansion of I-270. It was suggested that this will increase transportation costs for people with disabilities, and the money should instead be spent on public transportation. Members were advised that while Frederick County has not yet taken a position on this, it would be possible for the Commission to do so and present a written recommendation to the County Executive.

Guest Speaker

Stuart Harvey has been the Election Director for Frederick County since 2002. Mr. Harvey spoke about a number of different elections issues, including the popularity and convenience of early voting, the inclusion of people with disabilities as election judges in Frederick County, the use of sign language interpreters during the training of election judges, and the training that is provided to election judges on the importance of being sensitive to the needs of people with disabilities.

For example, election judges are trained to get people with disabilities to the front of lines whenever possible, and to make sure that wheelchairs are available. Mr. Harvey said that signs will be made that encourage people with disabilities to request assistance, and asked for help in getting the word out that people with disabilities need to ask for help at the polling location if they need it.

On sign language interpreters, Mr. Harvey said that with 63 polling places the County cannot afford to provide

them, but would welcome volunteers to provide these services. He would also be willing to speak to a deaf group, and hoped it could be at his office so they could see what equipment is available.

Mr. Harvey addressed concerns that were expressed about whether the use of an oversized ballot by a person with disabilities could divulge the way they voted. Mr. Harvey explained that the tabulation of votes is done by an electronic scanner. A bill on related ballot issues is being studied this summer. A blind person who wants to vote unassisted can use an audio device. They can also request assistance, or bring in their own assistant.

Absentee voting is also an option for people with disabilities. This can either be done by mail, or in person at the main elections office.

Business

A) Karen Duffy moved to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2019 meeting; Barb Trader seconded. The vote to approve was unanimous.

B) A slate of officers was proposed for election, as follows: Karen Duffy, Chairperson; Nadine Autry, Vice-Chairperson; Marsha Flowers, Recording Secretary. These individuals were elected to these offices by unanimous vote and will begin their term of office on July 1. However, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to reexamine the offices after new members are appointed.

c) Barb Trader moved to accept the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the following applicants should be recommended for appointment to the Commission: Jenn Tousey, Karen Rushing, Evan Evans, and Theresa Posthuma. Karen Duffy seconded. The vote to approve was unanimous.

d) Karen Duffy provided a report about her recent discussion with Rick Weldon, the president & CEO of the Frederick County Chamber of Commerce. She is working with him to determine if one of the Chamber's Leaders on Loan teams could take on the Business Leadership Network as a project for next year. Typically, Leaders on Loan teams work with nonprofits and the COD is not one. Assignments wouldn't be made until September. Business Leadership Network recognizes that disability inclusion is often overlooked as diversity, and the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is typically much higher than those without disabilities. It provides businesses with opportunities to network and gain information on the best disability inclusion practices.

e) Marsha Flowers stated that a Deaf Independent Living Association Town Hall will take place at the County library, 110 E. Patrick Street in downtown Frederick, on Wed. May 22, from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm. She encouraged Commission members to attend and learn more about what is being planned. Options and resources are being looked at that would provide more opportunities for students at the Maryland School for the Deaf to stay in Frederick rather

than go home after they graduate. Frederick is gaining a reputation as a deaf-friendly city, and this would be a way to keep these young people where they want to be, and where they already have transportation and jobs. It would involve supported care in a group home setting.

F) Karen Duffy moved, and Amy Crehan seconded, to approve the minutes for the February 12, 2018 COD meeting, and to approve an amended version of previously approved minutes for the September 11, 2017 COD meeting. The vote to approve was unanimous.

G) Marsha Flowers gave a report on the Maryland American Sign Language Festival that was held on May 11, 2019 at the Frederick fairgrounds. She said that lots of information was shared and given out. Many of the people who asked for assistance were from other counties.

H) Steve McKay asked whether closed-captioning was provided for all FCG-TV programs, or just for public meetings. He said he would look into this. Mr. McKay also asked about progress in updating the COD's *Keys to Independence*. The Commission previously agreed to divide up this work and assign it to members after the four new members are appointed.

I) Marsha Flowers said that she feels that a deaf center is needed in Frederick. There are more than 20 different groups that assist the deaf community, but providers and

people who are deaf or hard of hearing do not have a central location to meet at.

The meeting was adjourned.