

Mayor's Council on Disability
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Meeting Minutes
March 02, 2009

Sandra Booher, Chairperson
Katie Jones, Secretary
Jill Hindman, Parliamentarian

Council Members:

Jim Queen
Mary Ann Schenk
Tommy Gates
Carolyn Boyd
Carol Martin
Phillip Stevens
Karl Epperson
John Jackson
Bryon Kleusner
Nichole Myers
Robert White

Meeting called to order by Chairperson, Sandy Booher.

In Attendance:

Carol Martin
Carolyn Boyd
Bryon Kleusner
Robert White
Sandy Booher
Katie Jones
Jim Queen
John Jackson
Phillip Stevens
Tommy Gates
Jill Hindman

Excused Absences:

Karl Epperson

Visitors:

Lucy Teague
Chris Jackson
Dennis Dodson
Bea Lyons
Elaine Adams
Lana Newton
Ron Henderson
Katie Long

Jay Piercy, OMA City Compliance Officer
Kathie Fulgham, Project Manager, Mayor's Office
Matt Lea, Assistant to Mayor, Mayor's Office

Guest speaker, Ron Pankratz, manager of recruiting and planning for new Volkswagen plant, was introduced by Council member Carol Martin. Mr. Pankratz spent time last Friday with the consortium of agencies that do job placement. He shared fact that Volkswagen is happy to be here and part of community as they get ready to produce a "world-class vehicle" here in Chattanooga. He began his remarks by sharing personal story of living in Kentucky then when opportunity came along came to Volkswagen and Chattanooga in January 2009. He has been employed with VW since November 2008; his background of experience is 16 years in human resources in auto-manufacturing, has master's degree in industrial and organizational psychology, but will focus on essential job functions as he begins the VW selection and recruitment of new employees. The goal of recruiting is always to find the best people and to do that one must be inclusive of all people, all groups and cast the net the widest; diversity is good business practice. In Lexington, KY, Mr. Pankratz represented agency designed to help partner employers with agencies that support folks with disabilities.

Volkswagen broke ground in January on the paint shop that should be "weather-tight" by September 2009, equipment installation should begin and by first quarter January 2011 production should start; the project is on schedule. Recruitment and hiring process for any positions that are being filled currently are located on the Volkswagen career web site. Now they're working on developing processes for both skilled and production hiring, also working with local resources group, career centers, the chamber (Chamber of Commerce), and the college (Chattanooga State) to develop those processes and hope to have them in place later this year. Even though there are many requests for hiring right away, that is not possible to do everything right now. Mr. Pankratz's focus as recruiting manager is to emphasize local talent, our stability for the company. The web site is www.vwgroupcareers.com which is found on his business card.

The majority of the Volkswagen workforce will be comprised of the production team members/associates that will require from six-to-nine months before start of production. Then there typically is a six-month delay before starting the second shift. Skilled workers will be hired little before that for maintenance as they get equipment installed.

The Mayor's Council on Disability members and the Mayor's Office expressed appreciation to Mr. Pankratz for giving of his time to meet and discuss career opportunities. They also thanked Volkswagen for their most generous support of the 2008 Go-Fest celebration last fall.

Jim Queen, manager of Care-A-Van Division of CARTA, offered transportation services for any applicants who may cite problems with getting to and from job interviews during the hiring process in the future.

Volkswagen is very supportive of the arts and VSA, artists with disabilities. Members of the MCD would be happy to partner with Volkswagen as consultants to ensure that facilities are properly built and accessible for all prospective employees. Phillip Stevens will work on putting a link to the Volkswagen hiring web site onto the Mayor's Council on Disability web site.

Secretary Katy Jones stated that the MCD meeting minutes will be distributed via e-mail to all members; she has had computer problems recently.

Chairperson Sandy Booher returned to introductions of the newly appointed MCD members including their reasons for wanting to serve on the Council and their area of expertise that they bring to the group.

Bryon Kleusner: interest developed while attending MCD meetings; saw opportunity for some good networking between UTC campus and the community. He's excited and humbled to be here;

background in rehabilitation, work with students with disabilities office, expertise in assistive technology.

Robert White: affiliated with Epilepsy Foundation, Northeast Epilepsy Foundation even though not currently employed. He holds master's degree for psychology with some experience in that field; he has had epilepsy since age of 12 years, has lost number of jobs over time and has led support groups.

John Jackson: Art teacher for Open Arms Care for 18 years has passion for arts and advocates for people with disabilities in the arts.

Disability Days on the Hill will be held on Wednesday, March 11, in Nashville; Sandy Booher, Chris and John Jackson and Jill Hindman plan to attend. Jill encouraged everyone who can to go, make appointment with legislative representatives in advance, and talk with them about the critical issues for people with disabilities. One pressing issue is that Family Support received a 14% cut in their budget and may have another similar cut again by July 1. One-to-one discussions with Legislators are most effective. Matt Lea, lobbyist for the City, offered to assist with chatting with Legislators on Disability Days on the Hill. He also mentioned some regional transportation bills that are being reviewed and hopes that CARTA may be able to benefit from those bills in the future. For example, perhaps a bus can be provided to transport folks to Legislative Day on the Hill. It was noted that the East Tennessee Day has the smallest turn-out representation than any other section of the state.

Sarah Hollyday and Will from Goodwill Industries are visiting the meeting today; Sarah is director of the new assistance dog program, while Will is the first dog to go through the training program. Together they are conducting fundraising for the new program. They hope to establish partnership with McKamey to work with rescue dogs there; there are currently six people on the waiting list for service animals. They have a partnership with the school system and are also visiting elementary and middle schools to do disability awareness.

Sarah announced an up-coming Canine Fashion Show to be held Thursday, April 2, at the Mill. The show is a fundraiser for Goodwill. Dogs will be wearing outfits from Bon Appetit, while their humans will be wearing outfits from Goodwill; the program starts with a silent auction at 11:00am.

Nominations Committee: Matt Lea reported that there is one more vacancy on the Mayor's Council on Disability to be filled. Election of officers time is approaching as it's supposed to be held in the month of April; this year election is tentatively set for the month of May once the MCD has full membership on board.

Matt also shared that the Art Exhibit is continuing at City Hall with art works by city employees; there are art pieces from paintings to pottery. Phillip has his book on exhibit.

Phillip Stevens reported on the web site: inquiries have been received from Elaine Adams for posting of therapeutic recreation activities; few phone calls from Chamber of Commerce have been taken care of and are up-to-date.

Jim Queen said that CARTA began additional route thanks to the Community Foundation grant. Newspaper coverage about stimulus package to CARTA provides hope that ten new buses may be ordered to replace the old ones, two of which will be hybrid vehicles. Some comments about funds being used for refurbishing Incline, but no real new yet. Automatic announcements at the bus stops are reported by riders to be great and accessible.

Chairperson Booher noted the Council's appreciation to Bea Lyons for preparing an up-dated listing of the MCD members and their contact information.

Announcements and Audience Comments:

C.H.I.P.S. Golf Classic: Thursday, March 26, 11:30am Registration; 12:00noon lunch provided by Chick-Fil-A; 1:00pm shotgun start; still looking for sponsors and teams; money goes to support adaptive golf

program at Brown Acres; Sponsor levels include: \$25 cart sponsor, \$75 hole sponsor, \$200 team fee, \$250 organization, \$500 and \$750.

Mega Conference: May 29 & 30, in Nashville. More details later.

Confident Living Program for persons with both vision and hearing loss: Wednesday, April 22-Saturday, April 25, at Signal Center.

Local Chattanooga Chapter, Hearing Loss Association of America: Walk4Hearing event set for Saturday, May 16, 9:00am – 12:00noon, at Chattanooga State and the adjoining Tennessee River Walk. Kick-Off Brunch will be held Saturday, March 28, at 10:00am, at Chattanooga State in the CBIH Building Lobby and cafeteria. The Walk4Hearing is a major fundraising event for people who live with hearing loss; there are 33 million Americans who have some degree of hearing loss with 2 million of those being Deaf. It should be noted that 10% of the general population has a hearing loss. Visit the web site: www.walk4hearing.org, click on Chattanooga TN and join a team or make a donation in support of hearing loss.

Jay Piercy announced that there may be grant monies available for the Office of Multicultural Affairs to explore possibility of having more copies of the ADA resource directory printed; there have been numerous requests for more copies.

Regional Planning Council meeting: Orange Grove Center library on March 25; Jill Hindman is chair for this region that is looking for new members to join the Council.

Meeting was adjourned. Next MCD meeting will be held Monday, April 6, 2009, at 3:00pm, at the DRC.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Katye Jones

Katye Jones, Secretary
Mayor's Council on Disability