

Mayor's Council on Disability
Chattanooga, Tennessee

Meeting Minutes
August 04, 2008

Sandra Booher, Chairperson
Bea Lyons, Vice Chair
Katie Jones, Secretary
Jill Hindman, Parliamentarian

Council Members:

Dr. Rick Rader
Jim Queen
Mary Ann Schenk
Tommy Gates
Gina Turley
Carolyn Boyd
Carol Martin
Phillip Stevens
Karl Epperson

Meeting called to order by chairperson, Sandy Booher.

In attendance:

Sandy Booher
Bea Lyons
Jill Hindman
Jim Queen
Rick Rader
Carol Martin
Phillip Stevens

Excused Absence:

Mary Ann Schenk
Carolyn Boyd
Karl Epperson
Katie Jones

Tommy Gates
Jay Piercy, Office of Multicultural Affairs

Mayor's Council on Disability minutes for July 07, 2008, were distributed via email prior to today's meeting; these minutes were approved as prepared and will be placed on the MCD web site.

Rosalind Mussared from the Career Center at the AIM Center serves clients and assists them with receiving SSI benefits; she is very successful with assisting clients who are homeless and disabled. She presented information along with a brochure and survey on the SOAR: SSI/SSDI, Outreach, Access and Recover program from the Social Security Administration. People without regular place to stay face substantial barriers to participation in federal disability assistance programs that would help to end their homelessness. Obstacles include lack of acceptable ID, absence of fixed address and incomplete medical records. The Social Security Administration oversees two entitlement programs designed to provide financial support to individuals with disabilities. Supplemental Security Income, SSI, is needs based program providing maximum \$637 per month to individuals who lack stable employment history. Social Security Disability Income, SSDI, is related to earnings history and the amount paid into Social Security system. Disability Determination Services, DDS, is a state agency under contract with SSA to determine medical eligibility for disability benefits. Access to these entitlements is especially challenging for people experiencing homelessness. Recognizing importance of financial assistance to overall health and well being of people with disabilities, the federal government implemented the interagency SOAR program to

reduce the delay between application and receiving of benefits for eligible homeless applicants. In Nashville, a remarkable 98% of all SSA disability applicants in SOAR project were approved upon application. Rosalind and Diane at the AIM Center currently have 100% success rate. Gina Turley is a certified trainer for this area.

Virginia Piper, Program Developer for Education and Transition Services with the ARC of Hamilton County doing advocacy work with parents and children in the school system receiving special education services is concerned about accessibility. She reported that the National Council on Disability is interested in visiting Chattanooga; the biggest issue with bringing the National Council to the area is accessibility. NCD is an independent federal agency composed of members appointed by the President of the U. S. by and with advice of the U. S. Senate who promote policies, programs, practices and procedures that guarantee equal opportunity for all individuals with disabilities; all NCD policy recommendations can be found on their web site: www.ncd.gov. One important on-going initiative is promoting best practices and programs in disability policy. The Chattanooga resident now serving on the NCD would like for the Council to visit Chattanooga to view rural concerns, educational issues as well as other disability issue not readily seen in larger cities. Many NCD members are concerned that Chattanooga may not have available accommodations, transportation and other services. NCD would like to select Chattanooga as a location for one of their quarterly meetings in late 2009 or early 2010. Ms. Piper requested that the Mayor's Council on Disability review this proposal, perhaps be interested in helping to sponsor the NCD visit and to review the accessibility concerns that

may need addressing at the hotel, airport, local restaurants and other facilities. The National Council on Disability has previously met in New Orleans, Seattle and Atlanta. There are approximately 20 members who serve on the NCD. Discussion continued regarding CARTA and transportation accessibility through out the city and downtown areas.

Virginia Piper also extended an invitation to MCD members for the Sunshine Luncheon to be held at the Downtown YMCA in support of the summer camp programs at the facility. She also suggested that the MCD consider a standing committee for special education to address concerns that come from parents. When looking at being an accessible city, education needs to be included because children with disabilities grow up and must transition successfully into community life.

Phillip Stevens gave a report on the Go-Fest celebration: final input from the Zoo is complete; sponsorship packages are now ready; graphics have been approved by the Mayor; Channel 12, Times Free Press, The Chattanooga.Com are serving as media outlets for the celebration; billboards will be placed in the community; Art Expo and Career Fest arrangements to be handled by the MCD members. Darde Long and Rick O'Rear from the Zoo will handle volunteers. Save the date notice is now available on the MCD/Go-Fest web site; this notice may be printed and shared through out the community.

Note was made of the fact that Channel 12 provides the least amount of captioning services for Deaf and hard of hearing viewers. Channel 3 and News Channel 9 along with WTCI-TV-45 provide acceptable captioning, some real-time

and some newsroom teleprompter captioning; voice recognition captioning technology is also used for some news broadcasts. The Mayor's Office needs to ensure that Go-Fest information is accessible for all television viewers.

Carol Martin reported that Career Fest was conducted last year in conjunction with the Office of Multicultural Affairs, OMA. Employers, service provider agencies, people with disabilities, colleges were invited to participate. Kathie in the Mayor's Office will be contacting teachers and parents; Career Fest will be located in the same facility at the Zoo as last year; Signal Centers may be located in a side room so that they can provide a larger display of their technology.

Activities through out the Zoo are being planned by Matt and Kathie: Shakespeare group, Kids on the Block, and Kids Like You and Kids Like Me; there will be no concert this year. It was suggested that a large map with raised lines for blind visitors be provided. The Art Expo committee is meeting immediately following today's MCD meeting. DMRS Employment Contact for East Tennessee would like a booth at Go-Fest.

Jim Queen and Jill Hindman reported on the CARTA public hearing. Approximately 100 people attended the session. Decisions were made dependent on gas prices: Care-A-Van to be left as is, increase parking lot rates, reduce frequency of shuttle, increase parking meters and incline fares, and voluntary donation boxes on shuttle buses as experiment. CARTA's shortfall was \$900,000; sponsorship of shuttles is estimated to raise \$300,000 while incline increase, parking fees and parking lot increases raised another \$300,000. Care-A-Van fares increase from \$2.00 to \$2.50 effective

06/30/2008. Public hearing was a good meeting that generated new ideas and not just complaints.

Bea Lyons reported on Nominating Committee that has begun its work; committee worked via email reviewing interested prospective candidates for the Mayor's Council on Disability. The committee met today prior to the MCD meeting to discuss issues and questions that could not be resolved via email. Questions that need clarification include:

- 1) What is timeline for Nominating Committee to have prospective candidates, recommendations to the Mayor's Office, March 2009 or sooner?
- 2) When do we present new MCD members, bylaws state annual March meeting? Committee needs some guidelines as to when this nominating process should be complete. Mayor's Office also has collected some prospective candidates that need to be shared and forwarded to the committee to be included in the recommendations.
- 3) Bylaws state 15 members, but can be flexible with 18 members; committee would like to see Council expand its number of members to 17 or 19 total members. How does the Mayor feel about an increase and what does the Mayor's Council think of the suggestion?

The Nominating Committee plans to give new member recommendations to the Mayor, along with information of the current members who are eligible for a second term of office; he can then make appointments from among those members. Note should be made that the MCD has four newest members who shall remain on board to complete the second year of their first term.

Carol Martin reported on the success of the employers' seminar. She wished to thank Mayor Littlefield for coming and welcoming the employers and agency folks. A total of 110 participants attended: 75 employers, 35 agency personnel, Mayor's Council members and people with disabilities. Sponsors included the South East Tennessee Placement Consortium, Career Center, Developmental Disability Council, EPB, Greyfriars, AIM Center, Panara Bread, Hardees and the MCD. The program was well received by employers.

Phillip Stevens reported update of the Go-Fest web site stating that the information is current. Bea Lyons reported 5 or 6 inquiries to the MCD web site have been made since July meeting. The web site is looking good.

Announcements:

Disability Awards Luncheon: Thursday, October 16, 2008, event to recognize employers who go out of their way to hire people with disabilities.

October is Disability Awareness Month!

Job Fair: Wednesday, August 06, 2008, at BX in Brainerd; sign language interpreters were available from 9:00am-3:00pm.

"The Music Within" is a terrific film; if folks haven't seen it yet, get a copy of the DVD and view.

Minority Film Fair: Saturday, August 16, 2008, 9:00am – 2:00pm, at Eastgate Center, sponsored by Blue Cross Blue Shield and a couple of fraternal organizations.

Deanna Jones, coordinator for Multiple Sclerosis Society was introduced.

Carmike Cinemas near Northgate Mall has agreed to show open-captioned films for Deaf and hard of hearing citizens. First film "Wanted" will show Sunday, August 24 and Monday, August 25, 4:00pm and 7:00pm. Carmike plans to provide one open-captioned film each month in the future. Please put this announcement on the MCD web site for all Chattanoogaans to access.

Concerns brought from the audience include the following:

- a) Rossville Avenue and Main Street, new Art Work on sidewalks on Main Street may not be accessible with sufficient space for people in wheelchairs and people with dogs.
- b) Accessibility at Coolidge Park is currently only available through one path into the park without using Tremont Street and having to go around. Creating another path would also help bikers.

These concerns may be addressed by traffic engineer John Van Cleave and Larry Zinder with Department of Parks and Recreation. Coolidge Park and Renaissance Park will be combined and will be accessible.

September meeting will be held Monday, September 08, 2008, 3:00-4:30pm, at the DRC.

Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted,

Katye Jones, Secretary
Mayor's Council on Disability