

Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities Meeting and Activity Report March 1 through June 20, 2020

- As indicated in the January meeting minutes, the commission cancelled the February meeting pending the hiring of the strategic planner.
- Baltimore County hired the strategic planning consulting firm, Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations (MANO), via purchase order dated March 5, 2020.
- The list of commission members on the county website was updated on March 16, 2020.
- Commission leadership agreed to cancel the March 2020 meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Full meetings of the commission were also canceled in April and May, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and because the commission executive committee became deeply involved in re-orienting the strategic planning process to the virtual meeting environment. The strategic planning process was successfully shifted to the virtual meeting environment, in large measure thanks to Wendy Wolff's capacity to facilitate zoom meetings.

Response to COVID-19

While the full commission did not meet in March, April, or May, many commission members and county personnel were engaged in the response to COVID-19 pandemic virus. Mike Bullis of the Image Center conducted several online zoom meetings to share information and discuss the needs of people with disabilities. Concerns about access to food was a primary topic of the first Image Center zoom meetings. Baltimore County established a telephone hotline dedicated to food needs and posted information on food distribution sites.

In April, the county Department of Planning learned it would receive emergency federal funds through the Community Development Block Grant Program and the Emergency Solutions Grant program. These special funds were made available by passage of the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law March 27, 2020.

County personnel discussed this new allocation with commission chair Terri Parrish and other individuals engaged in assisting people with disabilities. County staff administrator Jay Doyle made direct contact with nonprofit organizations to better understand the needs of people with disabilities during the COVID-19 crisis. Those contacts included talks with/outreach to: The League for People with Disabilities, The Image Center, Emerge, The Arc Baltimore, Penn-Marr. Baltimore County articulated its approach to the deployment of these funds in a substantial amendment to its county fiscal year 2020 Action Plan, which was published on the county

website on or about May 18, 2020. Mr. Doyle sent a broadcast email to all commission members on May 19 with a link to the COVID-19 funding information, as well as to the draft Consolidated Plan, and emphasized that all interested parties were invited to a virtual public meeting on the funding to be held on May 20.

On May 22, Mr. Doyle sent the commission a broadcast email with a COVID-19-related resource guide from Baltimore County attached.

On June 4, Mr. Doyle sent the commission a broadcast email advising them a June 24 webinar on vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

On June 9, Mr. Doyle sent the commission a broadcast email advising them of a new county eviction prevention program related to COVID-19.

On June 15, Mr. Doyle sent the commission a broadcast email advising them of a new grant funding opportunity for nonprofit and government organizations. The funding is targeted to eviction prevention efforts and the prevention of homelessness for those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Virtual Executive Committee Meeting

On May 11, the commission executive committee held a virtual meeting via Webex facilitated by Mr. Doyle/Ms. Parrish. Attendance was strong. David Greenberg reported that the state is contacting provider organizations to check on their ability to serve clients under COVID-19 circumstances. The League is making food deliveries. Ben Dubin had been checking on the status of people with developmental disabilities and found that they were doing okay and receiving assistance from their advocates. Mike Bullis of the Image Center said that his staff were still employed and they were trying to get communications devices into nursing homes. Doug Smith reported that individuals he is aware of through his work at The Chimes have experienced a significant number of layoffs and furloughs. Mary Manzoni reported that the county workforce was experiencing a large number of job losses due to COVID-19. Also in attendance were: Mary Scott, Julie Gaynor, Hal Franklin.

The executive committee discussed a modified approach to the award ceremony given the social distancing aspect of COVID-19, and COVID-19 in general. The committee was favorable toward holding a hybrid event that would de-emphasize a large gathering, instead incorporating virtual/recorded material, perhaps with some live streaming. Perhaps ceremonial photographs could be taken with the county executive. Perhaps the award winners could meet with the executive in person, individually, or as a group, but not at a large luncheon. Mr. Doyle will contact the Office of Communications to discuss. The group agreed to seven award categories:

Student of the Year

Teacher of the Year

Employer Award

Employee Award

Volunteer Award

Disability Advocate Award

Accessibility Award

Strategic Planning

Commission Chair Terri Parrish and staff administrator Jay Doyle began contacts with Wendy Wolff, the strategic planner assigned by MANO in early March and began sending her background documents for review.

On May 29, strategic planning consultant Wendy Wolff launched the planning process with the executive committee via zoom virtual meeting. Attending: Mike Bullis, Ben Dubin, Jay Doyle, Julie Gaynor, David Greenberg, Larry Hughes, Mary Manzoni, Terri Parrish, Mary Scott, Judy Volkman, Santa Wallace, Wendy Wolff. Meeting notes: All attending introduced themselves. Ms. Wolff said that the commission's scope of work is broad, "spread out." She suggested that the commission consider a three-year plan. Ms. Wolff presented a series of slides depicting components of the strategic planning process and how it flows. Ms. Wolff engaged with commission members in open discussion as the presentation unfolded. Ms. Wolf discussed the online survey process/content. A smaller group was designated to collaborate on the survey content. During this meeting the process of re-appointing commission members through the county's online portal system was also discussed.

On June 5 a small group from the strategic planning committee met virtually with Wendy Wolff to review her suggested approach to the survey content. The group generally had a favorable response to Ms. Wolff's suggestions. Attending this virtual session were: Mike Bullis, Jay Doyle, Mary Scott, Doug Smith, Santa Wallace, Wendy Wolff. Ms. Wolff sent a draft online survey out to the group later in the afternoon.

On Monday June 8, Ms. Wolf disseminated the approved online survey to all commission members via email with a response deadline of June 15.

On June 17, the commission's strategic planning committee (executive committee plus one additional member) reconvened in a virtual meeting facilitated by Wendy Wolff to review the survey results and discuss the committee's views regarding the commission's mission, vision, goals and priorities. Attending were: Ben Dubin, Jay Doyle, Julie Gaynor, David Greenberg,

Mary Manzoni, Terri Parrish, Mary Scott, Doug Smith, Judy Volkman, Santa Wallace, Wendy Wolff

Member Appointments, Re-Appointments

Baltimore County has established an online portal system (granicuslabs.com) to assist in the management of its boards and commissions. Staff administrator Jay Doyle has become familiar with the system and, in consultation with commission chair Terri Parish and executive office representative Michelle Wilson, initiated the process of re-appointing commission members. In recent weeks, five commission members have successfully submitted applications for re-appointment through the online portal system. This process will continue.