

Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities Strategic Plan Progress Report

June, 2021

Strategic Priority I - Strengthen Collaborative Partnerships

Goal 1 **Improve relationships with Baltimore County Government.**

Objective 1 Increase the number of opportunities to work with the County Executive, County Council, and Baltimore County agencies.

The Commission has improved relationships with County government by engaging with County personnel on specific policy and administrative matters. Since adoption of the Strategic Plan in September of 2020, the Commission interacted with County personnel in the following ways:

In response to a Commission invitation (initiated by Ben Dubin), County ADA Coordinator [John Bryan](#) and County ADA liaison to the Department of Public Works [Carol Brown](#) participated in the January 2021 Commission meeting. The substance of the meeting dialogue can be found in the [meeting minutes](#).

The process of implementing a COVID-19 vaccination program in Baltimore County prompted many questions and concerns. The Commission made inquiries to its County Health Department representative, Elizabeth Lazzaro, who recruited Health Department vaccination site specialist [Terry Sapp](#) to participate in the January 2021 Commission meeting. Certain vaccination concerns raised during this meeting were documented by staff liaison Jay Doyle and transmitted to Deputy Director for Housing and Community Development Terry Hickey, who was able to share them with County Health Officer Dr. Gregory Branch. Terry Sapp also participated in the Commission's February meeting and provided a written summary of the latest access improvements to vaccination sites. Terry Sapp provided an additional update on vaccination site accessibility features on April 22, 2021 and this information was shared with the Commission via email. Terry Sapp provided an update on vaccination efforts during the May 2021 meeting as well.

County Department of Planning chief of policy, planning and administration [Colleen Mahony](#) participated in the February 2021 meeting to discuss COVID-19 related emergency funding that is primarily focused on providing rental assistance to county residents negatively impacted by the pandemic. The substance of the meeting dialogue can be found in the [meeting minutes](#).

County Executive John Olszewski received a full briefing on the Commission's awards program and agreed to participate by contributing recorded remarks as part of the [Commissions 2020 video presentation](#) of the awards.

The Commission strengthened its collaborative partnership with nonprofit agencies and other agencies by facilitating a roundtable discussion with several of these organizations during the Commission's [March 2021 meeting](#). The discussion focused on impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, how the agencies have adapted to the remote working/programming environment, lessons learned during the pandemic

(rise of remote learning/meeting/programming) and thoughts concerning a return to more in-person activities/programming. The following agencies/organizations participated in the discussion: Associated Catholic Charities, The Arc Baltimore, Chimes, Key Point Health, The League for People with Disabilities, The Penn-Mar Organization, Community College of Baltimore County, County Department of Economic and Workforce Development, County Department of Recreation and Parks.

The Commission strengthened its collaborative partnership with the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) by inviting Commission member Michael Tan, director of the college's Center for Alternative and Supportive Education, to present at the Commission's May 19 meeting. Mr. Tan's presentation can be found [here](#).

Goal 2 Boost awareness of and participation with Commission's work.

Objective 1 Increase the Commission's engagement with people and organizations.

- Strategies
- Create an outreach plan for the community.
 - Recruit non-traditional individuals such as business owners, home builders, restaurants, contractors, transportation companies, realtors, etc.
 - Reach out to other County Commissions and increase their understanding about the work of BCCD.

The Commission boosted awareness of its mission and activities by promoting its annual awards ceremony. The process of seeking award nominations involves outreach to various organizations and constituencies, and to the public at large. Baltimore County issued a press release announcing the Commission's request for award nominations on August 17, 2020. The nomination form is accessed via the Commission website.

The awards program can be an opportunity to attract new people to support the Commission's mission. The awards program represents an opportunity to facilitate new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships.

Goal 3 Strengthen advocacy and legislation for people living with disabilities.

Objective 1 Improve tracking of county, state, and federal initiatives.

- Strategies
- Coordinate information about legislation with Commission members.
 - Educate commission members on the legislative process and ways for members to participate in the process.

For the February 2021 meeting, Commission member David Greenberg provided a detailed briefing on legislation and government agency budgets being considered by the Maryland General Assembly. A detailed summary of Mr. Greenberg's report can be found in the [meeting minutes](#).

Goal 4 **Ensure that the Commission’s membership reflects the diversity of Baltimore County.**

Objective 1 *Increase the number of members who represent the diversity of the county’s population per three-year term.*

Strategies ▪ Recruit members to fulfill the objectives.

The Commission presently has 21 members with current terms. The Commission has discussed its interest in ensuring diversity in its membership. In May of 2021, as part of ongoing efforts to pursue appointments, the Commission expressed its interest in diversity among its membership to members of the county executive’s office.

Goal 5 **Strengthen coordination of compliance and enforcement of the ADA.**

Objective 1 *Improve collaboration with the ADA coordinator for Baltimore County.*

In response to a Commission invitation (initiated by Ben Dubin), County ADA Coordinator John Bryan and County ADA liaison to the Department of Public Works Carol Brown participated in the January 2021 Commission meeting. The substance of the meeting dialogue can be found in the [meeting minutes](#).

Goal 6 **Ensure that people with disabilities have safe, affordable, integrated, and accessible housing.**

Objective 1 *Advocate for safe, affordable, integrated and accessible housing at the County level.*

The Commission advanced its understanding of housing resources by inviting Colleen Mahony of the Department of Planning to the February 2021 meeting to discuss COVID-19 related emergency funding that is primarily focused on providing rental housing assistance to county residents negatively impacted by the pandemic. The substance of the meeting dialogue can be found in the [meeting minutes](#).

The Commission advanced its understanding of Housing Resources by including a discussion of Permanent Supportive Housing in its April 2021 meeting. County staff administrator Jay Doyle introduced the topic and invited guest speaker Nicole Connelly of Prologue, Inc., to speak on the subject. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines Permanent Supportive Housing as follows: *Permanent supportive housing is permanent housing with indefinite leasing or rental assistance paired with supportive services to assist homeless persons with a disability or families with an adult or child member with a disability achieve housing stability.* The substance of the meeting dialogue can be found in the [meeting minutes](#) and presentation slides are [here](#).

Goal 7 **Ensure that people with disabilities have adequate transportation services in the County.**

Mr. Dan Dalton, a consultant with the KFH Group hired by the county Department of Public Works (DPW), gave a presentation on the county's Transit Development Plan during the Commission's September 2020 meeting. Much of the presentation focused on the county's CountyRide service. This service is now administered under the Department of Public Works. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Dalton conducted an interview with staff liaison Jay Doyle and with Commission member Doug Smith. Mr. Doyle shared with Mr. Dalton results of the Community Needs Survey in which Commission members had expressed their views concerning transportation needs and gaps in services. In December, Commission members were invited via email to view a more advanced version of the Transit Development Plan and comment if they wished. This version of the plan included recommendations on ways to improve transportation service, including an expansion of CountyRide services. During the December Commission meeting, Mr. Doyle presented on-screen portions of chapters five and six from the transit plan. These two chapters include key proposals for improving transportation resources in the county. Subsequent to the meeting, Mr. Doyle distributed these chapters to the Commission via email.