

**Baltimore County Commission on Disabilities
November 17, 2021, Virtual Meeting via Webex
Minutes**

Attending: Mike Bullis, Carla DeMendonca, Jay Doyle, Ben Dubin, Kathleen Durkin, Julie Gaynor, Romelle Goodman, David Greenberg, Terry Hickey, Kali Mallik, Greg Miller, Mary Scott, Michael Tan, Brian Trees, Santa Wallace

Commission vice-chair Ben Dubin led the meeting.

Mr. Dubin introduced guest speaker Terry Hickey, director of the newly formed county Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Mr. Hickey spoke about the relationship between DHCD and the Commission, emphasizing that the relationship is an advantageous partnership, that DHCD provides staff support to the Commission. However, the Commission has a mission that is larger than any one county agency.

Key points discussed by Mr. Hickey included:

The housing community in Baltimore County is eager to hear the thoughts of the the Commission on housing issues generally; guidance from the Commission is very important to the county housing community. Guidance and feedback from the Commission can assist county housing officials as they strive to improve housing in the county and improve accessibility features within housing, and generally strengthen the portfolio of affordable housing that accommodates people with disabilities.

DHCD leadership is eager to hear new ideas and explore new ways to get information out to the public. DHCD seeks to send more information to the Commission on a regular basis and be a resource to the Commission.

Most Maryland jurisdictions have had a Department of Housing and Community Development for years. Officially forming the county DHCD brings Baltimore County into alignment with other jurisdictions.

The role of DHCD is to be a catalyst in the development of more affordable housing, including accessible housing. As indicated by the Voluntary Conciliation Agreement (VCA), the county does not have a strong history in producing affordable and accessible housing.

Additionally, DHCD strives to prevent, and whenever possible, end homelessness. Also, DHCD administers a large grants program that invests in community organizations (nonprofits) and their capacity.

DHCD administers funding from federal programs, including: Community Development Block Grant, HOME Partnership, Continuum of Care, etc. DHCD has been administering large streams of federal emergency funding related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

DHCD is the community investment arm of government and will strive to engage more with communities and community partners.

DHCD does have funds that can be used to modify homes to implement needed accessibility improvements. DHCD can improve its communications and thus public awareness of such resources. Per the Voluntary Conciliation Agreement, DHCD is to invest \$300,000 annually in accessibility modifications to rental units.

DHCD promotes home ownership opportunities and is striving to prevent foreclosures.

Mr. Hickey took some time to discuss the Voluntary Conciliation Agreement, which the county signed in 2016. The county agreed to invest in development of 1,000 new affordable housing units. 100 of those units are to be accessible units. The 100 accessible units should meet Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS). The county is presently working to improve its compliance with UFAS in the context of facilitating the development of accessible units; the county recognizes that certain units counted as accessible did not meet all aspects of UFAS.

The county has struggled to facilitate the development of multi-family affordable housing projects.

The county is striving to ensure that multi-family affordable developments exceed the minimum requirement that 5% of the units be accessible. The county will consider making investments to convert existing, market-rate UFAS units to affordable units.

DHCD leadership is exploring the idea of a broader housing navigation system that would help the public find particular types of housing/housing resources.

Q and A Discussion with Terry Hickey

Ben Dubin noted that the county's policy against owning affordable housing is an impediment to increasing the county's affordable housing inventory.

Mr. Hickey suggested that a particular architectural firm with accessibility expertise meet with the Commission

The county housing voucher wait list is presently servicing year 2008 applications. The only preference on this list is for a county resident. DHCD leadership may advocate for more fine-grained preferences.

The VCA requires that the county assist 2,000 families in moving from an impacted area to an area of opportunity.

Mary Scott discussed the need for affordable senior housing in Middle River/Bowley's Quarters; such housing should be near health care opportunities.

Terry Hickey discussed intergenerational housing as a potential opportunity looking forward.

Ben Dubin discussed matters pertaining to ADA compliance and requests for reserved parking spaces on public streets. Mr. Dubin, Jay Doyle, Colleen Mahony and ADA Coordinator John Bryan recently met to discuss ADA issues, including issues related to proper signage on parking lots.

Also, a member of the county Board of Appeals has asked the Commission to examine the process through which people with disabilities request reserved parking spaces on residential streets. Commission liaison Jay Doyle has sent written communications to DHCD head Terry Hickey advising him of issues related to the parking requests. Mr. Hickey has discussed the matter with the director of the county Department of Public Works.

Ben Dubin noted that the Commission awards video was recently posted and thanked the production team for creating a quality presentation that has been well received.