

Knoxville Mayor's Council on Disability Issues

February 9, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Zoom

I. Meeting was called to order at 4:03 pm.

II. Roll Call:

Members: Alexander, Barber, Briggs, Childress, Colebrooke, Cook, Dziubak, Foutch, Huang, Jenkins, Landfather, Lowe, Moore, Mull, NeSmith, Orr, Rodgers, Simmons, Spangler, VanDyke, Villanueva, Welch

Present: Alexander, Barber, Briggs, Childress, Colebrooke, Cook, Dziubak, Landfather, Lowe, NeSmith, Orr, Rodgers, Simmons, Spangler, VanDyke, Villanueva, Welch

Absent: Foutch, Huang, Jenkins, Moore, Mull

Guests: Tatia Harris, Regis Borsari, Marian Wildgruber

Interpreters: Jessica Brackeen, Haile Stewart

III. Approval of January Minutes: Barber first, Rodgers second – motion carried

IV. CoK Inclusion and Equity, Black History Month – Tatia Harris

- Tatia Harris is the Title VI Diversity and Inclusion Officer for the City of Knoxville
- Black History month was created by a man named Carter G. Woodson who was a slave and wanted to learn how to read and write but had to work in the coal mines and quarries to support his family. Once he got older, and the family had more financial stability, he went to school and discovered that in history textbooks, there were no stories about black people or the contributions they had made.
- If you go by history books, it was almost as if black people did not exist as there was nothing about the contributions they had made, so he decided he would write black history and founded an association called The Study of Negro Life. He then founded The Journal of Negro History where he interviewed people to collect stories and then taught these to people.
- In 1926, Woodson started Black History Week and chose February because Frederick Douglass, the great historian and abolitionist was born that month, as well as it being the month that the emancipation proclamation was born.

- In 1976, Black History week evolved into Black History Month, which is about representation. Black history IS American history and simply can't be encompassed in only one month.
- A lot of what Harris learned about Black History was not in school, it was through family storytelling, reading books, movies, museums, and other research. This should be incorporated all year round.
- Harris does a podcast called Loose Talk, which is on hiatus right now while she writes content, but there is an amazing podcast called "Black in Appalachia."

V. TN Dept. of Health and Human Services, Blind/Visually Impaired Services – Jessica Villanueva

- Villanueva is with Vocational Rehabilitation in the TN Department of Health and Human Services, specifically, the program director of Deaf and Blind Services statewide.
 - Villanueva started in 2015 as an intern with a background in deafness and got her bachelor's degree at UT in interpreting. She started working at the Tennessee School for the Deaf (TSD), found out about VR, and decided to get a vocational rehabilitation master's degree at UT. She is now the program director and covers statewide services.
 - The TN Department of Health and Human Services Blind/Visually Impaired department provides services to people with disabilities for obtaining successful employment. They call themselves the sensory unit.
 - With sensory loss, it can either be vision or hearing or a combination of both, which is referred to as Deaf/Blind.
 - They work specifically with those that are deaf and/or blind, which is a more specialized caseload, whether it means knowing sign language to communicate or taking additional courses for the vision aspect.
 - A lot of environmental barriers and challenges with VR is that there are individuals looking to be placed in employment and the employer immediately thinks accommodations would be very expensive and are fearful of the costs. Because of this, TN Department of Health and Human Services tries to educate employers to overcome these barriers as well as the challenges the individual may have in their workplace and how those can be overcome.
 - Sometimes these accommodations are simply turning a desk around to cut down on glare of a computer screen, or filters for glasses.
 - When they work with employers, they also offer sensory training for other workers as well, and sensitivity training.

- People have a variety of degrees of sensory loss, but often are still considered Deaf/Blind even if it is not a total loss. Some individuals do not prefer that term and prefer “Dual Sensory Loss” instead.
- They have several programs; one is called Independent Living which serves individuals with vision loss at any age. Any county can receive independent living services.
 - This assists the person with the entire aspect of the sensory loss which could include coming into the home to put bump dots on appliances or assist them with screen reader technology, or methods to identify their clothing and such.
 - This could include mock interviews, cane or “mobility training” services or helping them gain employment and making sure they are employed for 90 days before closing out their case.
- Another program is Tennessee Business Enterprises
 - It is one of our most amazing programs that we have. There is a law that federal buildings that have vending machines are to be ran by individuals that are blind, the Blind Vendor Program, which is a result of the Randolph-Shepard Act.
 - Colebrooke – Who would we talk to if we wanted one of these vending machines in a local business?
 - Villanueva – I would talk to Tiffany Kelly, the Tennessee Business Enterprises (TBE) director.

VI. Member Advocacy and Information

- VanDyke – It is very important to come and to participate at committee and special committees. There are some that have great attendance and others than only have one or two members other than VanDyke, Dziubak, and Cook that attend. The real work happens in committees, it is not just attending the regular CODI meeting every month. We would appreciate it if videos can be turned on with people actively participating. We can see reactions and though some may have a bandwidth issue, it is preferable to have videos on when possible. When it is just the same voices all the time, it can make us stagnant.
- It is important to get the views of all of our members.

VII. Committee Reports:

Bylaws:

- Did not meet in February
- George Childress has volunteered for the position of Bylaws chair in order to replace previous chair Annazette Houston, who resigned from CODI in January.

Membership:

- Will be meeting on February 15th at 2:00 p.m. to discuss filling the open membership spot available since Annazette Houston resigned in January.
 - When membership committee gets together, please think about executive committee because we will need officer nominations too.

Community Engagement:

- Dziubak – Checking to see if we can do fundraising for the “Dinner and Design” event
- Landfather will talk with Knoxville Chamber / Randy Boyd this month to see if they can come talk with all of CODI.
- Landfather feels like there is lack of understanding, what does Mayor Kincannon want from this committee.
 - VanDyke – She seems to be very on board with exploring multiple avenues of getting information out as well as making sure people the age of her mother who do not use social media can still access and find information. It seems that she is very supportive of our initiatives and that she is pleased about what we’ve accomplished so far.
- VanDyke would suggest that if there are things we want to participate in (such as parking day), we contact WATE because we have a contact over there, Lori Tucker, that has been very helpful with KAEC and is usually on board to come and do stories.
- Barber – Mayor will soon be hiring a new chief of police, and it might be a natural fit to talk about disability issues.
 - Dziubak – DSO does regular trainings for recruits for KPD and this should not be too much of a stretch to set up.
 - Landfather would like to sit in on one of those trainings.
- Landfather – Metro Drug Coalition is opening a building for recovery community to go to called Gateway, but perhaps this committee could have a presence there, or put fliers there to get our name out.
- There was recently a spinal cord operation that allowed a person with complete spinal separation which allowed them to walk again. This article will be sent to the group.
- Core focus: Parking Day, Dinner & Design, Helping Universal Design
- Community Engagement will be meeting with Universal Design next month to discuss “Dinner and Design” event as well as “What IS Universal Design” presentation.
 - Eric Moore volunteered for PowerPoint Presentation
 - Goals and objectives
 - Target audience
 - Any content that they would advocate for being represented

Transportation:

- Last time Transportation had met was back in December and Stephanie had shared an article regarding KAT and West Towne Mall.
 - Between December and when Transportation met, a meeting had been held between the Mall, KAT, dRC, and CoK. During that discussion, KAT had agreed to obtain additional ridership data in order to proceed with additional meetings with the Mall management. This data has not yet been sent.
 - Welch brought to the group's attention that it is listed on KAT website that service changes will be coming in March and operations are currently on a reduced schedule due to workforce shortage.
 - Route 11 is the Kingston Pike route which goes to the mall.
 - Transportation Committee will be checking with Cook to see if there is any way to speed up the process to get the data on ridership as there will be a KTA (KAT) meeting on February 24th at 3:00 p.m. in the large assembly room of the City County Building.
 - It was noted that both Joel Simmons and Sandy Booher would like to attend future meetings with Mall management.
 - Cook is waiting to hear back on follow up meeting date, but it should be next week sometime.
 - Borsari commented that the new bus stop at Fort Dickerson looks very accessible and it would be wonderful if we had them all over town.

VIII. Strategic Plan Reports:**Livability:**

- Did not meet in February

Universal Design:

- Went over One-Pager from Jim Tente and asked questions for additional clarification.
- Went over new Type C Visitable Dwelling Units 3-pager from Jim Tente
 - Jim worked in a place where they did do Type C dwelling units and had instituted back in 2000, everything was accepted by the building community except for the one sticking point was the clear width for doorways (31 $\frac{3}{4}$, same as type B dwelling unit).
 - An amendment could be made to the width of door to bring it up to 32 inches rather than 31 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Typically, the job of adopting and

putting together ordinances is Director of Plans and Review, Peter Ahrens. After this, it would go to city council.

- Type C Visitable Dwelling Units should be adopted by City of Knoxville before ordinance is changed with amendment by Peter Ahrens.
- To adopt Type C Visitable Dwelling Units, would need to talk to Peter Ahrens and Mayor Kincannon. This can be adopted at any point, does not need to wait until a certain date.
- March is combined UD/CE meeting, April is discussing Type C and getting together what we're asking for. In May, we should invite Peter and Jim to the monthly meeting to discuss starting this process, hopefully bringing to the mayor in June.

IX. New Business:

- Cook – Given the recent fires at Northgate Towers and Summit Towers, there has since been a team convened that involves Knox County, the City Fire Marshall, The Health Department, American Red Cross and others who will be meeting to discuss emergency preparedness. The next meeting will be this upcoming Monday at 11:00 a.m.

X. Announcements & Public Forum:

- Barber – Joni and friends have opened registration for family retreat
 - Dziubak – If you send the registration link to me, I can share on the CODI Facebook page.

XI. Meeting was Adjourned at 5:28 p.m.