

**Office of Equity & Civil Rights  
Mayor's Commission on Disabilities  
Meeting Minutes  
January 24, 2024**

**Attendance:**

<b>Voting</b>	<b>24-Jan</b>
Bouma, Chair	x
Begue	
Blevins	x
Davis	
Ewald	
Fields	x
Grade	x
Greenberg	x
Jackson	x
King	
Levine	x
Salmond	
Trentadue	

<b>Non-Voting</b>	<b>24-Jan</b>		
BCDSS		DHR	
BCFD Yancey/Brewer	x	DOT Gardener	x
BCHD Pugh	x	HABC Elam	
BCPSS Paxton		Law Levine	x
BCRP Nyakoe		MOED	
BPD		OEM Bright/Smith	
Com. on Aging		Planning French	
CRC			
DHCD Curtis		Pratt Library Kelly/Stokes	x

**OECR Staff:**

Robin Drummond

Viola Woolums

Lisa Kelly

**Guests:**

Jacob Leffler - Baltimore City Association of the Deaf

Chris Hason-Hale - Kennedy Krieger Institute

Nikki Stokes - Pathfinders for Autism

Zarifa Roberson - Coppin State University

Keyonna Mayo - IMAGE Center

Brenda Pitts Haynes

Deanna Tilden - Baltimore City Association of the Deaf

Chip Woods - St. Peter's Adult Learning Center

Guest Speaker: Chris Danielsen

ASL Interpreter: Andria, Ryan

**I. Welcome/Call to Order**

- The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Aloma Bouma at 1:05 pm.
- Chairperson Aloma requested a rollcall and welcomed everyone.

## II. Opening Remarks

- Opening remarks by Chairperson.
- There will be a guest speaker.
- Chairperson called for the Agenda, Minutes from legislative meetings, and the November Minutes
- Approval of legislative minutes on hold. Adam Levine said that the Committees would discuss during the Committee Reports. Note: Legislative Minutes will be approved by Legislative Committee.

## III. OECR Program Report

Program Report given by Viola Woolums.

- Administrative Updates
  - Civil Rights Breakfast 2024 is scheduled for Monday October 7, 2024, followed by Civil Rights Week (CRW). MCD participants are asked to give suggestions for CRW.
  - Five applications for MCD membership are being processed.
  - Reminder: MCD attendance will be enforced beginning January 2024. Two absences in a rolling 6-month period will be considered resigned.
  - The next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2024, at 1:00 pm. Additional meetings are listed in the agenda for 2024.
- Legislative Updates
  - The legislative session is underway in Annapolis - MCD participants are asked to report any legislative interest to OECR.
  - Special thanks to Adam Levine and Jack Elam for their hard work on the Legislative Committee.
- Accessibility Concerns
  - Since the last meeting, there were 8 site visits conducted. Seven were in response to public inquiries and one request from Parking Authority of Baltimore City for feedback on office space.
  - If interested in being Chair of the Access Committee, please contact Aloma Bouma and Viola Woolums.
  - There were 8 disability inquiries since the last meeting, and half are related to internal employment concerns.
- Janice Jackson asked why the Director's Report changed to the Program Report.
  - Ms. Woolums responded that the focus is to acknowledge the content is coming from all OECR staff including the Director.

## IV. Approval of the minutes

- David Greenberg moved to approve the November 22, 2023 minutes, seconded by Yojinde Paxton. Motion carried and minutes were approved without objection.

- Approval of the December 13, 2023 Legislative Committee minutes on hold until the next Legislative Committee meeting.

V. January is Braille Literacy Month

- Chair Aloma Bouma introduced the guest speaker, Chris Danielsen, Director of Public Relations, National Federation of the Blind and expert on Braille and Braille history.
  - Ms. Woolums asked to record the presentation. There were no objections.
    1. Mr. Danielsen talked about the history of creating Braille and its present-day usage.
    2. Contact: NFB – call 410-659-9314 and ask for Chris Danielsen or email [cdanielsen@nfb.org](mailto:cdanielsen@nfb.org)
    3. Recording ended.

VI. MCD Chairperson Update

- Civil Rights Week
  - Typically, on Tuesday of CRW. Because of conflicts with the date in the past, Chair Aloma asked if Tuesday, October 8 is still the best day? Members weighed-in on the date and programming:
    1. William Fields
      - a. no problem with Tuesday
      - b. address accessibility issues, ie focus on City Sidewalks and physical access.
    2. Janice Jackson
      - a. prefers afternoon event rather than an evening because mobility issues for folks accessing the event in the evening.
      - b. would like more input from the Commission during planning and programming.
      - c. speakers were not prepared to answer questions at the open forum, and she suggested presenting questions to agencies ahead of time to prepare their answers.
    3. David Greenberg
      - a. would like the event to be 1-3 pm on Tuesday for an open forum. This would allow him to bring in more people. He could commit to bringing in 15 people and suspected that Chip could also bring participants from St. Peters Adult Learning Center.
      - b. He would like to see more Agency collaboration and people with disabilities.
    4. Yojinde Paxton
      - a. agreed with having more agency collaboration.
      - b. would like to have people advocating for themselves.

c. focus on Youth activities and include these populations to get the word out about what the agencies do.

d. Last year AFRAM had a sensory area from children with autism.

5. Keyonna Mayo

a. okay with a longer program and agrees that the program needs to be earlier in the day because her mobility ride was late last year.

b. would like to more informational tables displaying information about agencies that serve people with disabilities.

c. suggested promotion via social media.

6. Chair Aloma

a. 9 am start time is appropriate and would like an exhibit hall program beyond afternoon into evening.

b. Agreed with having a focus on children.

c. Presentation of food deserts and inequity

d. Commented on presenting questions prior to the open forum: questions will continue if they are not addressed and if new people are attending.

o Consensus that Tuesday of Civil Rights Week will be a good day to focus on disabilities issues.

• [City for All Forum registration link](#), Saturday, January 27, 2024.

• Priority setting discussion.

o Chair Aloma suggested topic of Board of Elections

VII. Committees Discussion

• Legislative Committee – Committee Chair, Adam Levine

o He gave an overview of the December 13, 2023 and January 18, 2024 committee meetings.

o Jack Elam and Adam Levine put together a tracking document for legislation and the document was circulated with the Meeting Agenda. For all the bills, the Commission will need to coordinate with the Mayor's Office of Government Relations (MOGR) on how to advocate on these bills. Jack Elam agrees that more than one in-person testimony is better.

o SB0092/HB0426 – *Places of Public Accommodation - Motion Picture Houses – Captioning* - Requiring all motion picture houses to offer closed captioning for each screening of a motion picture; and requiring a place of public accommodation that controls, operates, owns, or leases at least two motion picture houses in the State to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week. Request: The bill did not pass last year. The Committee would like to support the bill again and have testimony.

- SB256 - *Public Safety – Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission* – Altering the membership and duties of the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission; providing that a law enforcement agency may employ an individual as a police officer for a certain period only if the individual is certified or provisionally certified by the Commission; and altering provisions of law relating to the certification and recertification of police officers. Request: MCD would like to support bill but suggests amendment requiring the Commission to include a person with expertise in issues facing people with disabilities. Jack Elam added that he reached out to William Brewer of the Fire Department for feedback on prior training and whether that program was still functional under the City and Emergency Management.
- SB0077/HB111 - *Bicycles, Play Vehicles, and Unicycles - Authorizations and Requirements* – Authorizing a person to ride a bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle on a sidewalk or sidewalk area unless prohibited by local ordinance; and requiring a person riding a bicycle, play vehicle, or unicycle on a sidewalk or sidewalk area or in or through a crosswalk to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian or a person using an electric personal assistive mobility device. Question: How would the bill address electric scooters on sidewalks. Action: the committee will reach out to MOGR.
- SB331 - *Task Force to Study Paratransit in Maryland* - Establishing the Task Force to Study Paratransit in Maryland; requiring the Task Force to study paratransit in the State, including current, needed, and expected funding for paratransit, reasons for current funding and spending gaps, and the role public-private partnerships could play in meeting funding and service gaps; and requiring the Task Force to report, on or before June 30, 2025, its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.
- SB0185 - *Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing - Deafblind Co-Navigation Services Program – Established* - Establishing a Deafblind Co-Navigation Services Program in the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to provide co-navigation services at no cost to deafblind individuals in the State; and defining "co-navigation services" as services providing visual and environmental information or sighted services to assist with communication accessibility in an individual's preferred language and communication mode and to assist with accessing an individual's physical surroundings and making informed decisions about those surrounding. Request: Jack Elam stated that we need someone from the MCD to represent. Jacob Leffler clarified: Co-navigation (formerly support service provider) means that Deafblind cannot see or hear and cannot ask for help or navigate daily life. They need a specific person who can give them context clues about the environment. He gave examples. Request: This would be setting up a new program, and it must go through the legislative process because the office works through the Governor's Office.
- Willie Fields would like to discuss the MTA funding and the paratransit bill.

- David Greenberg and Chip Woods were in Annapolis recently. Greenberg commented about the bills that do not have money attached were very unlikely to be successful this year. Woods agreed and stated that pandemic funds are diminishing.
- Chair Aloma spoke about 3 bills.
  - Voting and disabilities (electronic ballot returns) – An individual with a disability can vote electronically, but it cannot be returned electronically. It must be printed, reviewed, signed, and mailed. These additional tasks are problematic for people with disabilities and often require a trusted person's assistance.
  - Bus curb lanes – designated bus lanes bill to prohibit vehicles from using these lanes. This is important because this bus then cannot get to a curb or curb cut to load/unload people with disabilities.
  - Access and production of accessible textbooks for blind children
  - Adam Levine asked for the Commission's position on the bills discussed. Request: The Committee wanted to support the: 1) Maryland Police Training and Standards Bill, and the 2) Motion Picture Bill. The other bills – the committee would like to track, and the three bills presented by Chair Aloma need more research.
  - Viola Woolums, Adam Levine, and Lisa Kelly will follow-up.
- Regular meeting time expired and the ASL interpreters could not extend their services. Ms. Woolums announced that there are only 3 voting members at that time, so no business can be conducted. Although there was not a quorum, there were no objections to moving forward with the meeting. (Many members had to leave the meeting at 3pm.)
  - Woolums enabled the closed captioning as ASL interpreters left.
  - Chair Aloma requested a follow-up on what is being taken to the Mayor's Office. Chair Aloma requested hearing schedules for the legislation.
- Transportation Committee
  - Viola Woolums announced on behalf of Janice Jackson an upcoming meeting on February 5, 2024 at 2 pm.
- Commission Development - David Greenberg, Committee Chair.
  - Promotional materials update postponed.
  - Mr. Greenberg had to leave at 3 pm
  - Ms. Woolums will follow-up with Mr. Greenberg and forward any information to MCD participants.

VIII. Open forum

- Chair Aloma Bouma announced a transit event at Morgan on January 27, 2024. Viola Woolums included the link out in today's agenda.

IX. Closing

- Next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2024, via Zoom.
- There being no further business to discuss, Chair Aloma ask for motion to adjourn. Mr. William Fields moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Adam Levine at 3:16 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Drummond  
Special Assistant  
Office of Equity and Civil Rights