

# **Knoxville Mayor's Council on Disability Issues**

July 12, 2023, Meeting Minutes

Zoom

## **I. Meeting was called to order at 3:01 pm.**

## **II. Roll Call:**

**Members:** Alexander, Ajinkya, Barber, Brooks, Carter, Childress, Lowe, Maxwell, Mathison, Mull, Robertson, Shimmin-Orr, Simmons, Spangler, Villanueva, Welch

**City of Knoxville Staff:** Cook, Dziubak

**Present:** Alexander, Barber, Carter, Childress, Lowe, Maxwell, Mathison, Mull, Robertson, Shimmin-Orr, Simmons, Spangler, Villanueva, Welch

**Absent:** Ajinkya, Brooks, Villanueva

**Guests:** (Mayor) Indya Kincannon, (HND Director) Kevin DuBose, (Tennessee Disability Coalition) Tom Jedlowski and Jeff Strand, (CODI Nominees) Jackson Cain and John Eldredge, Regis Borsari

**Interpreters:** Erin Talley and Greysen Wood

**III. Approval of June Minutes:** Simmons made the first motion, Lowe seconded the motion, motion carried.

## **IV. Presentation - TN Disability Coalition, 2022 Scorecard, Tom Jedlowski & Jeff Strand**

- Tom Jedlowski is the Director of Communications and Technology for TDC, the preeminent disability advocacy organization in the state. They do a lot of policy liaison at the capital (in Nashville) and work to pass meaningful legislation that helps to improve, and in many cases protect, the rights of Tennesseans with disabilities.
- Jedlowski discussed the 2022 Disability Scorecard and shared the link in the chat, Tennessee received a cumulative final grade of D+ for working adults with disabilities.
- Different factors that impact working adults with disabilities in the State of Tennessee were taken into account. Represented on the scorecard infographic are individual grades for several different areas: housing, transportation, medical debt, home healthcare worker crisis, sales tax burden, employment, affordability

of care, and support for family caregivers who often have to carry that burden when providers are in short supply.

- This data comes from a variety of sources, but is founded in research by a professor at UT Knoxville, Dr. Steven McGarrity, who works in the social work department here in Nashville. He looked at the extra cost of living with a disability and found that it cost 27% more income for a person with a disability in the United States to achieve the same standard of living as someone without a disability and standard of living is a metric used in academia. He then ran the numbers for Tennessee and found that it was almost double that.
- It costs 51% more income to achieve the same standard of living as someone without a disability in Tennessee. We applied that number to housing, and said that anybody who could keep their mortgage payment under the HUD (Housing and Urban Development) established 33% housing burden barrier is not considered housing burdened.
- Housing is inexpensive in some counties, but they're also some of our most impoverished counties. So when we think about who lives there, and how many people can live there, it's a smaller number than the rest which impacted the data.
- Strand stated that for the term accessible housing, there are 3 tiers of HUD accessibility where tier 3 HUD level 3 is potentially modifiable for wheelchair access meaning it has no interior steps and no bumps (thresholds) between rooms but it doesn't necessarily have to have an accessible entrance.
- That's where potentially modifiable comes, and this is where we have to extrapolate a little bit— that's a national number. We have to assume that that's the same here in Tennessee, and that 33% of the housing stock is potentially modifiable, then it gets less accessible from there.
- Level 2 has accessibility features. So it's all of level 3, plus accessibility features like shower bar grabs and things like that. And that's about 5%, and then Level 1, which is the most accessible. The most accessible that doesn't need modification is less than 1% of the housing stock. When I say affordable and accessible, I'm giving the State the benefit of the doubt and just going with Level 3, or a third of them.
- For 2021 data in Tennessee there is a shortage of about 16,000 housing units in the State, and by 2040 that number is going to be up more like 35,000.
- The CDC says approximately one in fifteen people with disabilities in Tennessee have a mobility disability. So I look at how many people are going to need low income rent with a disability to get this number.

- Dr. Raj Chetti from Harvard pioneered the Opportunity Atlas which looks at the relative markers of social deprivation. These are crime, the quality of schools, access to key resources, and what it means for people who grow up there, and how much more you would make as an adult there versus some place that had more or fewer markers of social deprivation. You can extrapolate from there, where there is a high quality area with an area of high opportunity, or an area below opportunity. Affordability is often a sacrifice of quality of housing. Access to public housing, food and healthcare are often sacrificed as well.
- One of the updates to our statewide scorecards this year will be state policy suggestions. We'll include State policy suggestions for improving the grade from last year. I haven't run the numbers this year, but since last year, there's been no substantial state effort to increase affordable or accessible housing.
- In 2018, the Tennessee General Assembly passed a preemption on the use of zoning to impact the construction of housing and what they're really trying to get at was Nashville's policy. It is a voluntary policy that said, if you're a developer and you're building an apartment building, you can have certain zoning exemptions. So you could build a taller building you could have a smaller front yard. You could have less parking that kind of thing in exchange for affordable housing. And so the preemption from the State said, no city or municipality can pass anything like that, even if it's voluntary.
- Tennessee doesn't have any source of income protections. 49% of voucher holders are 65, or older, or have a disability, which means that if you go to rent a place they can take a look and see that you have a voucher and the value because of that. And that's going to just disproportionately harm aging folks and folks with disabilities.
- There's a bill proposed in the General Assembly last year, called the Tennessee Rural and Workforce Housing Tax credit. It's a low income housing tax credit but for the State, and really focused on rural areas, and workforce level housing, which is a tier more expensive than affordable housing.
- There's also the establishment of a State trust for the building of affordable and accessible housing. They have one in Nashville called the Barnes Fund which was successfully created a decade and a half ago. So those are the options that we're considering for this if we're looking to be proactive.
- Strand shared his contact information: [jeff\\_s@tndisability.org](mailto:jeff_s@tndisability.org)

## **V. Member Advocacy and Inform Member Advocacy and Information, CAC's Volunteer Assisted Transportation, Nancy Welch**

- Welch presented information on the Volunteer Assisted Transportation (VAT) program, which is one of many programs at Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC)
- VAT provides assisted transportation to Knox County residents that need more one-on-one assistance when they go places.
- Volunteers give their time. They pick up an agency vehicle and enrolled rider and transport and assist them out of their home, into and out of the vehicle, and then to their destination and back, staying with the rider at their destination.
- Door-through-door assistance is provided, as well as communication challenges, such as filling out paperwork because riders may have a visual disability, dementia, or other disabilities requiring additional assistance.
- VAT also provides wheelchair transportation as a non-emergency transportation service which is greatly needed here in our area.
- This program helps people stay more active and independent, helps them be able to get to medical care, the grocery store, and pick up prescriptions.
- How do people know about us? Sometimes it is word of mouth, and VAT cars have contact information on them. People see that information, and case managers and medical offices send us referrals, or people call and ask for information.
- If you know somebody that needs this service that can no longer travel safely alone, have them contact us. Rider Applications must be filled out and there is no application fee or membership fee. There is a small fee to use the service which is \$6 per round trip ride. Once approved, riders do have to call us in advance to place their ride request(s) at least 2 weeks in advance. All rides are based on volunteer availability.
- Volunteer drivers are background screened, given orientation, and additional training. This lets the rider know they can trust the driver we are sending and makes them feel safe.
- Welch mentioned that volunteers are needed for this service as it can be difficult to meet every need. That is why we request riders call in their trip requests in advance and plan for transportation ahead of time. If you are interested in volunteering your time, please contact VAT.

## **VI. Committee Reports:**

### **Bylaws:**

- None, did not meet.

**Membership:**

- None, did not meet.

**Transportation:**

- Welch reported that she shared some information on the Transportation Modernization Act 2023. Signed by Governor Bill Lee in April 2023, it will provide the state with innovative tools to address traffic congestion, freeing up additional dollars to invest in communities without raising the gas tax or taking on transportation debt.
- Welch shared website information and a YouTube overview of what Transportation Modernization Act (TMA) means as well as the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) Tennessee Build with Us website.
- Welch stated that the group discussed, possibly inviting Matt Meservy with TDOT to come speak at a committee meeting to provide more info on the TMA and what it means for us Tennesseans.
- Welch stated that there are No current updates regarding the Greyhound bus. City of Knoxville officials are still working with Greyhound representatives, and the stop is still at the KAT Superstop
- For KAT reimagined, some routes will be discontinued and some stops will be taken out of the routes. KAT will be adding a route 23 that will serve Broadway Towers and O'Connor Senior Center. - and that will be called New Route 23.
  - KAT has been working on a draft plan to make some changes on their network, and they are going to amend that draft plan because they went to the public and had several public meetings to ask questions on proposed changes. The draft plan will be amended due to some of the feedback from the public.
  - Everyone is encouraged to attend the KTA (Knoxville Transit Authority) public hearing to go over the amended plan on July 27, 2023 at 3pm in the City County Building's Main Assembly Room, 400 Main Street.

**VII. Strategic Plan Reports:**

**Livability:**

- None, did not meet.

**Universal Design:**

- Simmons reported that Universal Design will try to get invited to one of the meetings for Home Builders of Greater Knox, and a Realtor Association meeting to explore what is going on in the market pertaining to universal design and aging in place.
  - Instead of telling them what we think and what we want to see universal design will ask them what they are seeing in the market.
    - This will be to get details from home builders and realtors about housing trends regarding disabilities to find out if there is a demand for universal design in the marketplace.

**VIII. New Business:**

- Dziubak stated that the CODI Mayoral Candidates Forum will be Wednesday August 2, 2023, in the Large Assembly Room of the City County Building from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. with interpreters are scheduled fifteen minutes prior to fifteen minutes after as well as CART captioning during the forum.
  - Please make plans to attend this very important forum and invite your disability contacts, friends, and families to attend as well. The flyer has been sent out to all CODI members, and I encourage you to share it with whomever you would like to attend this forum.
  - This event will be recorded by KCM (Knoxville Community Media) and live-streamed as well, and the transcription will be up on our website shortly after it airs.
  - Confirmation of attendance was taken of the members who plan to attend the Mayoral Forum (Dziubak logged manually on voting sheet).
- Dziubak stated that because the forum will be taking place early August, CODI should revisit the possibility of continuing with the full-day August retreat on August 18<sup>th</sup>, rather than pushing it out to September and doing the in-person August meeting on August 9<sup>th</sup> as was motioned for and approved during the June meeting.
  - Lowe asked if the full-day retreat was 9am to 4pm; Dziubak confirmed yes to 9 to 4 at the Public Works Building and Lowe made first motion to keep the original date of August 18<sup>th</sup>. Spangler seconded the motion, motion passed with votes from all CODI Members.
  - Spangler asked if there would be lunch served at the retreat. Dziubak responded yes, however the food budget will need to be approved to serve lunch. Spangler suggested KARM Catering. Dziubak asked Spangler to send the contact info to her and Cook via email.
- Dziubak stated that due to the overwhelming response from current and former CODI members who would like to celebrate the Lifetime Award that Stephanie

Cook will be receiving at the disAbility Resource Center (dRC) 33<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration, one table will be reserved for the Housing and Neighborhoods department, paid for by the department, and two tables will be reserved for CODI members that day, paid for by the Disability Services Office.

- Dziubak stated that once we discuss the Mayoral Forum Questions and these are approved by CODI, we will need to have Housing and Neighborhoods Department and AARP weigh in on the questions, and this all needs to be fully completed so I can send them to our candidates no later than July 19, 2023
  - CODI members then voted on each of the (9) Mayoral Forum Questions; with suggested edits and comprehensive discussion on each question.
  - All questions passed after discussion with a majority roll-call vote.
  - These will be sent to AARP and Housing and Neighborhoods Department to weigh in on their thoughts and any suggested edits or comments.
  - Discussion and vote to have the Chair give opening statements and have the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary rotate to ask questions on the night of the Mayoral Forum:
  - Spangler made first motion, Simmons seconded motion, motion carried.
  - Dziubak asked that all CODI members send a paragraph about themselves and their role on CODI, and those will be typed up and given to all the candidates.

## **IX. Announcements & Public Forum:**

- Dziubak announced that City of Knoxville's Neighborhood Resource Fair will be held on Saturday, August 12, 2023, at the Jacobs Building in Chilhowee Park, located at 3301 East Magnolia Avenue. The event will be from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and Dziubak as well as CODI volunteers Stacy Spangler and George Childress will be there, so please stop by if you are there.
- Dziubak announced that August Advocacy & Information Presentation will be by CODI member Mull.
- Dziubak announced that CODI Grants Committee will be meeting on July 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. with Charles Lomax to discuss the possibility of partnering with KAUL (Knoxville Area Urban League), location is to be determined and more information will be sent out to committee members soon.
- Accessible trails and the Smoky Mountains: GSMNP in a partnership with Knox County, Catalyst Sports, and Friends of the Smokies, will make public lands more accessible for visitors of all abilities by offering three Summer "Adaptive Adventures" in July, August, and September. Register and find more information at Catalyst Sports.

## **X. Meeting was Adjourned at 5:20 p.m.**