

County of Westchester



Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

4:00 PM

Only Webex due to State of the County Event

Only Webex

Advisory Council on People with Disabilities

Chair welcomed everyone at 4:04PM

Minutes approved

No guest speaker

Shari and Evan on vacation

Employment:

- **Diverse Abilities Job Fair**
 - o **Carin shared that she, Geri, and Lucille volunteered at the fair**
 - o **Jeff contacted and arranged for 4 volunteers from the Center for Career Freedom and the Sterling Center of Greater Mental Health of Westchester and Rockland**
 - o **Job fair attracted 300-350 job seekers and over 70 employers and resources.**
 - o **Challenges included venue space limitations of the basement location for wheelchair and walker users, noise and crowding, direction of the tables, and last-minute cancellations by some employers**
 - **Jeff emailed those who signed up for interviews with employers who cancelled before the job fair to let them know**
 - **Due to the space downstairs, unlike previous fairs, there wasn't enough room for more employers and resources**
 - o **Job seekers and their supporters, as well as employers and resources, expressed enthusiasm, with many job seekers actively engaging in interviews**
 - **Elected officials were very enthusiastic about the event**
 - o **Because the fair was during school break, there were fewer groups and schools**
 - o **There were 2 workshops during the fair:**
 - **Resume Writing via Westchester Putnam Career Center**
 - **Job Seeker Tips via HOPE House of Human Development Services of Westchester**

Newsletter:

- **Article about Melissa Carney and her husband will be included in April's Out and About**
- **Due to the State of the County, staff who approve the articles and the design might be late, so the newsletter might come out on Monday instead of Friday**
- **Jeff continued to thank members for sending articles, events, and information**

Social opportunities:

- **Follow up with libraries**
 - o **Follow up with Terry Kirchner from the library regarding social opportunities**
 - **Send library events and information to Jeff for the Out and About**
 - **Inclusive Initiative advertises many social opportunities**
- **Segue into Inclusive Initiative as another agenda item later in the meeting**
- **Chappaqua Library offers art classes for people with disabilities during the day**
- **Lucille called and asked if her daughter could come**
- **Add to Out and About**
- **Francesca sees the same with Pleasantville**
 - **Discussions highlighted the need for better communication and coordination about local library programs for individuals with disabilities**
 - **How do we get the word out about social opportunities?**
 - **Liz feels Terry Kirshner has a full plate. Have each library take responsibility for**

getting the word out

- What is the communication between libraries like, especially with information about programming and services for people with disabilities?
- Can we meet with the libraries at a meeting to coordinate information for people with disabilities?
- Offer Out and About to promote
- Use Terry K if there is no way to meet with all libraries
- ☐ Pound Ridge Library is involved with offering inclusive activities, but is not aware of the resources at other libraries
- ☐ Jeff did a training on RAs for libraries, where they realized they need better centralization
- ☐ Carin will reach out to Terry K as a next step
- Asked Liz for info about alternative groups for this effort
- ☐ Croton group, starting a town disability training. Called IDEA – DEI
- ☐ Group didn't know about the Bedford Inclusive Initiative
- ☐ Jeff put together a list of the County's local disability committees
- ☐ Pleasantville has one where Michael Orth was involved.
- Lucille reached out to him for information

Inclusive Initiative

- Bedford came to our meeting last year
- o How to help promote it
- o Can County help promote and fund it?
- o Sent a letter to CE Latimer, but did not hear back since he was planning to leave
- o Re-engage with Erica Pierce
- o Rockland County initiated this program
- ☐ Carin sent info to Shari and Erica
- Shari asked for the original letter, which she will give to CE
- o Ask CE to have County employees trained
 - Francesca – Town boards can be reticent
 - Can County fund this?
- ☐ Liz – Towns aren't interested in the County intervening.
 - Council members and, community can call
- ☐ Carin – our role is to inform the CE
- ☐ Liz – go through the OFPD?
- ☐ Jeff reminded the group that our original idea was to ask CE to have County employees take the training for precedence and success, and then perhaps offer funding assistance for County towns, etc. to offer this training.
- ☐ Francesca – if the County does it first, it will have a better impact.

Airport:

- No updates.
- The Council continues to be interested in addressing the issue of how airlines handle wheelchairs at the airport
- o Carin wrote and asked for guidance on policy and procedures for each airline. She hopes to be able to report something for our May meeting.

New Initiatives:

- **Blue Envelope Program**
 - o Announced last week at a CE press conference
 - o Advocates on this council with lived experience with disabilities directly affected, and for whom this program was designed, were frustrated and questioned why they were not asked to be involved, never mind not made aware that this program was being implemented by the BOL
 - o G Duff Baily brought the program to the BOL and was there at the event
 - o Some council members were involved in bringing the program as much as Duff was
 - o CE said it didn't need legislation and moved it forward
 - o Eleanor Evangelista from WHID, who is also a parent advocate also gave an effective speech
 - ☐ Offer training. Set up mock traffic stops.
 - o Not all people with Autism drive. Francesca suggested stickers could be put on other forms of ID
 - o Chair encouraged the council to watch the video of the event
- **Fear of disclosing diagnosis due to possible legislation of a registry for people with certain disabilities.**

Chair asked us to keep watch about education and support that we may be able to share and advocate for.

- **CDPAP program**
 - o Chair added this to the agenda.
 - o Learned from Geri that the County has more involvement than thought
 - ☐ CDPAP program allows elderly and disabled people to direct their own care and be in charge of hiring and managing staff
 - ☐ Medicaid-funded program.
 - ☐ Geri shared her lived experience using Medicaid. Has Caseworker through the CDPAP.
 - ☐ Very popular program. Though fraud happens, the way the govt is dealing with it is causing much distress.
 - ☐ Care workers in the County are not getting paid in a timely manner – Geri's workers haven't been paid since April 1.
 - ☐ Though this is a NY State program, the County's DSS runs it – over 500 cases county-wide.
 - ☐ DSS didn't get her paperwork through on time.
 - ☐ Francesca said she can relate to Geri's issues:
 - Can we have an Ombudsmen for this program? Point team?
 - It's a full-time job advocating and making sure things are being done.
 - Having contacts to help is a privilege to too few people. Need to have more advocacy for public access
 - ☐ Let CE know about this issue
 - Letter from Council bringing this to CE's attention
 - Lucille – Chris Burdock's office has a liaison for this program.
 - Geri has already tried to use this service to no avail.

- Where is the accountability for people not doing their jobs?
- Michael G knows staff at ILCs that are looking into this and suggested Geri contact them.
- Jeff asked Geri if she's looked into filing a discrimination lawsuit
 - o Working with Legal Aid for a potential class action lawsuit.
- Carin will reach out to Geri to collaborate on a letter from the Council
- Because County DSS is administering the program, Carin asked Geri to share this so we can use local authorities to tackle this issue.
- CE liked a post by Geri on Instagram on this subject. She feels he's likely to be aware of this.
- We will discuss the issue of the US government espousing that vaccines cause Autism at another time.
- The Volunteer NY kits were brought up by BOL Nancy Barr. Not sure if she just wanted us to be aware of it, or make an initiative out of it. Carin will look into it
- Council vacancies
 - o Ellen Hendryx was the lead for filling vacancies on the council. She has moved on to work in George Latimer's office
 - o A new staff member on the 9th floor is taking over this role. Carin spoke to Shari about previous submissions
 - o Shari will give an update at the next meeting

New Business

- Francesca shared that the BeeLine can be paid for with your phone, but she needs to buy ParaTransit tickets at the county center. Why can't para riders pay with their phone?
 - o Jeff shared an update about switching to the OMNI system. Perhaps they are waiting to see how para riders can use it once it's closer to being implemented
 - o Teri – Why can't we get tickets via credit card?
 - o Council can address this to Evan for the next meeting

Next meetings: May 28th; June 25th; then off for the summer until September 2025

Chair closed meeting at 5:21PM

2. Approval of Minutes

3. Guest: N/A

4. Updates - Old/New Business

A. Employment

B. Newsletter

C. Social Opportunities

D. Airport

E. New Initiatives

a. Airline handling of wheelchairs at airport

b. Vaccines and Autism

F. Follow-Up Items:

a. Council Vacancies

b. Volunteer NY Kits

5. Adjournment