

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

June 8, 2022, Meeting Minutes

Zoom

### **I. Meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm.**

### **II. Roll Call:**

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

**Present:** Alexander, Barber, Briggs, Cook, Dziubak, Jenkins, Landfather, Lowe, Mull, Orr, Simmons, VanDyke, Villanueva, and Welch

**Absent:** Childress, Colebrooke, NeSmith, Rodgers, and Spangler

**Guests:** Marilyn Trader, Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults (HKNC), and Robert McLendon, HKNC, DBES KY & TN

**Interpreters:** Jessica Brackeen & Dawn Munroe

### **III. Approval of March Minutes:**

1<sup>st</sup> motion Mull, 2<sup>nd</sup> motion Landfather, motion carried with all in favor, and none opposed. The motion passed.

**IV. DeafBlind Awareness Week Guest Speaker:** Marilyn Trader, Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youths and Adults (HKNC) Southeast Regional Rep provided valuable information to the CODI body:

- June 26<sup>th</sup> – July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022 is Helen Keller DeafBlind Awareness Week
- Trader is the Southeast Regional Representative and covers North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee and Puerto Rico.
- One organizational goal is to promote and expand their field services. Despite COVID-19, the federal government provided funding for 20 Employment Specialists for 20 states. Due to COVID-19, not all positions are currently filled.
- In Tennessee, Robert McLendon is the Employment Specialist. Mr. McLendon has been employed since August 2021 and is housed in Nashville. McLendon's contact information is [rmclendon@helenkeller.org](mailto:rmclendon@helenkeller.org)

- Trader reported the agency has existed over 50 years, and their goal is to build relationships across the state, collaborate with the DeafBlind centers, community providers, governors, and mayors.
- They also collaborate with our area schools, and are currently seeking to collaborate with mental health service providers.
- The state of Tennessee has over 69,000 DeafBlind individuals and services for DeafBlind citizens in TN includes supporting employment goals, independent living, assistive technology, or whatever else the individual may need.
- One misconception is people think you must be like Helen Keller to receive services and that is NOT accurate.
- DeafBlind is the legal definition of vision or hearing loss. Many older adults' vision could be considered legally blind. Progressive hearing loss due to age or disease over time would be considered. There are numerous reasons why someone would lose their hearing or sight.
- The organization also assists individuals with computers and iPhone as well as other devices they may need through the National DeafBlind Distribution Equipment Program known as (ICC) I Can Connect.  
<https://www.icanconnect.org/>
- The organization also provides training, brings presenters to our area to promote educational awareness, and promotes the needs and supports the service providers have.
- Regarding employers, the organization has built relationships with employers across the nation. They have a National Employment Business Specialist (named Joe). Robert McLendon in Nashville builds these relationships for our residents in TN. When the employer knows they have the FULL support of the organization and can follow up anytime for assistance, most employers have been receptive to employment. The organization employs consumers at Marriott, and with other various other hotel chains, Amazon, Walgreens, and builds internship and apprenticeship program opportunities.
- Anyone can qualify for the "I Can Connect" program if they meet the legally DeafBlind definition and income guidelines.
- Trader mentioned that they have people who are very highly educated that were losing their vision or sight who came to the Helen Keller center in NY to learn how use the technology. They have people with all abilities and all degrees.
- The organization mentioned that they are searching for places willing to participate in internship and apprenticeship programs.
- The bulk of DeafBlindness in TN is through aging consumers, many of which go unreported and there is a large population in East TN with Usher's Syndrome.
- Contact Marilyn Trader, HKNC SE Regional Rep at [Marilyn.Trader@hknc.org](mailto:Marilyn.Trader@hknc.org)  
516-417-0038 Mobile/Text 516-393-7733 Main Number

## **V. New Member Nominee and Officer Voting**

- 1) Karen Lowe – CODI Secretary
- 2) John Barber – CODI Vice Chair
- 3) Dennis Landfather – CODI Chair
- 4) Conya Mull – 2<sup>nd</sup> Term
- 5) Nancy Welch – 2<sup>nd</sup> Term
- 6) Hank Jenkins – 2<sup>nd</sup> Term
- 7) Aquayla Maxwell – New Member
- 8) Kezia Cox – New Member
- 9) William Saxton – New Member
- 10) Mark Ross – New Member

New Member Nominee and Officer Voting was conducted. Membership Committee made a motion to vote on all officer nominations, second terms, and new members. All votes passed with none opposed, motion passed. New members will complete onboarding in July before the regular CODI meeting.

## VI. Committee and Strategic Plan Chairs and Secretaries

- Each CODI member may chair only one committee or strategic plan group.

	Chair	Secretary
Transportation	Nancy Welch	
Bylaws		Daniel Alexander
Community Eng.		John Barber
Executive	Melissa VanDyke	Conya Mull
Membership	Monica Shimmer-Orr	
Universal Design	Joel Simmons	Jessica Villanueva
Livability	Conya Mull	Karen Lowe

- VanDyke announced we need individuals to volunteer for the vacant Chair and Secretary positions for the Committee and Strategic Plan Committees. If anyone is interested in serving, please contact Dziubak if you're willing to serve in a leadership role.

## VII. In-Person Meeting/Retreat – 2022

- a) Date – August in lieu of the August CODI regular meeting, strategic plan meetings and committee meetings, we will have a full day retreat on Friday, August 12, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
  - Have a topic to discuss
  - Breakout groups discuss our committees' goals
  - Review our Strategic Plan
  - CODI Team Building Exercise

- Food will be provided

## **VIII. Member Advocacy and Information**

- a) None

## **IX. Committee Reports:**

### **A. Bylaws:** Did not meet in May

### **B. Membership: Misha Dziubak**

- The membership committee met numerous times in the month of May, conducted new nominee and officer interviews, and recommended new members to the body for voting.

### **C. Transportation: Nancy Welch**

- The mall KAT Bus Stop issue is still unresolved and no solid answer on how to resolve the issue at hand.
- There are several variables to consider; safety, accessibility, connected sidewalks, and pedestrian walkways.
- Current KAT bus stop is on Gleason Rd behind the West Town Mall – Outbound using Gleason is somewhat okay, but according to KAT the problem is the in-bound route (cannot make a left turn safely)
- Perhaps CODI could write a letter and submit to KAT regarding our concerns about the bus stop issue and it needs to be resolved not forgotten about or attend a future KTA (Knoxville Transit Authority) meeting to address our concern as a CODI body. Next KTA meeting is June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 3pm
- Cook is to meet with City of Knoxville Engineering Dept. regarding some possible options (maybe a flashing light or crosswalk, sidewalks, etc.) on June 8, 2022.
- Welch shared local initiatives that are ongoing which included KAT reimaged, Advance Knox, Justice Knox, Vision Zero Coalition, and the Greyhound Bus stop.

### **D. Community Engagement – Dennis Landfather**

- Updates on Parking Day from Landfather:
  - DIA will soon be getting their strategy together
- Questions regarding Parking Day include:
  - What can CODI supply for the Parking Day event?
  - Can we get two spots instead of one?
  - What disability simulation activities can we do?
- Biggest Challenges regarding Livability that could be addressed at Parking Day include:

- Zero step entrance. CODI could make a non-flat entry and see if people can get over in a wheelchair
- Navigating front steps, kitchen, heavy doors, shower entry
- Wide enough door to get through in a wheelchair
- Fire alarms with flashing lights.
- Could also look at disability simulation ideas
- Dinner and Design Updates include:
  - Landfather is waiting on Barbara Shipley to contact him.
  - Plans for Dinner and Design are on hold until Universal Design talks to the Home Builders Association to gauge interest in attending the event.

## **X. Strategic Plan Reports:**

### **A. Livability - Conya Mull**

- Mull had come up with a script for the email blast for the Chamber of Commerce for the Accessibility Checklist, which we tweaked the wording on as a group. We found some numbers on the buying power of people with disabilities. And different websites/links that discuss spending power for elderly and those with disabilities.
- Mull had also made a rough draft of a training we can do with regular CODI body when we are ready to start going out to businesses and restaurants. It discussed different ways to approach managers/gatekeepers. Mull will continue to work on it, but it was a wonderful rough draft.
- We will all look for more sites/links that may be useful to include information from in the training for July's meeting.

### **B. Universal Design – Joel Simmons**

- Simmons was nominated and confirmed as chair, and Villanueva as secretary.
- Discussed trying to get in front of the Greater Knoxville Builders Association so CODI can better plan our Dinner and Design.
- The committee wants to make sure we have good information on accessible homes, potential buyers, and profits to be made.
- Simmons is going to reach out to last year's GKBA president and pick his brain about the Association and see if he has any pointers on how to approach.
- Committee also agreed on letting one speaker cover the information presented to GKBA vs multiple speakers on multiple topics.

## **XI. New Business:**

- Cook thanked the previous executive committee and officer for serving and praised them for their hard work and dedication over the past year.
- VanDyke thanked CODI for all their support during her term especially during COVID-19. VanDyke has total faith in future leadership and know they will do amazing things.

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

- Landfather announced he met his son and grandson for the first time in Texas recently and it was an exciting time for he and his family.

## **XIII. Meeting was Adjourned at 5:28 p.m.**

### **Upcoming Meetings/Reminders:**

July 13, 2022	August 10, 2022
September 14, 2022	October 12, 2022
November 9, 2022	December 14, 2022