

Knoxville Mayor's Council on Disability Issues

October 11, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Zoom

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

II. Roll Call:

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

City of Knoxville Staff: Cook, Dziubak,

Present: Brooks, Cain, Childress, Eldredge, Lowe, Mathison, Mull, Robertson, Shimmin-Orr, Simmons, Spangler, Welch, Ziegler

Absent: Alexander, Barber, Carter, Cook, Maxwell, Villanueva,

Guests: Angelia Jones, (CP Center of Knoxville), Regis Borsari, Mayor Indya Kincannon

Interpreter(s): Antonio Banner, Vernice Williams

III. Approval of September Minutes: Motion by Mull, seconded by Mathison – motion carried.

IV. Presentation – Angelia Jones, CP Center of Knoxville

- Just celebrated (Oct 6) World CP Day – “Together Stronger.”
- A little background on CP: it's not a disease, it is caused by damage to the brain during birth.
- 70% of cases happen during the birthing process (pre-birth or during birth).
- Differs for each person, it is a muscle and movement disorder, affecting mobility.
- It does not progress and get worse, but muscle movement does not come back or get any better
- 1 million people in the U.S. have C.P. which equals approximately three of every one thousand births; more males than females have it.
- Commonly affects posture and movement.
- Facial muscles affected: Can affect chewing and swallowing, resulting in digestive disorders
- In Tennessee, there are about 15,000 people with disabilities, but there is not a breakdown statistic on how many folks have CP.
- C.P. is a developmental disability. It is not always accompanied by an intellectual disability. 40% of the time is has an intellectual disability but not always.
- Nationwide about 17% of the people who need long-term care have it, but a vast majority do not. Approximately 9% need long-term care for this disability in Tennessee
- Some folks with CP may use a walker for a while and then progress to a wheelchair.
- Some in wheelchairs may need to use a harness to sit up straight to aid with swallowing and eating.
- Life expectancy varies – anywhere from 30 to 70 years old.

- The Cerebral Palsy Center has been in Knoxville since 1956. They have remained at their current location on Woodland Avenue since the mid-seventies.
- CP center works with adults – no one under the age of 18
- They offer several different programs: Residential Support, Employment Services, Day Program,
- People with CP want the same things that you and I want such as enjoying social activities like bowling, learning to cook, as well as living independently.
- They may need help with daily tasks of bathing, dressing, or preparing food.
- They want love, acceptance, friendship, employment, and value. Look past their disability and their mobility issues.
- See their possibilities, not their limits. They are capable of so much more than just the physical limitations they have. They want dignity, independence, and a chance to do for others and feel valued.
- Everyone is employable: find the job that best fits the individual.
- Simple tasks/jobs can be given to individuals.... Even simply re-writing or re-thinking a job description can keep someone with CP in mind for a job.
- There are some barriers with communication, however there are ways to learn to communicate with the non-verbal. For example: enabling technology – like an iPad with a touchscreen; or smart watches.
- Transportation can be a challenge: options are limited for wheelchairs, and sometimes families are reluctant to let individuals become more independent and travel alone.
- Some of the characteristics of CP can be distracting such as drooling, but once you get past certain distractions you get to know the person.
- The CP Center loves visitors, but call first, they may be out on a regular social outing.
- Contact information: 865-523-0491 / AJones@CPCenter.org (Angelia Jones)

V. Member Advocacy and Information: Mental Health, George Childress

- First and foremost, I just want to say thank you all for being here today. Many of you know me, but for the ones who do not, my name is George Childress and I have been a member of CODI since 2020 and I am East Tennessee born and raised.
- I have been looking forward to today for quite some time now. Not only because Mayor Kincannon was going to be here, but also because of how much this month means to me. Fall of the year has always been a sort of happy place for me. Some of the best times of my life have come during the Fall, but also some of the worst as well. One of the bright spots for me was the day I married my wife, Amber.
- Another great memory, my parents' wedding anniversary. But for all the good memories, there is one that is not so sweet, that day being the day that I wrecked and became paralyzed.
- Ironically, after I woke up from my coma, I realized the wreck was on my parents' anniversary. In my dad's own sarcastic words, my wreck was the best anniversary present they got that year. I say all of that to give a little back story and to shine a light on why I picked this month to advocate for the people in and around Knoxville that are going or have gone through the same heartache and turmoil I have had to endure for 15 years.
- I picked mental health as my advocacy point because it holds a special place in my heart. It holds that spot not only because of my own mental health, but also because of a family member, and for a close

friend of mine and countless others who don't have a voice. We suffer and thrive for different and unique reasons, but the cause is the same at the very base level. I will talk about mental health today also because Tennessee ranks near the bottom for mental health accessibility across the board. Especially Children's care. Life is far too short to suffer through, therefore I genuinely believe that the people in my life, in my community, and beyond need better accessibility to the resources that are just out of reach for them.

- I speak for myself, someone who has lived with depression and had to be bounced from therapist to therapist, telling my story, sharing my deepest hurt. and darkest fears, only to be pushed to yet another therapist. It is soul crushing to tell such a devastating story repeatedly to get the same results when all you've ever wanted was help.
- Moving on from me, there is more than just depression when it comes to mental health, a lot more. One of my closest friends has schizophrenia. I see people like him roaming the streets of Knoxville daily, unable to get the care they need. I see these people suffering through life and I think to myself, this isn't how life is supposed to be, sure life is going to have their tough spots, but we as a people should not have to drag ourselves through the street, we should not have to go hungry, we should not have to worry if we're going to freeze to death when we close our eyes. I see these people and I know I'm within one missed paycheck to being exactly where they are and life is meant to be more than just that, life is meant to have happiness and joy. But things are just getting further and further away from that. It spreads beyond just mental health, with many getting priced out of their own homes, but I'll save that for another day.
- Another person affected by mental health in my life is a dear family member of mine. Her name is Doodle; she was named Doodle because she was born in the back of a doodle bug of all things. Talk about being cramped. I brought her up last because she is the most important. Rosa is her real name, and she is the happiest when she has a coke in one hand and her blocks in the other. I want to talk about her because she is the most helpless, she is in a 50-year-old 's body, with the mental capacity of a 2-year-old. I say that with no disrespect to her, because she has the eye of a hawk and the nose of a blood hound. I worry about a lot in my life, but I worry the most about her. I only have one parent left, that being my dad, our mom passed away a little over 8 years ago. Dad is 84 now and when something happens to him, Rosa will be left to fend for herself. I have looked high and low for a suitable place for her, and I have produced nothing but bare results. The closest place I have found for adults like her is in Texas. She deserves to have as good a life as anyone, yet I know when something happens to dad, she will be left in the state custody, and we all know the state is not a bed of roses. I worry that she will not have the care she deserves, and I know there are more people just like her.
- That is why I picked this month, to hopefully shine light on the injustices that people with mental health issues must live with daily. I speak and spread these words to show others that it is okay to have issues, it is okay to squirm, it is okay to have a bad day, but it is never okay to give up. That' s why accessibility for programs focusing on this topic are so important.
- They give hope for those suffering from all facets of mental health, both clinically and psychologically. Let us shine a light on the disabilities that are invisible to the naked eye so those in need of these services can confidently go forward knowing their community and government have made a priority in addressing their needs.

VI. Committee Reports:

Bylaws:

- Did not meet. Dziubak has reached out to CoK Law department, and Shields will get back to her later this month about separating the Bylaws into two documents - an overarching document which will not change often, and another that CODI may change with approval from the Mayor.

Membership:

- Will meet on December 6, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

Transportation: (Met October 9, 2023)

- Vision Zero Update:
 - CoK has proposed an action plan to reduce traffic fatalities to zero by 2030.
 - Has applied for a Safe Streets Grant which will be awarded to those chosen in December of 2023.
 - It will take five years to complete some projects.
- Choice Lanes:
 - Lee had signed a bill under the transportation modernization act back in March to invest 3.3B in TDOT to help roads keep pace with population growth.
 - Choice lanes are additional lanes drivers could use to circumvent traffic.
 - https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tdot/build-with-us/Choice-Lanes-Website-FAQs_06.pdf
 - <https://www.wate.com/news/politics/tennessee-paid-choice-lanes-how-they-work/>
 - <https://news.yahoo.com/tdot-releases-video-showing-choice-035649150.html>
- KAT Reimagined:
 - In July at the KTA meeting, they did vote on a resolution for the recommended network letting them go forward making changes to the plan and the new bus network would be implemented in august of 2024.
- Other Council on Disabilities/Advisory boards across the region:
 - Chattanooga, Memphis, and Nashville all have disability advisory committees.
 - What do they do? Do they have stories, successes, or challenges/lessons learned that they would like to share with CODI? Welch has gathered contact information.
 - Chattanooga quoted that 22.2% of adults in the US have some sort of disability, and 28.8% of adults in TN have a disability. Source was national Center of Birth Defects and Center for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - Memphis was relatively vague with information on their council.
 - Nashville: Mayor's Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities.
- Accessible Greenways/Parks
 - Beverly Park – Intergenerational playground – Ribbon Cutting in November 2023

- Link to all terrain wheelchair featuring brad Turner and his daughter
 - <https://tnstateparks.com/about/accessibility>
- Other links shared by Welch:
 - <https://www.alltrails.com/us/tennessee/knoxville/ada>
 - [https://www.knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/parks and recreation/greenways trails](https://www.knoxvilletn.gov/government/city_departments_offices/parks_and_recreation/greenways_trails)
 - <https://www.visitknoxville.com/things-to-do/outdoors/trails-greenways/>
 - <https://www.catalystsports.org/knoxville>
 - <https://www.tn.gov/environment/news/2023/8/29/tennessee-state-parks-all-terrain-wheelchair.html#:~:text=The%20system%20now%20offers%20all,Tennessee%20General%20Assembly%20recently%20appropriated>

VII. Strategic Plan Reports:

Livability:

- Will meet on November 1, 2023 at 3:00 p.m.

Universal Design:

- Will meet on November 6, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

VIII. New Business:

- Several cities in Tennessee, including Knoxville, are looking to participate in the 2024 Disability Freedom and Justice Caravan. During April to September 2024, the caravan will travel across America to bring disability awareness through storytelling, intersectional organizing, and celebrations.
- Dziubak is still trying to find a good place to meet for the CODI November 3rd social. So far, Dziubak has reached out to Tommy Trents, Café 4, Calhoun's, and Downtown Grille and Brewery, and they either were not fully accessible, would not take reservations, or wanted to charge us for the space.
 - Other options Dziubak will be trying include: Aubrey's at Papermill, Austin's Buffet, Texas Roadhouse on Morrell Road – and if these cannot accommodate us, then perhaps the food court at West Town Mall.
 - If anyone knows of somewhere else that they believe can fit up to 23 people including several manual and power wheelchairs, that does not charge a fee, and does not require the full party to arrive at the same time, please let Dziubak know.
 - Dziubak is waiting to hear back from Connor Concepts about space at Café 4 or Loco Burro, there is a possibility they will waive their \$600. per hour fee if CODI can change the date of the social to Thursday November 2nd.
 - Other locations were suggested: Marble City Market, Barley's, Corner 6, Parkside Grille.

- Dziubak is working hard at trying to nail down an accessible location for all to attend.

IX. Announcements & Public Forum:

- There is an NDEAM event, Project SEARCH and KAEC Breakfast occurring on Thursday, October 19, 2023 at 8:00 a.m. at Rothchild's Catering. If you would like to attend, you will need to RSVP and pay for your spot as soon as possible. Cost is \$25.
 - <https://www.kaectn.org/events>
- SPARK event – Sat. Oct 28th – Fun, Run and Roll at the Cove at Concord Park

X. Meeting was Adjourned at 3:47 p.m.