



Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2022

Public meeting held virtually via Web Ex

Attendees:

Alesia Richter
Ann Scholz
Cassandra Buffington-Bates
Cindy Parr
Dawson Robertson
Doris Jacobs
Eliza Hunter
Erica Lewis
Ihuoma Emenuga
Jemira Sarratt
Katie Collins-Ihrke
Kellie Rowden-Racette
Lea Fant
Michelle Henry
Missie Baxter
Naysha Conway-Hart
Stephanie Adibe
Stephanie Hayes
Susan Potts

Guests:

Khalil Harmon-Hough
Monica Shah

Absent: *(Note to Dawson: please double check that these folks should be recorded as absent)*

Aida Lebbos
Alexandrav Berry
Alyssa Bonser
Diane Nagle
Ernestine Bridges

Janice Yetter
Kathy Land
Laura Parsons
Meghan Smallwood
Paul Linkens
Stephanie Discepolo

Meeting called to order at 8:35 am.

Welcome and Introductions

D. Robertson completed roll call and welcomed new Commission members.

Approval of Minutes

K. Collins-Ihrke made a motion to approve the November 2021 minutes. K. Rowden-Racette seconded the motion. Minutes were approved unanimously.

Commission Membership Update

S. Adibe reported the following: There is a vacant seat for chair of the Commission. The chair is required to be a parent, and they would serve alongside co-chair D. Robertson. Duties of the chair include:

- Organize meetings
- Prepare agendas and distribute minutes
- Oversee the preparation of an annual report to include the work of and recommendations from the Commission
- Preside over meetings
- Participate in sub-group meetings

Ihuoma Emenuga and K. Rowden-Racette expressed interest in the chair position. Question was raised as to whether both could serve together as chairs. S. Adibe will check the by-laws to see if this arrangement is permissible. D. Robertson will share their resumes with the Commission.

Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Update

S. Hayes reported that (Note to Dawson: how many?) work-study students are in jobs in the community and within the HCPSS. Some are in paid positions. These include:

- Burger King
- Jiffy Lube
- HCPSS warehouse
- Assembling materials, laminating, etc. for teachers
- Alkon Distributors
- Doing mailers for a realtor
- Local horse farms
- Columbia Association fitness facilities

Some employers are curtailing operations due to COVID infections among employees. Other employers are starting to require that employees be vaccinated. Most of the work-study students are vaccinated.

K. Rowden-Racette suggested a public relations initiative, such as a “video spotlight” on employers, to increase the number of participating businesses.

M. Baxter reported the following:

- This is the last year of State transition grants
- HCPSS is developing a website for parents
- Compensatory work (Dawson – can you elaborate on this?)

Community Sub Group Report

K. Collins-Ihrke reported that the group has not met recently. No further update at this time.

Education Sub Group Report

Ann Scholz reported the following: The group met this week. Lots of ideas were generated, which are being organized. There is interest in meeting with HCPSS to discuss plans for the new website for parents.

D. Robertson discussed the development of a Transition Resource Guide. If developed, the guide could be posted on the webpages of the Commission and the Dept. of Community Resources and Services. The question was raised as to who would keep the Guide current and up-to-date.

Employment Sub Group Report

N. Conway-Hart reported the following: The group met in December and reviewed employment resources and strengths.

Ihuoma Emenuga suggested that creativity is needed to engage with private sector businesses; ask them to commit to working with just one student.

D. Robertson suggested re-connecting with the Chamber of Commerce.

Member Updates

C. Parr reported that she will be leaving The Arc of Howard County on June 30, 2022. The Arc has returned to a virtual format for the month of January, due to COVID. Eliza Hunter is the new manager for Project SEARCH.

S. Adibe reported that there is a vacancy within the Department of Community Resources and Services for a Manager of the newly-formed Office on Disabilities. She will share the job posting link with Commission members.

K. Collins-Ihrke reported that Accessible Resources for Independence has 104 COVID home test kits to be distributed to Howard County residents.

D. Robertson reported that a virtual Transition Symposium event is being planned for the spring, in the format of weekly workshops, some of which will be offered in Spanish.

S. Potts reported that the Dept. of Recreation & Parks continues to experience challenges due to COVID. Some programs are being cancelled due to staffing shortages and decreasing enrollments. Child care centers and summer camp plans are also impacted. A Project SEARCH intern is now working in the Rec & Parks warehouse! Use of outdoor parks has greatly increased. A sensory trail is being planned for Centennial Park North. Also, plans to include wheelchair-accessible swings. Rec & Parks is currently hiring for a variety of positions.

L. Font shared that finding out what employers need is helpful in “carving out” job positions and defining job duties, making it easier to place workers in small businesses. She also reported that the Columbia DORS office has a new supervisor, Kimberly Daniel, as well as three new case workers: Latwanna Johns, Christine Bennett, and Elton Harrison. **(Note to Dawson – I am not sure about the spelling of any of these 4 names!)** Most DORS services are virtual. Some work-based learning, automotive and child care training programs, are offered in-person.

E. Hunter reported that the second rotation for Project SEARCH has started, with interns placed at these job sites: APL, HC Library, HC food bank, and within Howard County Government in the Central Fleet Office, Finance Dept., Dept. of Inspections, Licenses and Permits, Office of Human Rights and Equity, Meadowbrook Athletic Complex, and the Rec & Parks warehouse. The program also includes classroom instruction.

D. Jacobs introduced a new Humanim staff person, Khalil Harmon-Hough. The start date of the Start on Success program with Howard County General Hospital has been delayed. The University of Md Orthopedic and Rehab Hospital (formerly known as Kernan) has open positions for students. The Start on Success program has a virtual option starting in February. The STEP program recently placed three new students.

Closing

The meeting adjourned at 10:13 am.

Upcoming Meetings:

March 10, 2022

May 12, 2022

This document is available in an alternate format by request.