

# **MAYOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES**

## **Accomplishments – FY'09 September, 2007 – July, 2008**

### **COMMISSION DEVELOPMENT**

- Provided testimony to the City Council on potential new Members.
- Provided testimony at a City Council hearing on major changes to the Ordinance that formed the MCD. This hearing appeared on the City Cable channel, TV 25. The recommended changes include:
  - Expanding the City Agencies participating on the Commission. The additional Agencies are the Department of Social Services, the Police Department, the Fire Department, the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and the Office of Emergency Management.
  - Changing the number of City Council Districts from 6 to 14 to conform to current law.
  - Sanctioning Membership for non-City residents who represent City organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities.
- Recruited new Members.
- Filled the long vacant Family Members category.
- Participated in the Maryland Alliance of Disability Commissions and Committees. Baltimore City served as Vice-Chair.
- Recorded and distributed minutes for Commission meetings and events.
- Provided orientation and support to Members.
- Revised the MCD Members Handbook and Community Resource List for the Website and community marketing brochure.

### **ACCESS**

- Abel Wolman Municipal Building  
Provided assistance to make the 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> floors men and women's restrooms accessible.
- Department of Public Works Museum Building  
Provided assistance to install a temporary ramp until a permanent ramp is installed.
- Department of Social Services 1901 E. North Avenue  
Provided assistance to make entrance/exit doors to decrease pressure to open and close doors from 19 lbs to the 7 lbs. An air control specialist is in the process to decrease the pressure to the standard of 5 lbs.
- Enoch Pratt Free Library

Canton Branch: Provided assistance to install an accessible ramp for the building.

- Good Samaritan Hospital  
Provided assistance to replace five (5) out of six (6) faded handicap parking signs.
- Pimlico Race Track  
Provided assistance to management regarding service animals and handicapped parking procedures for the Preakness and other horse racing events.
- 1600 block Walterswood Road  
Provided assistance to install eight (8) curb cuts for accessibility.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

- The Employment Committee continues to work and assure that employment-related information concerning rights, availability, and support services are readily available and accessible to persons with disabilities, as well as all citizens of our community. The committee assists the City, public, and private entities in ensuring the employment rights of individuals with disabilities.
- On Wednesday, May 28, 2008, the Employment Committee and the Commission hosted and organized a Public Forum on: **Brain Injuries—managing the vocational impact on the individual, family, and community**, Hosted by Life Bridge Health at Sinai Hospital’s Sinai Rehabilitation Center. We had 4 guest speaker/panelists who provided information & presentations.  
They were:
  - **Dr. Melanie Brown**, MD, from Sinai Hospital of Baltimore / LifeBridge Health; Medical Director, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program who talked about “Brain Injury and Employment”.
  - **Diane Triplett**, from the Brain Injury Association of Maryland - Executive Director talked about “The Brain”.
  - **Anastasia B. Edmonston**, MS CRC—Maryland Mental Hygiene Administration - TBI Projects Director talked about “Vocational Issues after Brain Injury”.
  - **Jo Anne Materkowski**, Maryland Department of Education—Division of Rehabilitation Services - ABI Program Manager talked about the “History and Overview of the Governor’s Employment Initiative”.
- We are still researching and investigating what incentives and benefits that are offered from the Federal level, State level and/or City level to businesses /companies that employ individuals with disabilities.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

- Participated in the Charles Street Trolley Community Planning meetings to review, comment, and assist in planning for an accessible street trolley transportation line.
- Participated in the review of the City Department of Transportation's Transportation Maintenance Control program.
- Co-Chaired the monthly Maryland Citizen Advisory Committee for Accessible Transportation (CACAT) to review and monitor para-transit services.
- Participated in the development of the pilot accessible wheelchair taxi project.
- Participated in the State Department of Disabilities Master Plan to review transit service.
- Began collecting comparable data regarding on time performance of Mobility service at The League for People with Disabilities, Chimes and at a community dialysis center.

## **LEGISLATIVE**

- The Legislative Sub-Committee reviewed, evaluated, and provided recommendations on legislation to effect positive change for citizens with disabilities on twelve bills before the City Council and State legislature.
  - HB280 - Tax Credits for Qualifying Employees with Disabilities
  - SB314 – Tax Credits for Individuals Facing Employment Barriers
    - – Sunset Extension – **MCD Position:** Support – Both Passed House & Senate: Favorable w\ Amendments.
  - HB273\SB – Assistive Technology Guaranteed Loan Program and Fund – Changes
    - **MCD Position:** No Position – Passed w\ Amendments.
  - SB792/HB448 – Residential Real Property – Maryland Building Performance Standards for Visitability
    - MCD Position: Track Development – Passed House Recommended for Interim Study by House Environmental Matters Committee.
  - SB698 - Criminal Procedure – Occupational Licenses or Certificates – Certificate of Relief from Disabilities
    - **MCD Position:** Defer to the Mayors Office of Criminal Justice – Failed to get out of Judicial Committee.
  - HB767 – Individuals with Disabilities Service Animals – MCD Position: Support – Passed with Amendments.

- HB493 – Health Insurance- Disabled Individuals –Eligibility for the Maryland Health Insurance **MCD Position: Support:** Withdrawn by Legislative Committee.
- SB501/HB873 – Criminal Law – Crimes Against the Elderly or Persons with a Disability – **MCD Position: Support** – Failed to get out of Judicial Committee.
- SB733 – Vehicles Equipped for Disabled Individuals - Fees and Taxes – **MCD: Position:** Defer to City of Baltimore, Department of Transportation – Failed to get out of Budget and Taxation Committee.
- HB958 – Vehicle Laws-Registration Fees- Discount for Senior & Individuals with Disabilities **MCD Position:** Defer to the City of Baltimore, Department of Transportation – Withdrawn by Legislature.
- HB1163 – Vehicle Excise tax- Vehicles Equipped for Individuals with Mobility Impairments Exemption – MCD: Position; Support with Amendments – Failed to get out of Environmental Matters Committee
- City Council Bill 08-087 Draft amendments to City Council Bill 08-0087, Mayors Commission on Disabilities- Members & Associates seeking to reflect current MCD membership practices. – **MCD Position:** Support – Scheduled for Public Hearing – Legislative Chair Testified before Committee.

### **SUPPLEMENTAL COMMITTEE WORK GROUPS-TASKS**

- The Legislative Sub-Committee researched the Taxi Access Programs as a project nationally and internationally to determine the viability for the at need service, as an alternative to augment the current Mass Transit, Mobility Service, which has a policy that allow rides to be scheduled 24 hours in advance for the mobility and premium service which are provided at a reduced cost for door to door service with in a mile of the fixed route.
  - Representative’s of the workgroup were from:
    - The State Mass Transit Administration(MTA), Office of the Administrator, MTA Mobility Services, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
    - Public Service Commission, Transportation Division
    - Members of the Taxi Cab Association
      - Veolia Transportation
      - Taylor Made
      - Star Associates
      - ABC Taxi

Recommendations were made to develop a pilot that would provide incentives to For Profit, Non Profit, New Operators, and the possibility of a brokerage arrangement; with the PSC, transportation division providing a not yet designated number of permits\medallions to be issued at no charge to allow the pilot to move forward, based on the demographic population to be determined.

Other avenues of funding were discussed to allow public service grants to be used to purchase equipment to centralize dispatch and market the availability of the accessible service.

- The Legislative Committee worked with members of Baltimore Housing, Code Enforcement, and Development & Planning, Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity Enforcement, along with staff of the Department of Finance to develop a process to orient and track and Visitability projects when they are approved to receive local state or federal funds. LITC, Below Market, Home Funds, Land Grants, and Site Based Section 8 are to be flagged in Tidemark software by issuing office and tracked by Baltimore Housing, Code Enforcement to assure compliance with City Visitability Ordinance.
- The Commission partnered with the State Department of Disabilities and the Maryland Commission on Disabilities Advisory Board to assist with a “Listening Post” /Public Forum to assist with the development of a strategic plan for people with disabilities for the State via the priorities for the City. The areas included transportation, housing, emergency preparedness, transitioning youth services, employment, etc.
- Collaborated with the Baltimore City Office of Emergency Management, The State Department of Disabilities, and disability providers to develop an Emergency Preparedness Planning document to assist providers with the identification on staff, equipment and resources for mutual support in an emergency.
- Participated in as a member of the BALTIMORE CITY CITIZEN CORPS COUNCIL. The Citizen Corps Council is a subcommittee of the LEPC (local emergency planning committee) that focuses on educating the public in emergency preparedness. The council is open to members of the public, government agencies, private companies, and non-profit organizations who are interested in broadcasting the emergency preparedness message in Baltimore City. Citizen Corps Councils are sponsored by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and are set up in counties and cities across the country.
- Collaborated with the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and Mayor’s Office of Homeless Services in obtaining transportation services for people with disabilities. Assisted both agencies with the Federal ADA requirements for shelters.
- Collaborated with the Parking Authority, Department of Transportation, and Police Department to begin Handicapped Parking enforcement in City garages. We initiated the project by inspecting City owned garages. Fifteen City parking garages were inspected and 12 tickets were issued.

- Hosted, planned, and implemented the National Disability Institute and Internal Revenue's Service, Real Economic Impact Tour's Mayor's Leadership Summit in Baltimore City. We welcomed representatives of Mayor's offices and community-based organizations from 12 cities. The group worked together over the course of two days to design and implement a coordinated plan of action to advance the economic freedom of working Americans with disabilities and their families through participation in free tax preparation and other asset building strategies. The Second Annual Mayor's Leadership Academy on Asset Development for Persons with Disabilities is the first stop on the Real Economic Impact Tour lead by the National Disability Institute (NDI) of Washington, DC. "The Real Economic Impact Tour began three years ago and reached 54 cities in 2007 and helped over 36,000 tax filers with disabilities," said Michael Morris, Director of the National Disability Institute. "We are active in 62 cities and we expect to triple the number of volunteer-led free tax preparation returns filed for people with disabilities."
- As part of Mayor's Dixon's Cleaner, Greener, Safer, and Healthier Baltimore Policy, the City of Baltimore had the First Annual Disability Income Tax Day on Saturday, March 29, 2008. Specifically the goal of the day was to target the thousands of people with disabilities and those receiving Social Security benefits to assist them with getting their Income Tax credits, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, and their stimulus package payments. This was an opportunity to increase the assets of people with disabilities and help stimulate our local economy. This was is part of a national partnership with the National Disability Institute and Internal Revenue Service's Real Economic Impact Tour. Locally, the partnership between government, businesses and community organizations was represented by The Mayor's Commission on Disabilities, Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development, Community Action Partnership, the Baltimore Office of the Internal Revenue Service, Making Choices for Independent Living, Inc., the Maryland State Department of Education, the Division of Rehabilitation Services, and the League for People with Disabilities. Utilizing ten staff from the Department of Housing and Community Development, 4 staff from the Division of Rehabilitation Services, 4 staff from Making Choices for Independent Living, we provided services for 139 residents at two Community Action Partnership Centers, 5225 York Road and 3314 Ayrdale Avenue. Utilizing e-mailed flyers to local Disability service, Senior, and low income service providers and local advertisement on TV 25 we were able to successfully market the event with two weeks notice. We were able to assist the 139 taxpayers in the following manner: 82 taxpayers submitted the stimulus application, 57 taxpayers received free tax preparation and electronic filing services resulting in \$15,668 of Earned Income Tax Credits and tax refunds.
- Chaired the Baltimore City Development Group, Inclusionary and Visitability Housing Committee. The Committee was charged with identifying the key components of the Inclusionary and Visitability Housing Ordinances that could be used for fiscal and project developer education, monitoring, and tracking. The

Agencies participating are Housing, Planning, Baltimore Development Corporation, Law, Transportation, and Finance. The group identified several methods of educating developers about the requirements of the bills, methods of financial and project tracking and monitoring of development projects affected by the bills.

- In collaboration with the Department of Human Resources, Mayor's Office of Employment Development, Federal Social Security Administration, the City of Baltimore was awarded a Pilot Ticket to Work Program. It is reportedly the first City to apply for a Ticket To Work grant. The program is for Baltimore City employees who are Social Security Administration beneficiaries. By being a Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and social security beneficiary working for the City of Baltimore we have identified approximately 30 eligible employees. The goals of the Pilot program are to: 1) is reduced reliance on Social Security benefits and increased self-sufficiency, 2) provide increased opportunities for career growth, and 3) provide job accommodations that result in increased productivity and improved quality of City government customer service.
- Collaborated with the City's Department of Housing and Community Development, Home Ownership Program and the State Department of Housing to assist with the development of the new State Program for Expanding Home Ownership Program for People with disabilities, starting July 1, 2008. The new program using blended State Housing and Bond funds will significantly increase the opportunities for people with disabilities to acquire Home Ownership. Additionally the 23 Baltimore Based 13 Homeownership Counseling Agencies will be better able to assist people with disabilities through assistance and training from the Mayor's Commission on Disabilities.
- Participated as a member of the City Voter Integrity Workgroup program to ensure accessible polling sites throughout the City. The Mayor's Office of Legislative Affairs, Board of Elections, Police Department, Department of Recreation and Parks, Department of Housing and Community Development, and Baltimore City Public Schools were collaborating members under the leadership of Demune Millard. Training information for judges, accessible signage, and seating for seniors and people with disabilities, and accessible polling sites were some of the Workgroups activities. We also took the lead in interfacing with BGE to assist with the charging of hundreds of cell phones.
- Following a Constituent Complaint regarding a the accessibility of Temporary Events, we worked with the Department of Public Works to revise the Temporary Permit form and process to increase accessibility and trash recycling at Temporary Events such as the Honfest and other community and City fairs, forums, and sporting events, and celebrations.

- Working with the Department of Finance and the Central Interpreter and Referral Services (Hearing and Speech Agency) we provided sensitivity and deaf awareness training for their customer service employees in the collections and parking fines sections.
- In collaboration with the Law Department, we worked with City Agencies to help them with their U.S. Department of Justice ADA transition plans to correct City ADA violations and educated Agencies about the requirement for future planning, construction, and program implementation.
- In Collaboration with the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Public Works, the U.S. Assess Board, and the Baltimore Chapter of the American Association of Architects we provided Americans with Disabilities Act and Fair Housing Training to approximately 80 individuals, including representatives for all City Agencies. This training was especially targeted to City planners, architects, and inspectors.
- In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Ms. Sandra Cammaroto, we provided training on sensitivity and security screening for the City's Sheriff's Office and Police Department.
- In collaboration with the Community Relations Commission and the Mayor's Office of Women and Minority Business, we worked with a citizen with a disability to address concerns about their civil rights, treatment, and possible discrimination by a disability provider and Baltimore City Public Schools.
- In collaboration with the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education, we worked with a group of African American Seniors who are Blind and have visual impairments to integrate them into Senior Center activities. Additionally, greeting and orientation staffs at all Senior Centers were trained in disability sensitivity and awareness.
- In collaboration with the Baltimore Development Corporation, we assisted them and an architectural firm with the accessibility of the new Hilton Convention Center Hotel.
- In collaboration with the Department of Transportation, we identified deficiencies in the equipment, facility, and training in the Pulaski Highway Impound Lot that resulted in poor customer services to people with disabilities. We developed a Plan of Correction which the Department is now implementing to provide better customer service.



- Working with the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the Department of Housing and Community Development, we provided ADA expertise on transient and temporary shelter and housing for people with disabilities. This assisted with greater and more efficient response to health emergencies, smoother activities of daily living, and reduces federal ADA violations.
- Collaborated with the Mayor's Administrator and Liaison to the Jewish Community, Department of Transportation, Law Department, and Controller's Real Estate Section to assist the citizens of Clarks Lane in Park Heights with greater accessibility and clarification on easement rights and lot boundaries.

### **Special Ideas and Recommendations**

- Initiated the idea of the Mayor's Office of Constituent Services utilizing a scanner to scan Mayor and City citizen letters and e-mailing all documents to City Agencies to expedite response time and ensure accuracy of information regarding constituent concerns. This program has been implemented with the following results: 1) reduced filing and paperwork, 2) increased and quicker response from Agencies, 3) greater accountability from Agencies, 4) The City is greener and in line with the Mayor's Cleaner and Greener Baltimore, 5) easier distribution to Agencies of information, 6) easier to Agencies to send to their staff within and throughout their Agencies.
- Propagated the idea of recognizing Baltimore City residents who make significant contributions to the Mayor's Operation Protect and Safe Zones. The City is considering recognizing Block Watch members and community and family advocates who make a significant contribution to the reduction of crime and violence in each of the Operation Protect, Safe Zones, and/or Police Districts on a regular basis.