

**Virginia Disability Commission**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**July 13, 2006**

**I. Call to Order/Opening Remarks**

Delegate Michele McQuigg, acting chair, called the meeting to order. She welcomed those in attendance. The Commission members who were present introduced themselves.

The Commission has eight returning members and four new members. The new members are Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling, Delegate Kathy J. Byron, Delegate David J. Toscano, and Ms. Sandra A. Cook. The returning members are Senator Linda T. "Toddy" Puller, Senator Yvonne B. Miller, Delegate Michele B. McQuigg, Delegate Bobby Orrock, Mr. Bev Fleming, Mr. Billy Howell, Dr. Fred Orelove, and Mr. C. W. Van Valkenburgh.

**II. Election of Chairman/ Vice-Chairman**

Delegate McQuigg, acting chair, asked for nominations for chairman. Senator Puller nominated Delegate McQuigg. The nomination was seconded, and Delegate McQuigg was elected chairman.

Chairman McQuigg then requested nominations for vice-chair. Delegate Orrock nominated Senator Miller. The nomination was seconded, and Senator Miller was elected vice-chairman.

**III. Report on 2006 Legislation**

Patricia Davis, Disability Commission staff, reported on four bills affecting people with physical and sensory disabilities that passed during the 2006 session:

- Senate Bill 182 (Puller), which establishes the Community Integration Advisory Commission as a codified entity;
- Senate Bill 663 (Miller) and House Bill 226 (Jones, D.C.), which relate to transportation needs of populations with limited mobility;
- House Bill 854 (Ebbin), which requires the head of each state agency to designate an existing employee who shall be responsible for reviewing policy and program decisions under consideration by the agency in light of the effect of such decisions on senior citizens and adults with disabilities; and
- House Bill 854 (Ebbin) and Senate Bill 244 (Ticer), which allow the Statewide Independent Living Council to accept grants, gifts, donations and bequests.

Delegate Orrock also called the Commission's attention to another successful bill, House Bill 821, sponsored by Delegate Orrock, which allows local governments in Planning District 16

to enter into cooperative agreements with school divisions to use school buses for public transportation purposes during nonschool hours.

Mr. VanValkenburg asked staff to follow up on the implementation of HB 854, including maintaining a listing of the designated employees.

The full presentation is available [here](#).

#### **IV. Report on Budget Items**

Susan E. Massart, Legislative Fiscal Analyst for the House Appropriations Committee, reported on the FY 2006-08 budget provisions that relate to services for people with disabilities.

Among the notable items were two supported by the Commission during 2005: the inclusion of \$2.3 million for brain injury services and \$0.6 million for a buy-in program as part of the Medicaid state plan. Ms. Massart reported that, in addition, \$1.7 million was included in the budget to add 65 Medicaid waiver slots for people with developmental disabilities, and \$2.6 million was included to increase the personal maintenance allowance for recipients of all Medicaid waivers. Ms. Massart's full presentation is available [here](#).

#### **V. Overview of Provision of Services to People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities**

The Commission received three reports concerning agency services to people with physical and sensory disabilities:

- James A. Rothrock, Commissioner of the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS), made a presentation on services provided by DRS to people with disabilities, including field rehabilitative services, community-based services, disability determination services, and training at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center. Among other items, Mr. Rothrock described the demographic of people receiving services, and the success factors used for measurement. A link to his presentation is [here](#).
- Joseph A. Bowman, Commissioner of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), also spoke about the many comprehensive, team-oriented services rendered by DBVI. These services also include field based services as well as those offered at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired. DBVI serves all ages, and often is called on to serve the aging population with degenerative conditions such as macular degeneration. A link to the presentation is [here](#).

Mr. VanValkenburg asked what DBVI would like the Commission to work on. Mr. Bowman suggested that the items could include job placement and marketing. The Department has only 18 vocational rehabilitation counselors. Also, youth need additional mobility training, requiring more staff. Mr. Bowman also pointed out that the aging of the population will create more consumers for the agency.
- Leslie Prince, Policy and Planning Manager for the Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH), described services offered by that agency. The agency's mission is to

reduce communication barriers between people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing and those who are hearing. Among the services offered are the coordination and screening of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, and technology assistance programs. A link to Ms. Prince' presentation is [here](#).

On questioning from Commission members, Ms. Prince indicated that VDDHH, given the funding, ideally would expand ASL interpretation programs, and would provide hearing aids, which often are not covered by insurance. She pointed out that hearing amplification can be especially important for language development of children younger than age five. Ms. Prince stated that she would provide the Commission with the number of young children in Virginia who could benefit from this service.

## **VI. Biennial Assessment of Disability Services in Virginia**

Heidi Lawyer, Executive Director of the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD), reported to the Commission about the Biennial Assessment of the Disability Services System in Virginia, which was published by the VBPD in April 2006. The Assessment is a comprehensive, cross-disability, cross-agency examination of services to Virginia's citizens. Ms. Lawyer explained the Assessment's format and methodology, and highlighted certain of the specific recommendations made by the Board.

The Assessment is available online at the Board's [website](#).

## **VII. Housing Work Group Reports – Visitability and Assistance to Localities**

Bill Fuller, Ph.D., VHDA, reported concerning the Commission's housing work group's suggestion to establish a coalition of supporters for a visitability certification program in Virginia. This program, certifying homes as "visitabile," would operate as an incentive to builders to construct "visitabile" homes – generally defined as those with a zero-step entrance, a first floor bathroom, and an area where people can congregate. Among the items suggested by the work group is the use of an underutilized tax credit for modification of existing homes to accommodate physical disabilities.

Harrison Rue, Director, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, reported on the Transportation and Housing Alliance, which has developed a planning assessment tool related to the housing and transportation needs of people with disabilities. His presentation materials are located [here](#).

## **VIII. Public Comment**

Sherry Avens told the Commission that she lives in Richmond and has multiple sclerosis. She was institutionalized, but received services from Resources for Independent Living, the Center for Independent Living that serves the Richmond area. As a result of these services, Ms. Avens now lives independently. Chairman McQuigg thanked Ms. Avens for making her statement.

Cora Dickerson informed the Commission that the state's 2-1-1 system, providing information about community services, has been implemented. She provided brochures to the Commission members about this service.

## **IX. Development of 2006 Work Plan**

Chairman McQuigg requested input on the proposed work plan prepared by staff. The Commission members engaged in extensive discussion of the work plan, and received comments from Mr. Rothrock and Ms. Lawyer. Ultimately, the following items were tentatively included:

### **Second meeting focus –**

Disability Services Boards (DSBs)

- History of funding amounts (statewide)
- History of funding usage (programs instituted in localities) using Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF)
- Report on locations where DSBs are no longer active. Any known reasons?

Independent living services (CILs)

- History of funding /requirements for CILs to receive state funding (what kind of services do they have to provide?)
- Locations of existing CILs/ areas not served or underserved
- How can statewide coverage be achieved in the most cost-effective way possible?

### **Third meeting focus –**

Employment issues

- Commonwealth employment policies that promote state employment of people with disabilities, including outsourcing of work to employment service organizations or individuals

### **Fourth meeting focus –**

Follow-up from previous meetings

Updates:

- Housing work group: Visitability certification progress
- Joint Commission on Health Care: Proposals relating to Autism
- Transportation: initiatives in rural areas (Jim Rothrock)

Legislative proposals for 2007 session

- Repeal/extension of 2007 sunset for Disability Commission – including information about Commission's history
- Any proposals that have been raised at previous meetings

### **December or January (if necessary) –**

Review proposed legislation (short meeting)

Ms. Davis will send the revised work plan to Commission members, and it will be reviewed when the Commission holds its next meeting.

Commission member Billy Howell moved that the Commission direct the work group to continue its efforts in gathering a coalition of support for this project and move forward with certification standards. The motion was seconded and passed. The Commission will decide at a later date whether to pursue use of the tax credit in connection with this process.