

**CITY OF MONROE
SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES COMMITTEE MEETING
300 WEST CROWELL STREET
MONROE, NORTH CAROLINA 28112
TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2024 – 3:00 P.M.
AGENDA
www.monroenc.org**

- Item 1.** Public Comment Period
- Item 2.** Approval of Minutes – May 7, 2024
- Item 3.** Adoption of Mission Statement
- Item 4.** Union County Transportation / Human Services Presentation
- Item 5.** Discussion of Information Hub for Available Services

ATTENTION COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Please contact Angie Sustar at asustar@monroenc.org or 704-282-4651 to confirm your attendance. Thank you.

CITY OF MONROE
SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 7, 2024
MINUTES

The Special Needs and Disabilities Committee of the City of Monroe, North Carolina met in Special Session in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 300 West Crowell Street in Monroe, North Carolina at 3:00 p.m. on May 7, 2024 with Chair Julie Thompson presiding.

Members Present: Council Member Julie Thompson (Chair), Committee Member Kelly Stegall, Committee Member Selina Campbell, Parks and Recreation Director Ryan Jones (ex-officio)

Absent: Mayor Robert Burns

Staff: Senior Staff Attorney Terry Sholar, Assistant to the City Manager Lisa Hollowell, City Manager Mark Watson

Guests: Karen Hall

Chair Thompson called the Special Needs and Disabilities Committee Special Meeting of May 7, 2024 to order at 3:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

Chair Thompson recognized the members in attendance.

Chair Thompson asked everyone to refer to the proclamation and stated that she would read it to set a precedence as to the meaning of the committee and the proclamation creating the Special Needs and Disabilities Committee. She proceeded to read the “Whereas, Now, Therefore” portion of the official proclamation declaring the purpose and expectation of this newly formed committee.

Item No. 1. Public Comment. Ms. Karen Heath Hall stated that she is an advocate and has a daughter with special needs who uses a wheelchair. She shared her desire to become a member of the committee. She stated that she has worked with InReach for the past six years and has been on the front lines of the disability world advocating for families with accessibility challenges. She advised that on behalf of the clients she represents and herself, she looks forward to the changes and is very excited this committee has been established and she is ready to take part.

Chair Thompson confirmed Ms. Hall’s residence address and reviewed the requirements and committee application process. Ms. Hall advised that she has completed and submitted the required paperwork.

Item No. 2. Prioritization of Goals. Chair Thompson stated that as part of the initial establishment of this committee, members were requested to provide what they felt were their priorities related to the goals of this committee and were asked to submit those priorities at the first official meeting.

Chair Thompson stated that there was discussion to have an interpreter for sign language at some point for the meeting.

Director of Parks and Recreation Ryan Jones advised that from a staff standpoint specifically from the

parks and recreation focus is inclusivity with playground equipment, accessibility within parks, and to move towards this focus at the community centers as well. He advised that staff must ensure that walking paths through parks are accessible to amenities that exist within parks. Also, Staff will prioritize replacing current playground equipment with equipment that focuses on inclusive play. He stated that he is looking forward to seeing what the committee members priorities are based on the purpose of Parks and Recreation within the community.

Member Kelly Stegall stated that she currently works at South Piedmont Community College (SPCC) as Dean of the School of College and Career Readiness. She advised that under that umbrella, one of the programs offered specifically for individuals with intellectual disabilities. The goal is to help adults who are interested in transitioning to the workforce or some type of other post-secondary educational training to be able to get there and to help them get into employment. She advised that the college received significant funding to help expand those efforts across the entire college not just segregated to their area but taking a look at how all facilities and how the instructional capacities are as accessible as possible for any individual wanting to come to the college with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). She advised that she is a life-long resident of Monroe and her mom was an advocate for adults with intellectual developmental disabilities for almost 30 years. She advised that this is something that's important to her and is congruent with her role in the community. This committee also aligns with goals specific to the college because of the interest that exists associated with increasing accessibility across the City of Monroe. Her participation in this committee would provide representation from the college to ensure that those goals are met. They have found that when we are speaking for individuals sometimes we're not true to what the needs really are so having someone on the committee who is a part of this community or a family member or a guardian might be something we might want to look at. Also, increasing buy-in and partnerships with local employers to increase employability or opportunities for employment is very important for us because our goal to help put people in to employment and then also transportation and insuring that we have adequate transportation services and looking at what that might be for this population.

Member Selina Campbell stated that she wears many hats in the community and that she's a community advocate for people who have real life experiences. She advised that one thing near and dear to her heart is providing assistance for victims of gun violence and other traumatic experiences. She shared a personal story regarding a family member that is paralyzed due to gun violence. She noticed the lack of support that many individuals receive while assisting in organizing a "Stop the Violence March" two years ago. She stated that one of the three things that she would like to work on is family support such as counseling, therapy, caregiver relief, education and rights, because one of the things he has struggled with is finding employment. Lastly, she added that she would like to promote resources that can assist those with special needs to a more independent lifestyle. Member Campbell continued to say that many may struggle with tasks that many of us take for granted and provided an example of taking a driver's license test and the lack of attention to the needs of those individuals regarding adapting vehicles to ensure they have equity for success.

Chair Thompson thanked everyone for their input. While long-term goals are appreciated, Chair Thompson asked if there are any immediate items that can be addressed related to the long-term goals.

Ms. Campbell responded that she personally likes partnerships, working together with different community organizations so maybe trying to find some connections where we can provide these individuals with different resources for support. She continued that through this committee and collaborative effort, she is confident that these specific resources can be provided.

Ms. Stegall advised that SPCC is looking at providing a resource fair in the fall for families and individuals with IDD. Union County Public Schools recently held their transition fair at the end of April that targeted high school students that will be transitioning into the workforce in a year or two. The landscape has changed significantly over the last few years so looking at what the community has to offer for any individual with IDD, traumatic brain injury, and others is important. It is something that SPCC is in the early stages of planning. They are also looking at bringing in a special needs plan which is an organization that helps families plan for some of the independence that has been mentioned. The seminars are at no cost so opening that up to individuals and families in the community to come and sit in on those sessions would be easily available to families. She noted that there are a lot of resources available and that taking stock of what the resources currently are and even what the accessibility issues may be in the community would allow the committee to really get a handle on how to move forward with addressing some of that. She did not know if Parks and Recreation already has some of that information available at the Aquatics Center. Are there accessibility gaps we can recognize immediately and then start working towards a plan for that? Is there a resource guide or resource list that we can go ahead and put together and work from that to see how we address some of the gaps in any of the things that we are talking about? She stated that we already have great resources available.

Chair Thompson agreed, noted what we are talking about today is connecting all of those dots to see how we can collaboratively work together for this community to be a vital part and be aware of the resources available. She stated it could be a catalyst for a resource not a catalog or directory but a place where you can go. We could create some type of a hub with links to resources.

Chair Thompson stated that one of the biggest challenges, coming from a health care background in to education; many times, it's simply knowing who to ask. If you have a hub of things that's a good place to start. Perhaps one of our tasks should be to compile all of the resources that we have available. The what are they, where are they, what do they provide and how an individual can access the information. This would be the starting point and then the other things that need to be implemented that we can build upon can come out of that and we can be working simultaneously.

Action: Compile all of the resources that we have available.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Jones stated that one of the responsibilities of the community centers is to provide resources to the community. One thing that our staff has done in the past is marrying events and programs to share resources with the community. He stated that in the past year one thing we have tried to focus on is training our staff to provide adaptive programs to adults, children, and teens that might have a special need so that they can feel included in our program and that takes partnership. He advised that we do partner with several organizations but there needs to be some type of procedure in place that assist our staff with that type of training when it comes to providing those opportunities for everybody in the entire community. He stated he believes it starts with the community centers because they are resource based and that is how we have set those up as far as programming goes.

Chair Thompson asked how can we take what we have there and communicate it. What's the next step?

Mr. Jones responded that he thinks some type of resource is included to share information that exists to families that need those types of resources is a great first step.

Discussion followed.

Chair Thompson asked if there was any other input.

Member Stegall responded that there is a resource that currently exist that you may want to look at as a template. The great thing about it is that it allows people to go in and drill through what their needs are. It used to be called Aunt Bertha but may have changed. It allows those in a certain community to connect for things such as, housing and transportation. This allows them to individualize what they are looking for. She stated that as we consider moving forward is to make sure the process for agencies to communicate with the community centers about updating that information and making that as accessible as possible and updated frequently.

Item No. 3. Committee Purpose Statement.

Chair Thompson stated that the thing that would be most helpful is as we discuss this and we can collaborate on it through email and look at it together and then have it reviewed so that it is sound. We want to be a sound document and applicable to the committee. She asked for feedback. She advised that the proclamation states the reason for the committee. What is the purpose statement that you would like to contribute?

She asked if anyone had anything, in particular they would like to share.

Member Campbell asked for clarification we are creating a mission statement. Chair Thompson responded that is her understanding.

Member Campbell shared the mission statement she had written. It stated our mission is to provide resources and disability services to help pave a way towards independency with the help of community partners.

Action: Chair Thompson asked everyone to email their purpose statements to the whole committee.

Member Stegall stated that she would be happy to send what she has and what she has heard is promoting inclusion, increasing accessibility, and equal opportunities for all. Making sure that people have access to essential services to promote independence and the best quality of life possible.

Chair Thompson asked City Manager Mark Watson, if we wanted to know what transportation availability is already in place to city residence with special needs, could we have someone come share or could you provide that information.

Mr. Watson stated that we could invite the Transportation Manager for the County that handles senior transportation for those that do not otherwise have transportation to get to the doctor and things like that. His understanding is that they have changed the way the program is managed and potentially some of its purpose so it probably would be a good idea to get an update. He advised that it is managed through the Department of Human Services. He advised that other than that there is no publically paid for sponsored transportation in the county.

Discussion followed.

Mr. Watson noted that the County's transportation system has to comply with federal Department of Transportation standards and those are very rigorous in terms of driver training, continuing education, drug testing, insurance requirements. Most if not all of the County's vehicles are handicapped accessible.

Chair Thompson asked if there was any other feedback at this point.

Member Campbell stated that this is a great start getting the resources together is something that we can start doing immediately for those individuals that need this service. That being out in the community she gets many questions and it would be nice to direct them to information available.

Item No. 4. Regular Meeting Schedule. Chair Thompson stated the Special Needs and Disabilities Committee needed to adopt a regular meeting schedule.

Following a brief discussion, Member Stegall made a motion the Special Needs and Disabilities Committee of the City of Monroe establishes the time and place of its regular meeting as the first Tuesday of every month at 3:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 300 W. Crowell Street in Monroe North Carolina. Member Campbell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Members Stegall and Campbell and Chair Thompson

NAYS: None

Chair Thompson stated just to summarize, if everyone would send your wording for your purpose statement to the committee, she will share that with the Mayor. Get his input and then she and Ryan will get together with the community centers resources and see what it is going to look like to create a central resource of things we already have in place and then others that we can add. Getting a place to direct people to whether it is a website or something and how we are going to communicate that out so we can work towards that.

Mr. Jones advised that when we do provide resources we need to be aware of how we provide the resources and there needs to be different methods of obtaining that information.

Member Stegall stated, with the number of non-native English speakers in our area; we need to ensure that it is translatable. She advised that if we are able to offer this on the website there is a Google translate option that if it is integrated into the City of Monroe website, they can choose their language and accept the information in that way.

Member Campbell stated that she appreciates the City of Monroe's forward thinking in this matter especially as we continue to grow and for the opportunity to be on the committee and looks forward to doing great work with every one of you.

Discussion followed.

There being no further business, Member Campbell made a motion to adjourn. Member Stegall seconded the motion, which passed unanimously with the following votes:

AYES: Members Campbell and Stegall and Chair Thompson
NAYS: None

The meeting adjourned at 3:44 p.m.

Julie Thompson, Chair

Attest:

Angie Sustar, Clerk

DRAFT