

MINUTES
McLEAN COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 2017, 4:00 P.M.
GOVERNMENT CENTER, ROOM 404
115 EAST WASHINGTON STREET, BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS

Members Present:

Mary Jefferson, Chair; Joseph Cleary; Michael Gorman; Carl Teichman; Mark Wylie; Carl Olson; Linda Olson

Members Absent:

Tyler Wrezinski; Michael Buragas, Vice Chair; Mary Kramp; Glen Ludwig

Others Present:

McLean County Regional Planning Commission - Vasudha Pinnamaraju, Executive Director; Jennifer Sicks, Transportation Planner; Jamal Smith, Assistant Planner; Daniel Handel, Assistant Planner; Jordan Brown, Office Manager; Public: Kari Sandhaas; Chuck Hartseil; Linda Kunce

Call To Order:

Ms. Jefferson called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and noted the presence of a quorum.

Public Comment:

None

Consent Agenda:

Mr. Teichman moved that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented. Mr. Cleary seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Regular Agenda:

Ms. Jefferson requested that any questions about the Director's Report be sent to Ms. Pinnamaraju ahead of time and to copy her onto the email.

Items of Information or Discussion:

Autism White Paper Presentation

Ms. Jefferson introduced Ms. Sandhaas, Ms. Kunce, and Mr. Hartseil and invited them to present.

Ms. Sandhaas began the discussion by providing a brief background on Autism Friendly Community of McLean County, the white paper, her background, and background of her co-presenters. She explained the intent of the white paper was to raise awareness and to start dialogue. Ms. Sandhass discussed how becoming a more Autism Friendly Community can create a more disability friendly community, senior friendly community, and family friendly community as well. Ms. Kunce provided the needs and opportunities for people with Autism. Mr. Teichman inquired about the number of residents in Bloomington/Normal on the Autism spectrum. Ms. Kunce stated that they do not have exact numbers, but based on the national statistic (1 in 68) she estimated around 2,500 residents in Bloomington/Normal/McLean County.

Ms. Sandhaas stated that Autism costs a family \$60,000 a year on average. Ms. Kunce added that a lot of people with Autism are still living at home with their aging parents. She anticipates a big need in supportive housing for this community coming quickly. Mr. Gorman requested clarification on appropriate supportive housing. Ms. Kunce clarified that it varies case by case. Some may need day to day care while others can live independently. Mr. Gorman clarified that it's not really physical needs but more about needs of the individuals involved. Ms. Sandhass responded in agreement. Ms. Jefferson asked about transition preparedness, specifically for those who have aging parents. Mr. Olson inquired about other health care needs for people with Autism. Ms. Sandhass explained that since Autism is on a spectrum this group needs stability and just like housing their health care needs vary. Mr. Hartseil explained that medications, mental health care issues, digestive issues, dietary issues (only eat one thing, gluten-free), seizures, etc. are common medical issues. Ms. Sandhass also added in sensory issues (such as noise levels). Ms. Kunce also explained that sometimes people with Autism can't always describe the distress they are in. They either cannot describe it verbally or they just are not aware of their symptoms. Mr. Hartseil explained the difference between Autism behavior and melt-down. Ms. Sandhaas noted that there is an early notification for first responders. It is a database that the individual or their guardians can sign them up. It will flag the police or fire department and give them some background information about the individuals condition.

Ms. Kunce explained that a housing task force or a collaborative working group could make some of the before mentioned housing needs a reality. Ms. Jefferson inquired whether or not they have researched other communities to see what they have done and see what could be done in Bloomington/Normal. Ms. Kunce explained that they have looked at some models and have included some in their whitepaper. Ms. Pinnamaraju stated that MCRPC is at the point in their housing study where five key issues have been identified and lack supportive housing is one of them.

Mr. Olson offered the idea of having Connect Transit employees be trained for special needs riders. He also stated that the airport would also like to investigate becoming Autism friendly. Mr. Hartseil said that the schools do some of the transit and public transportation skills. They start at the age fourteen and a half looking at where the students will be living and how they will need transportation. They build into that process what they will need as an adult. Ms.

Sandhass said that they could know everything about the bus or plane but they don't go independently. If something were to happen in that situation they don't have the social judgement. If the bus drivers also knows in advance to keep an eye out for this person, then they would know who to call. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that MCRPC is looking at ways to facilitate Human Services Transportation as part of Region 6 HSTP. Ms. Sicks added that Connect Transit has a partnership with the Life Center for Independent Living. She doesn't think at this point it extends to people with Autism but she thinks it could. In addition to having Life CIL do the screening they also do travel training. She also said that Marc First worked through the state to do an annual training. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that in the upcoming fiscal year, MCRPC will be working with different groups to address supportive transit comprehensively. Ms. Sandhaas stated that she liked the idea but wasn't sure how that would help out rural area residents. She also explained that the waiting for a the special services bus, the time frame can give too much delay. She also brought up that the YWCA has a bus for the elderly. Ms. Sicks clarified that it is a much broader program. She stated that MediVan is available to the general public but they do have to reserve it in advance. Their drivers are very aware of the issues that someone may have in riding a transit vehicle. Ms. Pinnamaraju explained that this program is seriously underfunded and is in danger of being eliminated. Ms. Sicks then expanded on different ways the YWCA is trying to keep this program working. Ms. Pinnamaraju reiterated that we cannot just rely on federal funding for programs like this anymore.

Mr. Hartseil summed up the discussion by reminding everyone that there is a wide spectrum of how to approach these needs. He thinks that Autism fits in with the diversity of approaches that everyone is looking into at this point. Ms. Sandhaas stated that being an Autism Friendly Community sends the message that we are an inclusive community.

Before they left, Mr. Hartseil requested the Commission to fill out a survey. Ms. Sandhass also gave MCRPC a window cling to display on their door as an Autism Friendly Organization.

Ms. Jefferson encouraged the commission members to go to the website and fill out that survey. Mr. Teichman thanked Ms. Pinnamaraju for bringing topics like this to the commission's attention and putting it on the agenda. Ms. Pinnamaraju in turn thanked the commission for their support.

Adjournment:

Mr. Wylie moved for adjournment. Ms. Gorman seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 4:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jordan Brown
Office Manager