

**Mayor's Council on Disability Issues (CODI)
February 8, 2012**

CALL TO ORDER: Bass called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m

MEMBERS PRESENT: Armstrong, Bass, Dockery, Getino, Godwin-Melvin, Hunter, McCormick, McMahan, Morton, Rearden, Ritchie and Wright

MEMBERS ABSENT: Cooper, Dandaneau, Gittens, Harrington, Helm, Hilbert, Rawlins and Wiggers

GUESTS: Deborah L. Stuart and Josh Hawkins, nurses at UT Medical Center

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION:

A **motion** to approve December 2011 retreat minutes was made by Morton and seconded by Getino. The motion carried.

The CODI member "spotlight" was shown on Sheryl McCormick.

McCormick shared with CODI information about herself, including that she is the Coordinator of Peer Support & Recovery Training Services at Peninsula, A Division of Parkwest Medical Center. McCormick has been employed in the mental health and co-occurring substance disorders field since 1996. (A brief biographical outline is attached.)

McCormick is a professional in the field and a consumer of mental health services who serves on many boards including the Board of Trustees at Lakeshore Mental Health Institute and the TN Department of Mental Health's Region II Planning Council, among others that work to improve services for people living with mental illness. She is certified as an Advanced level WRAP Facilitator and as a Peer Employment Training facilitator training specialist. McCormick spends a lot of her time—both on and off the clock—ensuring that members of the community understand that mental illness is treatable and that, most importantly, "recovery is possible!"

Next month's spotlight: Godwin-Melvin and Ritchie volunteered to share about their experiences in the disability community and bring relevant handouts.

The Mental Health White Paper Report (re Closure of Lakeshore Mental Health Institute) was discussed. Morton relayed that everyone has a copy of the paper, and that the issue was discussed at length during the retreat where all had agreed that to write the paper must be a priority for CODI and it must happen quickly, given the timing of Lakeshore's closure. Dockery drafted the paper from information gathered from Harrington, McCormick and Morton. Everyone

appreciated the efforts of this committee to work so quickly over the holidays to produce the paper and get it onto the January 10, 2012 City Council agenda.

The intent was to inform the Mayor and City Council. The paper did just that. Unfortunately, the paper went to Council as a resolution to accept and was not accepted. The feeling is that, possibly it was not accepted because this is a “new” Council. However, the success here is also in showing that CODI is a body that can and will “get it done” when necessary.

Dockery shared that this was the third paper of its kind that CODI has presented to the Mayor and City Council and provided the City with great input (from the disability community) and that two different newspaper columnists have either spoken about it in their columns or used excerpts from it. The best part is that CODI didn’t take “sides,” but merely laid out the issues.

McCormick was disappointed that City Council did not accept the white paper, as previous Councils had done, but is eager to learn if city staff, the Mayor or anyone on City Council has pursued learning more or taking action as a result of the paper. As of last week, there were 90 patients at Lakeshore and no contracts were yet in place with community providers, but this is possibly due to the cumbersome process of state contracts. Morton added that another issue may be the perceived lack of preparation.

Morton made a **motion** to re-present the white paper to City Council in the form of an “informative brief” and not as a resolution. McCormick seconded and the motion carried.

Additionally, the membership voted to conduct a taping to educate the larger community regarding the issues surrounding the closure of Lakeshore and appropriate planning for those served currently by the facility. The special-called March Meeting will provide an opportunity for this taping to occur.

Transportation: Rearden shared information from the January 26th KCAC. The report is attached.

Talking to the Media: Since there was some media attention given to the white paper regarding the closure of Lakeshore, some CODI members wanted to discuss how CODI members are supposed to speak to the media if approached, as spelled out in Section 3.04 of the bylaws. Section 3.04 specifically addresses “Unauthorized representation of CODI” and states that the City’s Liaison is to be contacted in advance of speaking to the media and if the Liaison is unavailable, a unanimous vote of the executive committee can authorize such representation.

Some members felt that every member should have the freedom of speech provided all persons by the U.S. Constitution. No one disagreed that all people do have such freedom of speech, but that, when a member of a body, no one

can nor should speak on behalf of the body without authorization of that body, especially if there are bylaws or rules that specifically prohibit it as in this case.

Dockery stated that he acted in good faith when he answered questions about the white paper, since he was the “drafter” of the paper. He also related that he in no way meant to not abide by the bylaws, but that he was merely answering questions from a fellow journalist since he’s had decades of experience in the field. Morton stated that in this case, it turned out to be okay but that every member should be aware that there are times when individuals can be held personally liable for what is said on behalf of a larger body to which they are a member if the larger body should disagree or the information relayed is incorrect. McCormick related that the reason she feels strongly about adherence to the bylaws is that it is really easy to undermine the entire body’s integrity without meaning to and this body is too important to let that happen to.

As a result, all agreed that any time there is a committee or white paper drafted on behalf of CODI, which is an advisory body to the City of Knoxville, there will be no further unauthorized representation to the media. If the media contacts any member of CODI, the process is to be that the media representative is told that he/she should contact the City Liaison for an official statement. If the City Liaison is unavailable, then the Executive Committee should be contacted and they will act in the Liaison’s stead. At a minimum, there should be “talking points” created when there are “hot” topics on CODI’s radar or when there is the potential to generate interest by the media.

New Member Nominees and Removal of Inactive Members: City Liaison Cook explained that the time for recruitment of new members was coming up and explained the nomination process. She will send the nomination form to the entire membership. The Nominating Committee has already received several inquiries from potential new members. McCormick and Wright currently are members of this committee—one more member is needed to complete the committee, per bylaws. Membership was asked to approach potential members keeping in mind previous discussions regarding the areas of representation needed. Also, nominees are to be asked about their willingness and ability to serve, given the purpose and importance of CODI and the time commitment required to be involved.

Membership then reviewed the bylaws and discussed currently inactive members and members who are in jeopardy of dismissal due to inactivity. It was determined that the Chair would send a letter to members who have missed all meetings this year and also those in jeopardy of a discussion of dismissal in the future.

Committee Membership (follow-up from retreat): Bass reminded the membership that sub-committee participation is a requirement, per bylaws, and encouraged everyone who has not yet selected a committee to see her following

the meeting or email anyone on the executive committee to volunteer. City Liaison Cook reminded everyone that, since the bylaws were revised and regular meetings occur bi-monthly, committees are better able and encouraged to meet during the “off” months.

Taping with Knox County: The taping with Knox County’s ADA Committee originally planned for today has been postponed.

Special-called Meeting in March: Membership voted to hold a special called meeting on March 14, 2012 at 4:00 p.m. with a taping to following at 5:15 pm. The taping topic will be the closure of Lakeshore Mental Health Institute (LMHI) and its potential impact on the community at large.

New Business

- “I Am Equal” is an initiative to showcase pictures of different people of diversity. An email with more information will be shared with the membership (Ritchie)
- The Autism diagnosis is about to change and it will affect a lot of people. (Getino)
- The Knoxville Area Employment Consortium (KAEC) presented on current activities and past success of Disability Mentoring Day (DMD) to the January meeting of the TN Council on Developmental Disabilities (TCDD). The information was well received and all were impressed by the collaboration and efforts made in Knoxville to encourage the employment of people with disabilities in Knoxville. (Cook)

Topics postponed until April Meeting:

Report on Access Knoxville (Cooper)
Invitation to join: Mr. Mark Hairr with UTK Parking and Transportation
People First Language/Disability Etiquette Brochure Discussion
Collaboration with Knox County ADA Committee Discussion

Public Forum (none)

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Stephanie Cook, Staff Liaison and Sheryl McCormick, Secretary