

Norfolk Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Minutes

18 April 2019

Attendance:

Commissioners Rickey L. Ross, Gray Puryear, Bill Clendenin, Helen Brown, Paul Atkinson Jr., Jennifer King, Shirley Confino-Rehder

Friends

Vernon Savage, Michael Reiss, Carter Melin, Olivia Melin,

GUEST SPEAKER – Maureen Hollowell – Endependent Center, Norfolk

Meeting was called to order at 2:10pm

Maureen Hollowell – Endependent Center Inc., Norfolk
Director of Advocacy and Services

ECI was the first non-profit Center for Independent Living (CIL) in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The original federal grant was awarded in November 1980 to Handicaps Unlimited of Virginia (HUVA) and the Center opened in February 1981 at the Tidewater Rehabilitation Institute building in Norfolk. In 1983, the Center was incorporated and received 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service as a separate non-profit organization with 51% of its board of directors comprised of individuals with disabilities. In 1984, the Center moved to downtown Norfolk on Plume Street, where it also operated satellite offices in the cities of Chesapeake, Virginia Beach and in Newport News. In 1988, the Newport News satellite received funding from the Virginia General Assembly to establish as a separate community based non-profit CIL. In 1989, ECI moved to the Janaf Office Building providing a more central location to the service area and in 2004, ECI moved to its present location.

ECI is funded through federal, state and local governments, as well as through grants, private donations and contract services to the public and private sector. ECI is part of a network of 17 non-profit CILs in Virginia and a network of almost 400 CILs nationwide.

Their goal is to give persons with disabilities (PWD) a chance to do what they can do in their lives and community. The Center attempts to recruit and utilize volunteers, support staff and instructors who are individuals with disabilities. The Center also secures business from companies owned or operated by individuals with disabilities.

They act as an Information & Referral service to the public, including Medicaid Waivers, housing options, funding for home modification, and assistive technology.

Assistance is provided to individuals with disabilities to resolve discrimination complaints in all areas of life such as housing, education, employment, transportation, public accommodation, and community programs.

They are controlled by at least 50% PWD.

Very early in their career they won a grant to train 40 people on the ADA – Our Chair was in this first group of trainees.

They are called in to advise in housing to achieve accessibility, working on sites such as the Harbor Part, Zoo, and Spirit of Norfolk. They work in partnership city agencies such as with

Norfolk Redevelopment and Housing, the Community Service. They are a strong advocate on the State level for PWD.

Joining us was Olivia Melin. She spoke to us about her experience with seclusions in the schools. She experienced restraints, held in isolation rooms, and being locked out of class. Her statement was heartfelt, and very explicit. Her experience still haunts her. Ms. Hollowell stated Bobby Scott, our Congressman representing the 3rd district of Virginia, is advocating the limit of restraints and removal of child to seclusion rooms.

Olivia's dad, Carter Melin – past around and spoke about statement authorized by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review commission dated December 2018. It outlined the Federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Effectiveness of Virginia's Special Education programs. He stressed that the Virginia school division might be meeting federal IDEA targets for graduation and parent involvement, but missing federal targets for serving children in the least restrictive environment and developing reading and math skills. He further announced that the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission will be reviewing the effectiveness of Virginia's special education programs.

He further read a letter from Mr. Henry Millward, Jr., director of the Office of Specialized Education Facilities and Family Engagement (SEFFE), in response to his public comment to the State Special Education Advisory Committee (SSEAC), that the Norfolk City Public Schools are currently under corrective action to include academic performance for students with disabilities, after they underwent an onsite result driven accountability review.

PAUL Disability Day at Zoo – May 4th 10-1 Representing our commission: Vernon, Helen, Barbara, Shirley

Gray – Faith Inclusion - April 23 – 7.30- Has free tickets to the TATOO for persons with disabilities. On May 14th – FIN – will be having a meeting at the 2nd Presbyterian Church

SEAC – approximately 50 people attended the training our Chair arranged through PEATC. **BILL AND SHIRLEY** have been asked to conduct a training covering ADA Title II the city's Facility Maintenance, General Services .

OLIVIA'S STATEMENT

Seclusion rooms are identical
to solitary confinement
because it doesn't allow
people to leave the
room and if they
do they lock
the door.

Restraining feels like a
knife stabbing you,
it hurts, and is
traumatic and
is hard to move
on from.