



MEETING MINUTES
Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC)
August 20, 2020

The meeting of the Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee was held by Skype at 2:00 pm on Thursday, August 20, 2020. Present at the meeting were committee members Matt Nash, Vice-Chair, Amanda Hatfield (County Elections Manager), Gretchen Hormel, Judith Davis, and Deidra Beck (Committee Coordinator).

In the absence of Brenda Chilton-Chair, Matt Nash, Vice-Chair opened the meeting.

Matt introduced our guest speaker, Donna Tracy, with ARC of the Tri-Cities. Donna has been with the ARC for 27 years and is currently serving as the Program Manager for Advocacy in Recreational Services. After asking about each board member in order to better understand our interest, she explained the purpose of the ARC of the Tri-Cities and some of their accomplishments through the years. Starting as the Developmental Center, they were instrumental in starting the Ben-Franklin Transit, the housing of Special Olympics, and Tri-City Residential services. Donna explained that in general, the ARC of the Tri-Cities is a community tool that is moldable to whatever needs arise. Their primary focus is as an advocacy helping families with disabled children or other family members and to help create opportunities for them. Donna stressed that there are so many families in the Tri-City area that need much help. Because the schools are often not necessarily set up to provide the capacity of assistance they need, the ARC contracts with the schools to provide aid and involvement to help meet the parent and family needs. They are careful to not duplicate other services that are already provided in the Tri-Cities, such as Columbia Industries and others. Examples of some of their services are:

- The Buddy Club. Inspired by a student that wanted to help from Southridge High School in 1999, this club provides opportunities for teens with disabilities to form friendships with teens without disabilities. They are “matched” for the year and commit to stay in regular contact and share activities and experiences. Often, these relationships develop into lifelong friendships.
- Summer Camp. Normally, they will have approximately 200 participants. However, during this COVID19 year, they have not been able to hold this activity. Instead, they

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are individually servicing about 30 children that have a high need for outside interaction. With gracious people that have volunteered their private pools, they have been able to provide these children the opportunity to play in the water and gain some much needed outside-the-home interaction.

- Day Program. Although there is a long waiting list for this much needed service, they are able to provide the opportunity for individuals with Intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) the chance to be out of their homes and learn to develop skills and be productive, socialize, and experience community inclusion. This service, provided at low cost, just \$60/month, helps parents avoid having to give up their job to stay home and provide this care on their own. Before COVID19, they averaged 150 participants. Right now, the service is limited to 1-on-1 service to those with high needs. Donna's motto is, "Be productive and happy".
- Partnering with Ben Franklin Transit since 1991, the ARC runs transportation services for agencies like Goodwill, Columbia Industries, and Adult Day Services. Without this bus service, people with I/DD would have no way to maneuver around the Tri-Cities.

Donna added that the ARC has a very strong national voice, and they partner with many other organizations, like Down Syndrome services. She shared concern about the effect that some 'well meaning' governmental policies, such as increasing minimum wage, has on the disabled community. Doing away with sub-minimum wage policies will make it impossible for those with disabilities (who are unable to work at the same ability level as those unaffected by disabilities) to have an opportunity for employment. The elimination of Sheltered Workshops also minimizes opportunities for families desperately needing help with their disabled child. She shared that she believes in utilizing many methods and options, and that institutions alone are costly and not always an option that well works for all. Thus, the ARC works to provide awareness and guidance toward the understanding of these families' needs.

Following Donna's wonderful and very informative introduction to the ARC of the Tri-Cities, the committee asked Donna to provide us a 'wish list' of ways she could see that Benton County's ACAC could partner with them to provide aid and exposure. Donna promised to email Deidra her wish list as well as a contact for someone she knows is developing an electronic application that will inform families about disability and autistic friendly

restaurants and activity centers. The board collectively thanked Donna for her presentation and promised to stay in touch.

Because the hour had grown short, the other items on the meeting agenda were discussed briefly.

Deidra reported that we had been contacted by Elaine Stefanowicz, Program Coordinator for the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, to inform us of their intention to put together an All County ACAC Virtual Meeting. We responded with our interest, and that initially, Brenda Chilton (Chair), Matt Nash (Vice-Chair), and Deidra Beck (ACAC Coordinator) would attend. So far, no date has been set. After we are more familiar with the all county meeting, we would inform the committee and how we could become more wholly involved.

For the 30th ADA Anniversary virtual celebration, Teresa reported to Deidra that she was able to send in a video to them. Currently, Teresa does not know whether the video was used in their presentation, and Matt stated that he had contacts that he would reach out to in order to learn how we can view the presentation and share Teresa’s video with the committee.

Deidra shared that Matt Nash had learned that Dave Reynolds, Coordinator of Access4All Spokane, has possibly resigned his position there. After being unsuccessful contacting him over the past few months, Deidra promised to attempt to reach the committee in Spokane through another contact so that we might move forward in inviting one of them to attend our meeting as a speaker. Matt believed he knew someone on the Governor’s committee that could help.

In order to provide public access to our virtual meetings, Deidra has met with Benton County’s IT department, and they are helping us get it set up. Starting next month, we will have capability to open our virtual meetings to public viewing or listening in by telephone. The link for the public to join our meeting will be posted on the County/ACAC website each month. Deidra will send more information out to the committee before our next meeting with instructions on how to access the link to join virtually.

Our next meeting is scheduled for September 17, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. We will be meeting virtually by the WebEx link that the County IT department sets up for us, and Deidra will send the link to the committee one week prior to that date. According to IT, there is no need for each committee member to acquire their own WebEx access.

Matt Nash, Vice-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:04 p.m.