

**Walla Walla/Columbia County  
Accessible Communities Advisory Committee  
Zoom Meeting Minutes for February  
2/16/22**

**PLEASE NOTE: I have included links to documents. You will have to make a copy of them when you begin to open them so you can view them. If you have any issues, please let me know.**

**Welcome**

Call to order at 5:31.

**Attendance (update accordingly)**

**Present:** Timothy Barrett, Angie Peters, Betsy Hadden, Connie Taylor-Randall, Joe Huether, Larry Hector, Cindy Wolski

**Guests:** Nancy Riggle

**Excused Absence:** Aracelli Castro, Aniko Kuschatka, Jeanne Walter

**Unexcused Absence:** Joshua Hepler, Kati Tureman

**Minutes**

Tim listed several corrections and moved to approve the minutes as amended. Joe seconded. [January Minutes](#) approved. (Click on the link and make a copy.)

**Guest Presentation - Nancy Riggle, Executive Director, Valley Residential Services - Presentation on Affordable and Accessible Housing**

Nancy has been a long-term advocate for a housing study. Nearly everyone that she works with is considered low-income and faces serious housing challenges. Our area has the least amount of housing of this time available compared to our peers.

In 2008 the Community Council did a [housing study](#) to research what is driving this housing crisis, with wide community involvement in the data collection. However, just in the last three years, the cost of housing locally has increased exponentially. Additionally, we have a mismatch between

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household size, and housing size, with families renting down (fewer rooms) because they cannot afford a house at the size their family needs. Walla Walla County has a zero percent vacancy rate for studio or one-bedroom apartments because of this issue, and for low-income families, this leaves them unable to find housing. A vacancy rate of 5% is considered a stable housing market.

In 2018 we had a 1.7% rate, and the situation has gotten worse since then, and that is before assessing for accessible housing. Most of our public housing complexes lack any accessible units, and if they do it is unlikely to have more than one unit. As of 2008, 41% of our households in Walla Walla County are cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income for housing). This leads to high-income households outbidding everyone on the market, furthering the housing crisis.

11% of homeowners in Walla Walla County, do not live in Walla Walla County. Families have been able to get approved for 3-bedroom housing vouchers, but the max availability is \$1500, and the average 3-bedroom rental cost for our area is significantly higher than that.

Nancy is working with the Community Council and Community Land Trust on affordable housing options. The City of College Place has approved zoning to protect mobile home parks for those who already own homes, but are at risk of the lots being priced out from under them. Walla Walla has not yet approved this type of zoning.

[ROC Northwest](#) has a successful [example of work](#) being done to solve these issues. There is also an example of [how to purchase buildings in disrepair and restore them for use on affordable housing.](#)

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BMAC and the Housing Authority have worked on renovations of existing homes to make them accessible for their clients. This has helped move the issue forward on a small scale.

Nancy's recommendation for what we could do to support/advocate on this issue is: to discuss these challenges with our elected officials and help them understand all of the funding pots available for them to tackle this issue. Nancy is reachable at [nancy@valleyresidential.org](mailto:nancy@valleyresidential.org).

**Sub-Committee Reports (update accordingly)**

**By-Laws Committee:** Connie

[WWCACAC Bylaws Revised 8-19-2021](#)

**Membership Committee:** Connie - no report

**Terms of Office** [Terms of Office](#)

**Member Recruitment and Application Process** - Connie acknowledged we need to continue to recruit members for compliance with bylaws and state requirements. She will work on a list to highlight unrepresented demographics

**Officers** - Chair: Connie, Vice-Chair: Larry, Secretary: Angie

**Community Outreach Committee:** Katie - No report available.

**Grant Proposal Committee:** Connie, Jeanne, and Joe - No report.

**Update on Local Grant Requests** -

Include update here

**Communications/Media Committee:** Connie (Need chair) - Nancy, Larry, and Cindy have been working on rack cards that provide information on our committee and how we serve the community, discussing the lack of accessible and affordable housing, overall community accessibility, and care options available locally. These are [viewable here](#), and each subcommittee should submit notes for further changes. We may be able to partner with the high school on branding for these materials.

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This committee has also been working on business cards that ACAC members can use when they are out in the community advocating on these issues. The drafts are [viewable here](#), and you should review and submit any notes. Please also note if you would like accommodation cards (e.g., braille, Spanish). At this time the cards indicate that emails should go to the county email, rather than personal emails.

**Transportation Update:** Timothy Barrett - The WWVMPO/SRTPO officially has a new director. His name is Andy Gomez and he started in mid-January. Tim has been super busy getting him all setup and situated; it is nice to finally have him here. They will be having a kick-off meeting for our Coordinated Public Transit - Human Services Transportation Plan on February 24th at 9 AM and if anyone would like to be involved in the process of improving our region's transit services please let Tim know and he will put you on the invite list.

ARPA funds (American Rescue Plan Act) are helping advance several projects for the City of Walla Walla. They will be making the 1st Avenue plaza change permanent, though they have yet to set a date for a public hearing on the project which currently lacks details about the provision of accessible parking.

ARPA dollars will also be going to a redesigned Heritage Square Park (the one between Colville and Spokane) that will provide a paved riverside walking area, improvements to the senior center's parking lot, and new pickleball courts and parking at the Mill Creek Sportsplex.

Other projects with accessibility components are the Cookerly IRRP project which will add ADA ramps and sidewalks in the area around the US-12 underpass at Wellington Street and the Poplar/Alder TBD project that will add rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) in several locations to improve pedestrian access.

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RRFBs are pending on a series of other pedestrian crossing locations around the city, but supply chain issues are impacting the availability of some of the electrical components - they will be installed as soon as those materials are available.

Preliminary work on potential designs for pioneer park crossings and adding more paved trails (along with other improvements)

### **Goals**

- 1) **Employment** - Improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities
- 2) **Housing** - Increase affordable housing for individuals in the disability community, providing more choices in where they can live
- 3) **Accessibility** - Increase accessibility in Walla Walla Valley, making it more desirable for residents and tourism
- 4) **Care Options** - Increase care options for parents/guardians of children and adults with disabilities to provide respite alternatives, care options, and enrichment opportunities.

### **Goal Progress**

1) **Employment Report Update** - Cindy - working on resources for employers to make accommodations, partnering with local providers. Here is a brief rundown of current resources:

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

[www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/resources/JAN](http://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/resources/JAN)

- Accommodation Toolkit
- A to Z Disabilities and Accommodations
- Webcast Archives (FREE)
- Just-in-Time Training Modules
- Workplace accommodations: Low Cost, High Impact
- JAN Blog: What works for me?
- JAN Quarterly Newsletter

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ADA National Network [www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

- . FAQ
- . Publications and Videos
- . ADA Training
- . Agencies and Resources
- . Federal ADA Regulations and Standards

American Association of People with Disabilities [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com)

- . History of the Americans with Disabilities Act
- . Advocacy and Initiatives
- . News and Media

Walla Walla Valley Disability Network

[www.wvvdn.org](http://www.wvvdn.org) (Local Agency)

- . Local Resources
- . Employment Support Agencies
- . BenefitU (financial planning for people who are on SSI or SSDI)

2) **Housing Report Update** - Cindy (need chair) - covered above in the discussion with Nancy Riggle

3) **Accessibility Report Update** - Larry and Betsy - Met with Nabil Shawa asked for 4 van-accessible parking spots at the 1st Street Plaza. He had a request for the ACAC to complete an audit of available spots downtown. There are currently 20 spots, and only one is accessible to a van. Additionally, two spots have been lost to streeteries (outdoor restaurant seating). Larry did not find it to be compliant with the ADA requirements. He would like to recommend to the city that they relocate the accessible spots to make them more accessible and to place ramps directly in front of these parking spots to prevent users from having to enter traffic to gain access to the sidewalk. The group will meet again with Nabil

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Shawa on 2/24/22; Connie will coordinate additional invitations of key advocates in the community.

- a) City of Walla Walla - Larry, Betsy, and Connie - see above
- b) Accessibility Checklists - Aniko and Betsy - no report
- c) Elections - David - no report
- 4) **Care Options Report Update-** (chair needed)

**Walla Walla County Department of Health Report and DD Report -**  
Cindy - watching COVID numbers, they are currently dropping.

**Announcements and Further Discussion Items**

Betsy: Accessible Walla Walla is now live, still rough, but it is growing. [T-Bex](#) is a worldwide travel blogger conference, held three times a year, this year one location for it will be in Tri-Cities. Betsy will be sponsoring three bloggers for this, there will be a wheelchair user, a person with a hearing impairment, and a person with a vision impairment. These three individuals will spend three days in Walla Walla and then blog on the experience.

Tim: Hotel to apartment conversions are still awaiting a zoning code change with Walla Walla. The planning commission has not met on it, so the timeline is unknown at this time. Tim has also had early conversations with Todd Kimball on accessibility needs in upcoming projects on Tausick Way, and it was positive and bodes well for the project.

Connie: The officers will meet with Tom Scribner on Friday for a meet-and-greet to open the lines of communication.

**Moving Forward - What are our next steps?**

- a) Membership Recruitment and Application for Members Whose Terms Have Expired

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- b) Employment
  - i) Securing jobs for those with disabilities
  - ii) Temporary Summer positions for DD employees
- c) Housing - Need new ad hoc chair
- d) City of Walla Walla
  - i) WWACAC member to serve on Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee Issue
  - ii) Develop a checklist for Downtown Alfresco Accessibility for Policy Development
  - iii) Develop pamphlet and materials on Accessibility for Building Permit Office
  - iv) Partner with Developmental Disabilities in Inclusion Stickers and Informational Pamphlets for Walla Walla Businesses
  - v) Possible Grants and Revenue Options
  - vi) Downtown Accessibility Study of Parking Options and Sidewalks Walkways with Alfresco Outside Dining

**Public Comment - none**

**For the Good of the Order - none**

**Next Meeting Date - 5:30.** March 16, 2022 (Zoom). [Meeting Dates - 2022](#)

**Bolded important notes for the upcoming meeting.**

**Adjournment -** The meeting was adjourned at 6:45.

**NOTE:**

Any extra information, typically sent after the meeting, goes here.