

Walla Walla ACAC Zoom Meeting Minutes
6:30-7:30 pm

PRESENT Amelia Odeen, Amy White, Andrea Weckmueller-Behringer, Cynthia Wolski, Dwayne Williams, Jessica Tourtellotte, Joshua Hepler End, Kati Tureman

EXCUSED Emma Kubrock

ABSENT Aniko Samu Kuschatka, Aracelli Castro

WELCOME Chair Connie Taylor-Randall welcomed everyone to the meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS Chair Connie Taylor-Randall made the following announcements: Meghan Debolt, who was the Walla Walla County Public Health Director, recently resigned and took a position as Director of the Blue Zones Project. Connie indicated that this was a huge loss to the health department and expressed thanks to Meghan and Cindy for helping us start our local ACAC. She will be missed, but we wish her well in her new endeavor as Executive Director of Blue Zones.

Jim Johnson, Former Walla Walla County Commission, passed away after a battle with Acute Myeloid Leukemia on February 8, 2021. He also had been instrumental in helping us form our local ACAC. Jim's legacy will live on in what he accomplished in our community.

Judith Krantz, Director of the BriTon House, Inc., a therapeutic group home serving medically complex children in College Place will be retiring. Krantz indicated that 139 children have been cared for at this facility since she started the business in 1993.

ACTION: It was suggested by the committee that notes be sent to Meghan and Judith for their service and a sympathy card to the family of Jim Johnson. The chair will follow up on this.

SUB-COMMITTEES Each sub-committee reported as follows:

By-Laws Committee - Connie Taylor-Randall indicated that there was no change or recommended by-laws changes. Changes may need to happen if we merge with Columbia County to form a joint committee.

Community Outreach - Jessica Tourtellotte and Kati Tureman - No report - Sub-Committee will meet with chair to determine next steps at a predetermined date and time prior to the next meeting. Jessica volunteered to serve on the housing committee.

Grant Proposal Committee - Amy White and Emma Kubrock

Amy indicated that she and Emma would work on putting together a proposal for a state GCDE grant for a communication set (computer/printer) for our local ACAC. Connie indicated that she would forward the grant information onto them. The grant application is due mid April.

Communication/Media Committee: Report will be provided at next meeting..

Transportation Update: Andrea gave an update on the Ninth Street roundabout.

NEED MEMBERS

The chair indicated that new members are needed. She asked that committee members provide her or Cindy names of potential members. She reminded community members that we need to look at rounding out our committee seeking veterans and cultural diverse individuals to represent our community.

GOALS

The following goals were reviewed and discussed:

- 1) **Employment - Improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities**
Discussion commenced about the difficulty of finding employment especially for those in the disabled community due to the pandemic.
- 2) **Housing - Increase accessibility in Walla Walla Valley, making it more desirable for residents and tourism**
Discussion commenced about the difficulty of finding affordable housing in Walla Walla especially for those with disabilities. Cindy Wolski spoke about the difficulty with landlords wanting to rent some segments of the disabled population even though there was funding available to fix up any structural damages caused by tenants. Connie indicated that the Community Council along with the City of Walla Walla were working on an affordable housing study and researching community land trusts. Council Members Riley Clubb, Yazmin Bahena, and Steve Moss have spearheaded this. They have merged their efforts, and Common Roots Housing Trust has been formed. In addition, resolutions have been passed on zoning and development regulations relaxing restrictions on what and where people can build in the city. It was suggested that we have a representative from our local ACAC contact Riley Clubb to obtain more information and provide information from our disabled ACAC perspective. Jessica Tourlellotte volunteered to

serve in this capacity. More information regarding the Community Council is provided in these links:

<https://www.commonrootshousing.org/>

<https://www.wvcommunitycouncil.org/what-we-do/affordable-housing/>

Developmental Disability (DD) Residential Housing Update:

- Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) Referrals for local housing are based on state-wide referral system. There is no priority or consideration to keeping an individual in their local community factored into the process (there used to be). The ones with the highest needs are at the top of the list. These individuals are coming out of State Mental Hospitals or Residential Habilitation Centers. They have many mental health and behavioral challenges that VRS is not staffed to handle. We have several local individuals who are needing housing due to aged parents/guardians; but they want their child/love one to stay in this community near family and supports. Referrals have been denied – even after multiple appeals. Affordable and accessible housing is a challenge in Walla Walla. Housing shortages give landlords a bigger pool of potential renters and drive up prices.
- VRS is working with BMAC to try to address the issue of affordable housing for DD clients and plan for the future.

3) **Accessibility - Increase accessibility in Walla Walla Valley, making it more desirable for residents and tourism**

Discussion commenced about issues that are currently affecting accessibility in Walla Walla. These discussion items were:

- a) Downtown Accessibility and Parking - difficulty getting access, ramps blocked, less handicapped parking
- b) Post Office - difficult access and problem with handicapped parking especially during inclement weather
- c) Schools - difficult access during construction
- d) Elections - office moved between Walla Walla Court House and Walla Walla Fairgrounds making it difficult to access and get the word out on how to access - a point of contact to discuss options would be helpful

ACTION: It was the consensus of the committee that the chair write letters to the City of Walla Walla, Walla Walla Post Office, the Walla Walla School District, and the Walla Walla Auditor to bring these concerns to their attention.

4) **Care Options - Increase care options in Walla Walla Valley,**

making it more desirable for residents and tourism
Discussion commenced about the closing of various childcare options in Walla Walla. The need is still very pressing for our disabled families especially during the pandemic.

- 5) **Joint Walla Walla/Columbia County ACAC** - This topic was omitted due to time constraints. This will be on the agenda for the March meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next ZOOM meeting will be held on Thurs., Mar. 18, from 6:30 to 7:10 pm. Connie will send out a scheduled ZOOM invite.