

**Walla Walla/Columbia County
Accessible Communities Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes for August 17, 2022 5:30-6:45 pm**

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. Also, the information listed in RED is an ACTION ITEM.

Welcome

Connie called the meeting to order at 5:30.

Attendance (update accordingly)

Present: Timothy Barrett, Angie Peters, Connie Taylor-Randall, Joseph Huether, Anikó Kuschatka, Jeanne Walter

Excused Absence: Betsy Hadden, Aracelli Castro

Unexcused Absence: Joshua Hepler End, Kati Tureman, Larry Hector

Guests: Janet Vaupel, Amy Osterman, Roxanne Brown, Joleen Ferguson, Stanley Green

Minutes

Motion: Angie Peters, Second: Joseph Huether
Passed Unanimously.

[April](#), [May](#), and [June](#) minutes were approved. (Click on link and make a copy.)

Sub-Committee Reports

By-Laws Committee: Connie - The County Commissioner's team has requested we review our By-laws for any changes before they are reviewed by their legal team. The leadership team is proposing a few changes, which can be reviewed [at this link](#). A vote on these changes will take place at the September meeting.

Membership Committee: Connie - we are seeking additional membership, and asking all members to recruit potential members. To help facilitate this, Connie will be putting together a social event at

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her fully accessible home in September and more information will be forthcoming.

Terms of Office [Terms of Office](#)

New Members - application submitted for review by Tobi Powell, one expected from Joe Decker, and Roxanne Brown and Stanley Green are attending today to ascertain their interest in applying. If anyone has difficulty with the application process, please reach out to Connie, Angie, or Larry and they are happy to help you through the process.

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

Grant Proposal Committee: Connie, Jeanne, and Joe: grant deadline of September 30, 2022. Workgroup meeting needed. This group has previously brought in grants to help install an accessible door at SonBridge and for the development and printing of rack cards that explain the goals and provide learning options on our areas of focus.

Update on Local Grant Requests - the committee will work on resubmission of our previous accessible bicycle grant for the fall application round. This would provide bikes for community use by residents and tourists.

Communications/Media Committee: Need chair, (no formal report) The group discussed options for increasing visibility and Anikó suggested a group entry at the Christmas parade. While social media options are currently on hold, Amy will reach out to see if it is possible to share some of our messaging through the County Health social media pages.

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Transportation: Tim - The City of Walla Walla is pursuing a Safe Streets and Roads for All grant from the Federal Department of Transportation. This grant would provide funding to develop a Vision Zero policy, as well as a plan for safety improvements to all modes of transportation. Having such a plan in place would allow them to seek funding for those safety projects in the future.

The city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee has secured funding for an update to the bike map. All that is left is to complete the work on updating the old version and printing the maps. That committee will also be discussing potential locations for future Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, or RRFBs, at their next meeting. If anyone would like to attend, or if anyone has some locations that they would like to share feel free to reach out to either Tim or the city.

When it comes to projects, this summer has been a challenging one in our area with all the road closures. Unfortunately, these will continue to be a challenge into late fall as portions of the Poplar and Alder projects are constructed. Construction on the 1st Avenue plaza will begin this fall and the work on the Senior Center is expected to finish towards the end of September or early October.

In MPO news, the consultant has been hard at work on the new Coordinated Public Transit plan. They have just finished developing the draft projects and strategies to address the system gaps and needs that were identified earlier on. As always, if anyone would like to participate in our transit coalition meetings where we provide input and guidance to our consultant, please let Tim know and he will get you all the details.

Goals - discussion on current goals and any updates was tabled.

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1) **Employment** - Improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities: see DD report below.

2) **Housing** - Increase affordable housing for individuals in the disability community, providing more choices in where they can live
Tim was on vacation in July, so he provided a recap from the Walla Walla County's Council on Housing meeting minutes.

The City of Walla Walla has some zoning code changes that are out for public review right now. These will eliminate Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) parking requirements, increase the size of allowed ADUs, clarify the existing code definitions for a variety of housing types, and reduce general off-street parking requirements. All of these changes are a big win for housing and affordability in the city.

The Common Roots Community Land Trust board will require representation from low-income community members when the organization is all set up, and they held a recent low-income community outreach meeting that had nearly 50 attendees. They will host two more of these meetings which are anticipated to take place early next year.

The Emergency Solutions Grant, which has helped fund much of the homelessness response around the country during the pandemic, has been extended through the end of September next year. It does not add any additional funding, but it is still significant.

3) **Accessibility** - Increase accessibility in Walla Walla Valley, making it more desirable for residents and tourism
Larry continues to work with the city of Walla Walla on accessible parking downtown, and this has a special focus on accessible van parking spaces. The city intends to increase the total number of

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available spots, including a concentrated amount at the First Street Plaza.

Jeanne continues to work on accessibility in Columbia County and reported that the trail project had been paused based on local priorities, but there are currently discussions on the city giving land for the creation of a skate park with a pump track/bike path. This is an opportunity to advocate for accessible paths, and we may be able to partner with the active parks and rec committee.

Anikó provided the following statement: *Obviously, including roundabouts, will cost the city more money. If we really gave it some thought, adding roundabouts will have the same effect as just simply removing traffic lights and signage and just...expecting people to be more cautious and watchful. Let's just do that and save ourselves a few dollars. If there really is the confidence that the roundabouts would solve issues for both pedestrians and drivers, why are some areas with roundabouts adding more signs and lights again to the original plan? This has been happening to some of the roundabouts in Tri-Cities.*

A few months ago, I met with Joleen Ferguson, the head of United Blind of Walla Walla. My goal with her was to find ways we can make useful changes in affordable housing to accommodate the blind and visually impaired. She shooed me away from the subject and said, "What we really need is more lights and more crossing signals for the blind like the ones we have downtown."

I was told that roundabouts are indeed safe for pedestrians and if I didn't feel so, to find resources that prove otherwise. Let us not be fools. There aren't pedestrians out there who can cross a roundabout with the same peace of mind and confidence as if crossing a regular intersection, especially those who are blind, deaf, wheelchair-bound

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or all of the above. A car in a roundabout it watching extra carefully where he/she needs to turn off and when they need to yield to other vehicles cutting in. Sometimes they are not sure which street they want to turn on so they might forget to signal. Pedestrians watch these signals for cues to cross. It's not that easy for a blind or visually impaired individual to see these lights quick enough and for the driver to remember there are pedestrians. The driver doesn't want to miss his turn.

So now, with the new roundabout craze, people with disabilities are becoming even more isolated in our city than ever before. More and more focus is spent on roads, streets, and roundabouts, not sidewalks which they can use confidently. Roundabouts prevent them from venturing out as enthusiastically as before. They are not an inclusive plan. So much focus is on the drivers and not the pedestrians. Sidewalks are not being fixed or accessible. Sure, disabled people are safe, but that's because they're confined and don't have the freedom to travel and commute like drivers. Yes, I am one voice, with one unique limitation and I am hoping I can voice for those with their own limitations, to open the eyes of our city and give us a bit of support.

Yes, "we are ok." We are isolated and not seen, out of sight, out of mind. And now, with so much more focus on drivers and roads, when do those of us who can't drive have a chance to be supported? What happened to the education drivers received in driver's education? If pedestrians should feel safe in a roundabout, please take the time to blindfold yourselves, put in ear plugs, and/or sit in a wheelchair and get out there on the roundabouts and give it a try. In all honesty, no, I don't wish for anyone to try that. I know how dangerous that is and now hundreds of disabled and limited people have to risk those dangers or continue more grave isolation. Let's start thinking outside of the box and make real change that helps everyone.

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The group discussed the possibility of presenting this statement to local legislative bodies in the near future.

Joleen spoke in support of Anikó's statement and added that blind pedestrians cannot safely cross roundabouts and that she has been saying this since she was on the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee in the 2000s. They create a "circle of noise" that is difficult if not impossible to navigate for a blind person who needs to listen to traffic to know when lights change. Cars, by design, do not have to stop in a roundabout and there is not an easily recognizable built-in yield to pedestrians. While these are not a large safety concern outside of the town, they are creeping into downtown and creating many issues for people with disabilities from safety barriers to increasing isolation due to the risks of traveling.

Connie mentioned examples from Europe that still use traffic lights to stop all traffic and allow safe pedestrian travel. There are also examples of a crossing that is fully separated from the roundabout for safety. There are many options that the cities and counties could explore. Our team will explore options and opportunities to advocate with decision-makers on this issue.

Joseph sent a follow-up message linking [this article about roundabout safety for all users.](#)

- 4) **Care Options** - Increase care options for parents/guardians of children and adults with disabilities to provide respite alternatives, care options, and enrichment opportunities.(no report)

Goal Progress-

- 1) **Housing Report Update** - Need Ad Hoc Committee Chair - No report.

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- 2) **Accessibility Report Update** - Connie no report
 - a) City of Walla Walla - Josh
 - b) Walla Walla United States Postal Service - Connie
 - c) Walla Walla Public Schools - Kati
 - d) Elections - David -

Meetings: The group discussed a change of meeting time or date to correct the issue of numerous member conflicts and increase participation. While discussion remains open on updating the annual calendar to possibly change the meeting frequency, a motion was put forward to change the meeting time to 3:30 pm (still on the third Wednesday of each month). Anikó made the motion, Angie Seconded, and a unanimous vote approved the new schedule taking effect in September.

County Health Report: Amy Osterman reported that the County Health Department is currently focused on the response to COVID-19, Monkey Pox, and a local outbreak of Avian Flu. She reported that Janet Vaupel was recently hired into the Developmental Disabilities program.

Developmental Disabilities Report: Janet Vaupel attended the early portion of the meeting, but left due to a conflict and Amy reported that Janet has been meeting with subcontractors and local partners as she learns her role. She attended the Goodwill grand opening.

Moving Forward - What are our next steps?

- a) Membership Recruitment - bring a friend - a person with a disability, a caretaker for someone with a disability, and/or someone who can advocate on their behalf. We want to grow the membership so we can continue to do what is best for people with disabilities
- b) Communication- complete rack cards, social media access advocacy
- c) Grants- reapply for bicycle grant
- d) City of Walla Walla Next Steps

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- i) Develop pamphlet and materials on Accessibility for Building Permit Office - Anikó and Betsy are continuing to work on check-off sheets for businesses and buildings downtown
- ii) Downtown Accessibility Study of Parking Options and Sidewalks Walkways

Public Comment - Cyndy Knight from Walla Walla Valley Disability Network provided the following via email: *I have been in conversation with Brian (Rehabilitation Therapist) at Providence and Deanna Riffle who are interested in outfitting area youth with Para-sport equipment supplier (out of Spokane) in September. We are looking at offering this day at the Center for Children and Families, and are hoping to invite members of the WWCCACAC, as well as area high school coaches, to expand adaptive sports opportunities. Most of our families would participate in Special Olympics vs. Para Olympics, but I think para-sport exposure is important in our valley.*

Also, our Ability Walk and Roll is scheduled for Sunday, October 2, 2022, 1:00-2:30 pm at Fort Walla Walla Park, Rotary Shelter. Registration will be open, on our website, near the end of August. This year as part of the registration the participants will be given a t-shirt along with a medal. In the past we have had teams built around an individual with a disability, approximately 343 attended in 2018.

There are many more events posted on our website, www.WWVDN.org

Joleen Ferguson commented via email that the Finch Hotel made a request of Betsy for a person who read braille to check the signage at their facility. Betsy coordinated with Joleen and she went to check their signage. There were eleven changes that needed to be made according to James, who worked with Joleen on the walkthrough. Joleen wanted to thank Betsy and the WWCCACAC for thinking of her, she was glad to help.

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For the Good of the Order - an interpreter may be needed for future meetings to accommodate two members. Some accommodation requests need to be submitted ahead of the meeting as there may be paperwork requirements. Officers can assist with this paperwork as needed.

Next Meeting Date - Weds. September 21, 2022, at 3:30 -
In-person/hybrid meeting at Valley Transit. [Meeting Dates - 2022](#)

Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned by 6:45 pm.