

PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY
UNIVERSAL DESIGN IMPLEMENTATION WORK GROUP

DRAFT MINUTES

JANUARY 10, 2024

Attendees:

Council Chair and Work Group Chair, Jolene Ivey
Jim Chandler, Office of the County Executive
Charlesetta Griffin, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), Chapter 939
Brooke Larman, Maryland - National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)
Tierra Medley, Maryland Inclusive Housing
Marcus Monroe, American Institute of Architects – Potomac Valley
Lori Parris, Prince George’s County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE)
Sarah Reddinger, Habitat for Humanity

Members Absent:

Griffin Benton, Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA)
Dwight Joseph, Prince George’s County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT)
Council Member Ingrid S. Watson, Vice Chair

Staff:

Amy J. Fry, Chief of Staff, Council District 5
John W. Sheridan, Policy Director, Council District 5
Kathleen H. Canning, Legislative Officer
Rana Hightower, PHED Committee Director
Shirley M. Anglin, Administrative Aide
Aminah Bushrod, Council Technical Services
Sharon Savoy Williams, Administrative Assistant
Rhonda Riddick, Administrative Aide
Michelle Hughes, MNCPPC
Maurene E. McNeil, Zoning Hearing Examiner

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The second regular meeting of the Universal Design Implementation Work Group (Work Group) was called to order at 9:15 a.m. on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, by the Chair of the Work Group.

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Work Group Member Introductions

Work Group Members introduced themselves and identified their affiliation.

New Member Introduction

Ms. Tierra Medley, representing Maryland Inclusive Housing, was introduced as the new member, replacing Sarah Basehart, representing the disability community.

Discussion Item: No-Step Entry

Chair Ivey indicated that the topic for discussion at today's meeting was the no-step entry and that it had garnered a lot of discussion during the legislative process. Chair Ivey indicated that Mr. Benton, the Maryland Building Industry Association (MBIA) member, could not attend today's meeting due to an illness in the family. At the meeting on November 8, 2024, Mr. Benton indicated that the no-step entry requirement was significant. However, Chair Ivey indicated that while MBIA raised concerns about the no-step entry requirement during the legislative process, they supported the legislation.

Member Speakers

Lori Parris, Prince George's County Department of Permitting, Inspections and Enforcement (DPIE)

Ms. Parris indicated that she would like the Work Group to consider the following issues regarding the no-step entry: topography, the not to exceed 50% rule, and the waiver. Ms. Parris indicated that DPIE is in the process of recommending how to put practices in place on how to receive the waivers, what they would look like, and who would review and approve the waivers. Ms. Parris indicated that feedback regarding topography from site engineers is needed.

Ms. Parris spoke about the waiver process for the Plans on File. A checklist and form would be needed to be reviewed by either a separate group or plan reviewer, which staffing needs are to be decided. Ms. Parris also spoke about the possibility of processing the waivers with technology, which would incur some cost but would streamline the process. Ms. Parris said that by the next meeting, she would have a draft regarding these items.

Chair Ivey indicated that she would want the waiver process to be as simple as possible with as little expense as possible and that the thought of a checklist is favorable.

Ms. Parris also suggested that a small group be convened to discuss the details and the technical implications of what the waiver process would look like on the front end. Per Chair Ivey's inquiry, Ms. Canning indicated that a smaller group may consist of five or fewer members of the Work Group. Chair Ivey indicated that a small group meeting to iron out the details would be beneficial. She said the goal is to avoid delays in the process and excessive costs. She asked Ms. Parris to be in charge of the small group meeting to discuss questions concerning the waiver.

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Brooke Larman, Maryland - National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)

Ms. Larman indicated that her permit review team can work with Ms. Parris on applications, waivers, and Plans on File. Ms. Larman indicated that topography needs to be addressed.

Sarah Reddinger, Habitat for Humanity

Ms. Reddinger indicated that Habitat for Humanity builds universal design homes in Prince George's County and that they look for priority sites within the County. Ms. Reddinger indicated that the timing of the waiver process is critical and should be at the preliminary plan of subdivision or site plan stage, rather than at the time of building permit. This is important for development and financing. Chair Ivey indicated that Mr. Benton also raised the timing of the waiver. Chair Ivey asked about Habitat choosing sites based on topography and if there were mitigating factors. Ms. Reddinger indicated that site selection was generally based on topography suitable for universal design, but that grading and longer entryways have helped to address the topography issue, but these methods are more costly.

Marcus Monroe, American Institute of Architects – Potomac Valley

Mr. Monroe spoke about the importance of producing a universal design pattern book with predesigns with a checklist and focusing on what to do to incentivize those protocols. Mr. Monroe asked Chair Ivey to request that Mr. Benton submit MBIA's comments regarding the no-step entry for the Work Group's review.

Jim Chandler, Office of the County Executive

Mr. Chandler stressed the importance of creating a procedure up front, earlier than permits.

Charlesetta Griffin, American Association of Retired Persons (AARP)

Ms. Griffin indicated that the persons that AARP represents stand to benefit greatly from the no-step entry as many residents rely on walkers and wheelchairs for mobility. Chair Ivey thanked Ms. Griffin for AARP's support for the legislation from the start.

Tierra Medley, Maryland Inclusive Housing

Ms. Medley spoke of universal design features for new and existing housing. Chair Ivey indicated that this legislation pertains solely to new construction. Ms. Medley said that for new housing having universal design features near the front door is the best option for use by persons with disabilities. Ms. Medley said that for existing housing, ramps are the best option for persons with disabilities.

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Additional Discussion

Chair Ivey indicated that a field trip is being planned to view universal design features from a practical viewpoint.

Next Meeting:

February 14, 2024, In-Person

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m. on Wednesday, January 10, 2024.