

Community Living Committee Pre-Council Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2025 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Members Present: Carol Conway, Rhonda Cox, Dr. Joshua Gettinger, Deb Goda, Dr. Charlean Mapson (Chair), Marjorie Serralles-Russell, Bethany Smith

Members Absent: Senator Sydney Batch, Debra Farrington, Brendon Hildreth, Mary Mac Jenkins, Kay McMillan, Dr. Peggy Terhune, Ginger Yarbrough

Staff Present: Pam Dempsey, Juanita Hooker, David Ingram, Melissa Swartz, Talley Wells, Philip Woodward

Guests Present: None

Introduction:

Dr. Charlean Mapson led an icebreaker activity and called for a motion to accept the May minutes. However, a quorum was not present at the time.

Future Investment Discussion:

Philip Woodward shared a PowerPoint presentation with some basic information about each of these future investment topics.

Appropriate Language Use

Charlean Mapson reminded the committee members to avoid using jargon, especially especially when talking with legislators or the general public. Carol Conway expressed a concern about the term “lived experience” and later suggested the term “Been There Experience.”

I/DD Peer Support

Philip Woodward shared how NCCDD has supported three cohorts of a *Peer Mentoring for People with I/DD* initiative. He also pointed out that the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Use Services (DMH/DD/SUS) sent out an e-mail on July 8th, 2025 with policies and procedures for its NC Certified Peer Support Specialist Program, which is for mental health and substance use recovery.

Philip also shared what he learned from interviewing Brittany Ellis per Talley Wells’s suggestion. He said Brittany participated in NCCDD’s first cohort and helped to co-facilitate its third cohort, and she now works full time as an I/DD Peer Support Specialist at Johnston County Industries.

Carol asked if North Carolina Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) will do anything to support I/DD peer support or peer mentoring. Talley Wells provided some historical context for how the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services developed its peer support program and how NCCDD became involved in developing an I/DD peer mentoring program. He also mentioned what has and has not worked with peer support in Tennessee. He pointed out that he sees I/DD peer support as an employment opportunity, so NCCDD's Financial Asset Development Committee has taken the lead on discussing this topic. Juanita Hooker said Ann Marie Webb will present about I/DD peer mentoring at the August Financial Asset Development Committee meeting.

Private Equity Firms

Philip Woodward shared information about private equity firms, saying that Carol Conway has alerted him, Talley Wells, and Charleean Mapson that private equity firms are buying up group homes and small disability service providers with a goal to generate a high return for their investors. Philip pointed out that Carol Conway learned about this topic from a presentation that Lisa Grafstein gave at the Disability Rights North Carolina Conference in May 2025. Philip also pointed out that he e-mailed a May 2025 news article from the *NC Newsline* to the committee members. Philip pointed out what he has found in his research:

- Patients, including people with disabilities, have received substandard care when costs are cut.
- Private equity firms might operate in multiple states, so they can be difficult to regulate (for example, if a firm operating in multiple states is shut down in one state, it might continue to operate in other states).
- If a group home closes because of debt or financial non-sustainability, the residents will need to relocate elsewhere. This can be very difficult when North Carolina already has a shortage of affordable housing.

Carol added that at least five major venture capital companies or private equity firms are operating in North Carolina I/DD services. Rhonda Cox pointed out that one firm, RHA, is a good partner to Vaya Health and does good work. She mentioned that providers can struggle with cost margins. Carol shared her belief that private equity is invisible and that the economy of private equity is not bad but that it does not belong in disability services. Talley pointed out that understanding the economics of how a service provision is developed is important, and the legislature needs to understand this, too. The group briefly discussed funding issues at the federal level.

Housing

Charleean Mapson started the housing discussion by mentioning Independence Works, a housing organization in the Wilmington area. Carol Conway suggested adopting housing as a top priority and for the Council to consider the no-cost or low-cost things it

can do in this area. Carol also mentioned developing a white paper on housing that discusses a wall of regulations and a lack of coordination. Carol expressed an interest in sharing information about how parents can pass a home on to their adult child with I/DD. The group discussed housing models and situations that they are aware of. Carol shared the need to better educate Robin Sulfridge and the North Carolina Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) on the I/DD community's needs and wants. Talley Wells mentioned how the administering housing programs has not gone smoothly for the Local Management Entities/Managed Care Organizations (LME/MCOs) and how he, Philip, and others have a meeting scheduled for July 29th to discuss the Targeting and Key Rental Assistance programs. Philip Woodward read the bullet points from the PowerPoint presentation that he created to update the committee members on the housing meetings and discussions that he and Talley Wells have participated in between April and July 2025. Carol suggested obtaining a list of potential speakers to present at future Community Living Committee meetings.

Motion:

With a quorum present, Charleean Mapson made a motion to accept the April 2025 draft Community Living Committee meeting minutes. Carol Conway seconded the motion. The motion passed. Rhonda Cox abstained from voting because she missed the April meeting.

Wrap Up:

Philip Woodward said he would e-mail the *Autism and I/DD Safety Training for First Responders* initiative's community Safety Training flyer for August 5th in Asheville with the committee members. Bethany Smith said she will participate in an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) 35th anniversary event in Greenville on July 26th.

Charleean Mapson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 p.m.