

**TOWNSHIP OF LOWER MAKEFIELD
DISABILITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
February 8, 2023**

A meeting of the Disability Advisory Board of the Township of Lower Makefield was held via zoom on February 8, 2023. Chairperson Huchler opened the meeting at 6:02 pm.

Those present:

Lisa Huchler, Chairperson

Michele Williams, Vice Chairperson

Lynne Catarro, Secretary (absent)

Al Catarro, Member

Cynthia Lang, Member

John Lewis, Supervisor Liaison

APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 11, 2023 MINUTES

Dr. Catarro moved, Ms. Lang seconded, and the January 11, 2023 minutes were approved by all board members in attendance.

OPEN POSITION

Ms. Huchler stated that there is an Alternate position open for the Disability Advisory Board (DAB). She will have the township advertise for this open position on the website, social media accounts, etc.

WEBSITE AND BROCHURE TO BE UPDATED

Will have Ms. Catarro update the brochure for the webpage to include John Lewis as Supervisor Liaison.

Ms. Huchler and Ms. Catarro have been working on a new layout and information for the website. Will complete this in March 2023.

GUEST SPEAKER

Ms. Huchler introduced the guest speaker for tonight. We welcome Ms. Claire Leal, Director of BCCIL Services, Bucks County Center For Independent Living in association with Lehigh Valley Center For Independent Living (LVCIL), (P) 484-655-2211(F) 610-770-9801 www.lvcil.org.

The local chapter for our area is:

Bucks County Center for Independent Living

164 Lincoln Hwy Suite 101

Fairless hills, PA 19030

<http://buckscil.org/>

215-781-5070

The Bucks County Center for Independent Living has undergone a reorganization and has reopened to serve the needs of people with disabilities in Bucks County. Bucks County CIL's mission is to provide CORE Services, Information and Referral, Independent Living Skills Educational, Peer Support, and Advocacy.

Ms. Leal described the main services they are contacted for are related to young adults coming from High School with various needs, people looking for housing (accessible and affordable), and transportation.

They are staffed with 51% people with disabilities. Bucks County residents can attend an in-person peer support group on Wednesdays. They have 3 people staffing the office and are open by appointment from 8-4 pm M-F. A young adult group (17-24 years old) will meet the 3rd Thursday of the month.

Ms. Huchler asked how they work with the Pennsbury school district. Ms. Leal has met with them and have had teachers reach out. The school district is aware that they can call the CIL and be provided with support in whatever situation arises with their students.

Ms. Huchler asked about employment. Some employers will contact them if they are looking for a certain skill set. They will refer people with disabilities to the Office for Vocational Rehabilitation. (OVR). Any high school student with a disability who may need vocational guidance and assistance in preparing for, obtaining, or maintaining competitive employment should be considered for referral to OVR. The OVR office for Bucks County is located in Norristown.

Ms. Huchler asked several questions to get more detail about transportation. Ms. Leal works with Bucks County Transport and is currently working with SEPTA. This is a huge issue for all people in the suburbs where public transportation is not available.

Ms. Huchler asked about housing and how they provide information to people. Ms. Leal has reached out to several complexes and has found very little affordable or accessible units. Wait list for housing is up to 2 years. Once people get into housing they rarely leave and units do not come up often.

Ms. Huchler asked what the largest concerns she has seen in her office. Ms. Leal said housing, transitioning young adults and where consumers can get equipment.

Ms. Huchler asked how they can get the word out about their services. Ms. Leal attends events in the area and is trying to get the word out that they are there to assist anyone. (Senior fairs, schools, community days, legislatures district offices, Doctors, town managers, therapists, etc.) If the CIL does not have the answer, she will find out for you. They do not do in home meetings but will meet people at locations that are convenient.

Ms. Huchler stated we would be happy to partner with her and hope we can meet up in the future at events. We can also let the CIL know of any if our residents have needs.

Ms. Lang asked if they do advocacy for certain causes. While that is not their main purpose in the Bucks County office, Lehigh Valley Chapter has participated in various organizations to protect disability rights. Ms. Leal and the Bucks County CIL, would help anyone if needed with getting assistance for whatever their cause/issue is regarding their disability. Ms. Lang asked specifically about stroke patients and getting their license back to drive if they can pass the driving test. The CIL could help write a letter, give info, connect with groups and connect people with legal services to protect their rights.

Mr. Lewis asked about transportation and any consideration to use ride share opportunities. However, a vehicle may not be accessible. The CIL is looking into partnering with Uber. Also, SEPTA is looking into using a more on demand service that would be accessible.

Mr. Lewis asked if they reach out to hospitals. Ms. Leal has reached out but has not met with any support groups. Mr. Lewis said many older people in the community may need assistance and asked if the CIL directs them to the Department of Aging. The CIL will provide individuals with all of the services available for their situation. Ms. Leal said her goal is for people to achieve their independence, whether that is going into a facility or staying in their home.

Mr. Lewis asked if they track people from when they reach out and what their outcome is. She will follow up but there is not a long-term tracking of each case. She tracks type of services, how many people attend events, etc.

Ms. Williams is a former Board member of the CIL and is thrilled to have Ms. Leal and welcomes her to the community. Ms. Williams said affordable housing and being accessible is one of her topics she continues to address especially in Bucks County. Maybe the CIL can reach out to developers and let them know about tax benefits.

Ms. Williams stated that there is a group called Bucks County Women for Advocacy Group and will help with many issues.

MEETING SCHEDULE

Next meeting will be held in April 12, 2023. 6:00 pm via zoom.

Meeting for March 2023 has been cancelled.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Williams moved and Dr. Catarro seconded to adjourn, approved unanimously by all board members in attendance.

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynne Catarro

Secretary, Disability Advisory Board