

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY DISABILITY AWARENESS  
COMMITTEE (ECDAC) MEETING  
August 20, 2025**

**Present:** Kristin Wilson - Present  
Tammy M. Straughn - Present  
Rhonda Dorfman – Present  
Dawn Shumaker Smith – Present  
Jason Coffey - Absent  
Lisa Fournier - Absent

**Location:** 3363 West Park Place, Room 104 , Pensacola, Florida

**Minutes prepared by:** Cecelia Amos

**REGULAR DISABILITY AWARENESS COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDA**

1. Call to Order

Tammy M. Straughn called the Disability Awareness Committee Meeting to order at 2:05 p.m., due to the absence of Jason Coffey, Chairman.

2. Did we have a quorum?

Yes, a quorum was established.

3. Was this meeting properly advertised?

The Disability Awareness Committee Meeting was published in the Pensacola News Journal on August 14, 2025.

4. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Tammy M. Straughn led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

5. Are there any items to be added to the Agenda?

There were no items to be added to the Agenda.

6. Adoption of Agenda

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| <b>Motion:</b> To adopt the Agenda. |
| <b>Made by:</b> Rhonda Dorfman      |
| <b>Seconded by:</b> Kristin Wilson  |

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| <b>Disposition:</b> Motion passed unanimously. |
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7. Approval and Adoption of the June 18 Meeting Minutes

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| <b>Motion:</b> To approve the June 18 Meeting Minutes as amended. |
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| <b>Made by:</b> Rhonda Dorfman |
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| <b>Seconded by:</b> Kristin Wilson |
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| <b>Disposition:</b> Motion passed unanimously. |
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8. Public Forum

The Council heard comments from the following individuals –

- Thomas Burns with Kristy Hatsfelt and Joni Caraway serving as ASL Interpreters from AOI Interpreting Services – Reported the difficulty of locating and harnessing information to procure an ASL Interpreter because of the unclear instructions on the Escambia County website and lack of procedural knowledge by County employees to facilitate the request; expressed gratitude to the library and Jon Lachney of Human Resources for their assistance; proposed the procedures for ADA accommodations should be displayed on the home page of the Escambia County website and the first page of the Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties 2024 Street Survival Guide by United Way of West Florida
  - Kristin Wilson apologized for oversight and promised to take action to ensure instructions were clear and able to be located on the County website.
  - Dawn Shumaker Smith suggested moving forward, all Disability Awareness Committee Agendas should include instructions on how to make an ADA request.
  - Rhonda Dorfman suggested a standing ASL Interpreter for the Disability Awareness Committee Meetings.

9. Deborah Carty Statement for Department of Blind Services

Deborah Carty notified staff, effective immediately as of August 19, 2025, she is resigning from the Disability Awareness Committee. Cecelia Amos, staff member, read the following quoted statement from Deborah Carty's email:

"The Division of Blind Services is committed to supporting individuals adjusting to vision loss. We offer a wide range of services, but participation and follow-through are essential for continued engagement. To protect confidentiality, specific cases cannot be discussed, however, we are always open to re-engagement when individuals are ready to work collaboratively within program

guidelines. Rest assured that when the Division of Blind Services closes a case, a letter is sent to the participant explaining the reason for the closure, outlining the mediation process should they wish to dispute the decision, and providing contact information for Disability Rights Florida.”

10. Guest Speakers for Meeting: The Committee listened to presentations by two guest speakers.

- Eddie Smet – President of Five Flags Sertoma of Pensacola
  - Eddie Smet explained that the Sertoma clubs are a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to charitable works and donations to multiple causes. There is a total of five chapters in Florida and Five Flags is a co-ed chapter. He highlighted the fundraising efforts that include, but are not limited to, partnering with Baptist Hospital’s Speech and Hearing Board for the supply of hearing aids, provision of Christmas food baskets to needy individuals, and their work with deaf and disadvantaged children. He remarked on the success of the Bingo Bash Fundraiser, promoted recruitment efforts for the chapter, and asked for sponsorship for and/or participation in the Cornhole Tournament on October 25, 2025.
    - Kristin Wilson joined Five Flags Sertoma in 2025.
- Jacquita L. Stokes and Angela Walden – ADA Mobility Coordinator and Mass Transit Information Specialist at Escambia County Area Transit (ECAT)
  - Jacquita Stokes and Angela Walden promoted ECAT services via a PowerPoint presentation, specifically highlighting Flex Transit, ADA, and Transportation Disadvantage services. These services are meant to serve as complements to Fixed Route services. They discussed eligibility levels and what was required to qualify for these services. They reported high levels of ridership for Flex Transit and Transportation Disadvantage along with robust and constructive feedback that has allowed Mass Transit to further develop the services to better serve the community. They requested more people try the service and provide detailed, honest feedback to ensure quality service delivery. They also highlighted their Flex Transit Expo on September 25, 2025, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Transportation Week in October culminating with their Second Annual Trunk or Treat event.

11. Old Business – Announcements

The Bingo Bash Fundraiser hosted on July 31, 2025, by Five Flags Sertoma of Pensacola was declared a success with approximately \$3,500 raised for charitable efforts.

## 12. New Business

- The first review of the 2025 Annual Report was conducted by the present group members, using a rough draft created by Kristin Wilson. Kristin Wilson proposed three recommendations to include in the final draft: post prominently the procedures to request an ASL Interpreter on the County website, request that the Escambia County procedures for securing an ASL Interpreter are posted in the Survival Guide, and contract for an ASL Interpreter for all Disability Awareness Committee and Board of County Commissioners Meetings. Rhonda Dorfman requested that an amendment be made to the June 18, 2025, section of the report. Under Public Forum – Stephanie and Donnie Ellington, a note would be made clarifying that Stephanie Ellington was denied service because of racial slurs and theft allegations made against her provider.
- Guest speakers were discussed for the next meeting on October 15, 2025. Kristin Wilson would like to secure a representative from Civitan Pensacola to come speak about their work with developmental disabilities.
- Eddie Smet and Kristin Wilson announced the Cornhole Tournament, hosted by Five Flags Sertoma of Pensacola on October 25, 2025, at the Escambia County Equestrian Center.

**Next Meeting Scheduled** October 15, 2025

**Meeting Adjourned** 3:08 p.m. by Tammy M. Straughn

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## **ESCAMBIA COUNTY DISABILITY AWARENESS COMMITTEE**

Escambia County Central Office Complex  
3363 West Park Place, Room 104

### **FIRST DRAFT OF ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

The Escambia County Disability Awareness Committee (ECDAC) was established by the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), in its regular meeting on October 17, 2013, by adoption of Resolution Number R2013-126. The purpose of the ECDAC is to make recommendations regarding issues relating to the disabled community of Escambia County, Florida, and any other issues requested by the BCC.

#### **Committee Members:**

- **Jason Coffey**
- **Kristin Wilson**
- **Tammy M. Straughn**
- **Rhonda Dorfman**
- **Deborah Carty**
- **Lisa Fournier**
- **Dawn Shumaker Smith**

#### **Staff:**

**Cecelia Amos**, Citizens Services Coordinator, County Administration

**Donald A. Christian**, III Program Manager, Engineering

#### **Meeting Dates for 2025:**

April 16, 2025

June 18, 2025

August 20, 2025

~~October 23, 2024~~

## Summary of Activities for 2025:



### April 16, 2025

- Established dates for upcoming scheduled meetings of the committee
- Sunshine Law
  - Speaker: Christi Hankins, Assistant County Attorney, from the Escambia County Attorney's office
- Special Guest Presentation: Special Olympics Florida
  - Speaker: Michael Stone, Regional Community Engagement Manager
  - Discussed: Special Olympics Florida's growth, free health screenings, athletic training, school partnerships. Expressed interest in future collaboration with Escambia County

### June 18, 2025

- Public Forum
  - Stephanie and Donnie Ellington – Failure by Independence for the Blind, Division for Blind Services, the Florida Council for the Blind, and the American Council for the Blind to provide skills for his wife, became blind two years ago, to live independently
  - Michael Stone – Announced and invited the audience and Board to the regional bowling event, hosted by the Special Olympics and including seven Florida counties, on July 26, 2025, from 8 am – 1:30 pm at Strikerz Entertainment Center
  - Thomas Burns – Wanted to speak but left due to a lack of an interpreter for the deaf
    - It was noted that future aids and accommodation for those with disabilities may need to be prepared ahead of time. This would allow disabled citizens the opportunity to speak and be heard, just as able-bodied citizens.
- Special Guest Presentations: Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Deborah A. Trocki, M.S.W. and Susan Wachob-Joiner – Business Relations Representative and Youth Services Consultant, Bureau of Field Services, Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
    - Deborah A. Trocki explained that the purpose of Vocational Rehabilitation services is to help individuals with disabilities, from 14 years of age and up, to secure employment by removing barriers.
  - Glenn Barbee – Director and Secretary of Pensacola Lions Foundation
    - Glenn Barbee introduced the Pensacola Lions Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) non-profit that sponsors projects and initiatives for individuals suffering from blindness or vision impairment, in addition to other community projects. A flyer was provided summarizing their projects including the Sight Clinic and Independence for the Blind.

### August 20, 2025

- Special Guest Speaker Presentation: Five Flags Sertoma



## Recommendations for the BCC

1. ~~Recommend BOCC consider supporting the Micro-transit solutions to offer additional and enhanced services for ECAT riders including those with disabilities.~~
2. ~~Recommend BOCC bring the AHAC recommendations to the County Commissioners' agenda for discussion.~~
3. ~~Recommend BOCC consider collaboration with Career Source Escambia to support the Youth Summer Training Program for Escambia County.~~
4. ~~Escambia County Disability Awareness Committee are requesting a feasibility study to be performed on FDOT roadways for the need of the Audible pedestrian signals ( APS). Audible pedestrian crosswalk signals, also known as accessible pedestrian signals (APS), which are designed to help people with visual impairments cross the street safely. They provide audible and/or vibrotactile information to indicate when it's safe to cross and can include These devices are typically installed at highly traveled intersections or crosswalks.~~

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FLORIDA

3363 West Park Place, Room 104  
(850)595-4900-Phone  
www.myescambia.com



Escambia County Disability Awareness  
Committee

Speaker Request Form

Please Print Legibly

\*Name: Thomas Burns  
\*Email Address: ttycaller@yahoo.com \*Phone: 850.208.3154

Chamber Rules

1. All who wish to speak will be heard. —
2. You must sign up to speak. This form must be filled out and given to the clerk to be heard. —
3. When the Chairperson calls you to speak, come to the podium, adjust the microphone so you can be heard, then state your NAME for the record. —
4. Everyone will be granted uniform time to speak. —
5. Should there be a need for information to be presented to the Board, please provide 6 copies for distribution. The board will determine whether to accept the information into the record. Once accepted, copies are given to the Clerk for Board distribution.