

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY DISABILITY AWARENESS  
COMMITTEE (ECDAC) MEETING  
November 19, 2025**

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

**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 Straughn called the Disability Awareness Committee Meeting to order at 2:13 p.m.

2. Did we have a quorum?

No, a quorum was not established.

3. Was this meeting properly advertised?

The Disability Awareness Committee Meeting was published in the Pensacola News Journal on November 13, 2025.

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

There were no other items added to the Agenda.

5. Public Forum

There were no speakers at the Public Forum.

6. Follow Up on 2024 Annual Report Recommendations

Cecelia Amos provided follow-up to the Committee's 2024 Annual Report recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners:

- The Board of County Commissioners has provided support to the MicroTransit Pilot Program.
- Appendix Q – Tiny Homes was discussed at the October 16, 2025, BCC Meeting but not adopted due to Board concerns about cost feasibility and negative equity effects on neighborhoods.
- There is a disposition policy for County-owned inventory.
- The surplus/real property inventory for the County has been updated.
- The Neighborhood and Human Services Department has included consideration for working with Community Land Trusts for affordable housing and actively considers alternative sources of grant funding.
- The Planning & Zoning Division does not track rejected projects that did not conform with current zoning and regulations.
- Clarification that CareerSource Escambia does partner with Escambia County to support the Summer Youth Employment Program.
- The Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS) system is currently being tested out at Pensacola Beach. The Transportation and Traffic Operations Division is focused on installation in high density areas likely to fit the necessary population characteristics to be financially viable. There is no known feasibility study.

A fifth recommendation was added to the 2025 Annual Report in response to the current activity and development of the APS system.

## 7. Announcements

- Cornhole Tournament hosted by Five Flags Sertoma of Pensacola on October 25, 2025, was not attended by any of the present Committee members.
- Social Hangout Game Day hosted by Center for Independent Living on October 29, 2025, was not attended by any of the present Committee members.

## 8. Adoption of 2026 Escambia County Disability Awareness Committee Meeting Schedule

The 2026 Meeting Schedule could not be formally adopted due to a lack of quorum.

Choice 2 of the Schedule was chosen and revised to a quarterly schedule: January 14, 2026; April 15, 2026; August 19, 2026; and November 18, 2026.

All present Committee members agreed to meet on January 14, 2026, to ratify the 2026 Meeting Schedule.

9. Final Discussion of Escambia County Disability Awareness Committee 2025 Annual Report

A fifth recommendation was added to the Annual Report for the APS system and Rhonda Dorfman expressed distress at Kristin Wilson's removal from the Committee because of the latter's high participatory zeal.

10. Upcoming Events

Tammy Straughn announced that Arc Gateway would be hosting the "Wreath of Joy" event at the Brownsville Community Center on December 5, 2025.

11. Guest Speakers for Upcoming Meeting

Rhonda Dorfman wants to invite Carolyn Sutton of Sutton Support Services to speak at the next meeting.

**Next Meeting Scheduled** January 14, 2026

**Meeting Adjourned** 2:33 p.m.

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## **ESCAMBIA COUNTY DISABILITY AWARENESS COMMITTEE**

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

### **FINAL 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 [Removed on November 6, 2025]**
- **Tammy M. Straughn**
- **Rhonda Dorfman**
- **Deborah Carty [Resigned on August 19, 2025]**
- **Lisa Fournier**
- **Dawn Shumaker Smith**

#### **Staff:**

**Cecelia Amos**, Administrative Assistant, County Administration

**Misty Pardue**, 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 15, 2025  
November 19, 2025



## 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
    - The couple was denied service because of racial slurs and theft allegations Stephanie Ellington made against her provider.
  - 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 aid 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:
  - 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 - He 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

- Public Forum
  - Thomas Burns with Kristy Hatsfelt & Joni Caraway serving as ASL Interpreters from AOI Interpreting Services – Reported the difficulty of locating and harnessing information to procure an ASL Interpreter through the Escambia County website
- Special Guest Presentations:
  - Eddie Smet, President of Five Flags Sertoma of Pensacola – He introduced the Pensacola chapter of the national Sertoma Clubs and the charitable work they engage in.
  - Jacquita L. Stokes, ADA Mobility Coordinator and Angela Walden, Mass Transit Information Specialist, ECAT – They discussed and promoted ECAT services specifically highlighting Flex Transit, ADA, and Transportation Disadvantage services.

#### October 15, 2025

- Public Forum
  - Carolyn Grawi, Executive Director at the Center for Independent Living – She promoted the Center for Independent Living's supplementary services for disabled Escambia County citizens and specifically highlighted employment services under the LOST grant, adaptive device procurement, and peer support services.
    - Jason Coffey asked her about the Center's efforts towards adaptive housing and offered to connect her with construction companies that he was working with.
  - Angela Walden, Escambia County Area Transit - She highlighted Flex Transit services for the County and expressed Mass Transit's plan to expand those services into Century, Florida.
- Special Guest Presentations
  - Dawn Rockey, M.Ed., Student Accessibility Resources Director at the University of West Florida – She explained the meal, housing, furniture, academic, and internship accommodation services that the Student Accessibility Resources Office of the University of West Florida offers to its students. A separate office works with campus accessibility. She stressed that the accommodations were meant to level the playing field for disabled students, not provide advantages over other students.
    - Rhonda Dorfman offered to connect her with the Division of Blind Services, North Davis Highway Office.
    - Kristin Wilson offered to connect her with Escambia County Area Transit representatives.
  - Charles Thornton, Sr., Incoming President of the Civitan Club of Pensacola - He promoted the mission of the Civitan Club in aiding those with developmental and intellectual disabilities as every person is "one step away" from having a disability. Primarily the Civitan Club works as sponsors to raise funding and is looking to expand their membership.

#### November 19, 2025

- Rhonda Dorfman expressed distress at the Board of County Commissioners' November 6, 2025, removal of Kristin Wilson because of the latter's high participatory zeal.
- Public Forum: There were no speakers as Public Forum.
- Special Guest Presentations: There were no Special Guest Presentations.



### **Recommendations for the BCC**

1. Post the procedures to request an ASL Interpreter in a prominent place on the Escambia County website.
2. Post the Escambia County procedures for requesting an ASL Interpreter in the Survival Guide.
3. Issue a standing contract for an ASL Interpreter to be present at all Escambia County Disability Awareness Committee and Board of County Commissioners Meetings.
4. Record and post Escambia County Disability Awareness Committee Meetings on the Escambia County website and YouTube.
5. Identify areas of Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS) installation where blind and other applicable individuals could benefit.