



**MINNESOTA GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES**

**June 3, 2026**

The Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain  
2025 East River Parkway  
Minneapolis, MN 55414

**Minutes**

**Members Present**

Lee Shervheim, Chair  
Luke Bourdeaux  
Prince Cole  
Amy Hewitt  
Lisa Jemtrud  
Heather Kainz  
Joel Liestman  
Katie McDermott  
Chris McVey  
Alan Morrison  
Carolyn Perron  
Garrett Petrie  
Kaylie Schmidt  
Bonnie Jean Smith  
Heather Stillwell  
Sumukha Terakanambi (virtual)  
Garret Zayic

**Members Excused**

Jenny Arndt, Vice Chair  
Heidi Hamilton  
Elizabeth Marsh  
Mary Raasch  
Jenny Santema

**Guests**

Holly Anderson  
Jennifer Hall-Lande  
Professor Elizabeth Schiltz  
(Ret.) Magistrate Judge Becky R. Thorson

**Staff Present**

Paul Nevin  
Colleen Wieck

**I. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER**

Shervheim called the meeting to order at 12:15 pm.

**II. INTRODUCTIONS**

Shervheim invited all present to introduce themselves.

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Shervheim called for the agenda to be approved. **MOTION:** McDermott moved, seconded by Smith, that the agenda be approved. Motion carried.

**IV. APPROVAL OF COUNCIL MINUTES**

Shervheim called for approval of the April 1, 2026 Minutes. **MOTION:** Morrison moved, McDermott seconded that the April 1, 2026 Minutes be approved. Motion carried.

**V. PROGRAM PRESENTATION**

Lee Shervheim introduced the guest speakers for today, Professor Elizabeth Schiltz and (Ret.) Magistrate Judge Becky Thorson. The purpose of the presentation is to provide a brief review of the work on disability justice issues and to announce today's release of the Disability Justice website revamp. This work has been collaborative with the Federal Bar Association, the US District Court (Minnesota District), the Robins Kaplan law firm, and three Minnesota Law Schools.

Judge Thorson began the story with Judge Donovan W. Frank's presentation to the Council on October 3, 2007. A videotaping session with Judge Frank followed that visit in November 2007. Judge Frank then invited the Council to present to the FBA Diversity Committee. Judge Thorson said that the discussion of topics was overwhelming, but a decision was made "to do something." We began with small activities, such as an FBA luncheon meeting on disability rights in 2009. Judge Thorson worked at the Robins Kaplan law firm and asked them to host the first Disability Justice seminar in 2010. That seminar has been held for 15 consecutive years. In 2011, a self-advocate was added to the panel discussion. Since then, individuals with developmental disabilities and parent advocates have been featured speakers, depending upon the topic.

Judge Thorson served as Editor-in-Chief of the Federal Lawyer magazine, a publication distributed to the FBA and all federal judges. Two editions included disability justice articles because of Judge Thorson's decisions. The FBA Diversity Statement was also amended to include disability because of Judge Frank's leadership on the national committee.

Professor Schiltz explained that as part of the *Jensen* lawsuit, one family declined the settlement funds and asked Judge Frank to put the money to good use. Judge Frank established a cy pres fund, and the funds were given to Public Television (TPT). TPT produced a documentary and a Disability Justice website. Professor Schiltz curated the website content with law school students. These products were released in 2014. The Council assumed ownership in 2015 and has added content since then. In 2025, the Council began working on a complete revamp of the website. The work is now complete, and the website was released on June 3, 2026.

Before Judge Thorson retired from the federal bench, she approached the US District Court (Minnesota District) public outreach committee. This group had sponsored education events about the Duluth lynching and the Chinese Exclusion Act, and so Judge Thorson asked if the Court would agree to a disability initiative.

Chief Judge Partick Schiltz said YES within seconds of the request. Judge Thorson was appointed as Chair, and several people served, including self-advocates, parents, attorneys, judges, and other professionals. A typical outreach effort includes a set of banners and a continuing legal education course. Subgroups were assigned to work on the 21 banners, the CLE speakers, the art show, and the talent (spoken word, musicians, and choir). The banners were dedicated to Bud Rosenfield, who served on the content subgroup and died in 2023. The Unfinished Journey kick-off event was held in the Minneapolis Courthouse in March 2024. Since then, the banners have traveled to other courthouses and the three law schools.

Professor Schiltz then demonstrated different parts of the website. The Unfinished Journey documentary and banners are new features added to the website. Both Thorson and Schiltz thanked everyone for all their assistance in keeping this effort moving forward.

- Discussion centered on not moving backward.
- One question was how to keep informed about federal lawsuits, and several sources were mentioned, including The Arc US, the National Disability Rights Network, and other national associations.
- Another question was about where to get help. The Disability Law Center and Groundwork Legal were both mentioned. People are being told about the lack of enforcement of the ADA. Complaints can be filed with the Department of Human Rights and the AG's Office.
- Another issue is the availability of accommodations when a case appears in federal court. The Clerk's Office can help, and the Judge's staff can help. For example, one attorney complained about the lack of accessible parking spaces at the federal courthouse, and that changed immediately.

- The Pro Se project was mentioned as a resource to find volunteer attorneys.
- Another question asked about the training available to state court staff, because people with disabilities appear in state court more often than in federal court. This can be a future area of activity.
- Both Thorson and Schiltz promoted the new documentary, also titled “An Unfinished Journey.” They asked Council members to help promote the website, the banners, and the documentary.

**VI. GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Shervheim gave an overview of the committee's work today. The Committee reviewed the current 8 goal areas and the grantees. FFY 2026 is the fifth and final year of the current Five-Year Plan. The history and status of each program goal provided an orientation and refresher for all Committee members. In October, grant recipients will present to the full Council. The second topic was a discussion of training conferences and parameters for a new RFP.

**VII. PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

Petrie and Terakanambi provided an overview of the committee meeting. Eren Sutherland, the new director of the Minnesota Disability Law Center, described the MDLC's work and provided impact statistics. Eren's PowerPoint will be sent to all members. David Dively of the Minnesota Council on Disability summarized the 2026 Legislative Session, and his PowerPoint will be sent to all members. Terakanambi provided an update about the implementation of HR 1, and his presentation will be sent to all members.

Discussion: A question was asked about CMS approval of the corrective action plan. Yes, the plan was accepted, but CMS keeps changing the goal posts. Part of this dispute is in court. Questions were asked about work requirements and exemptions.

**VIII. FIVE-YEAR PLAN (2027-2031) APPROVAL**

In late May, the federal government provided the Five-Year Plan template and a set of instructions. There was one section that needed to be rewritten. Members received a written copy of the section. This is the only major revision since the April version of the Five-Year Plan. **MOTION:** Hewitt moved, seconded by McDermott, to approve the Five-Year Plan. Motion carried.

**IX. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

Wieck reviewed highlights from the past months.

Federal Funding:

- The 2026 federal allocation received to date totals \$1,145,074.00, which is \$7660 less than FFY 2025.

- The President's budget calls for level funding for both Councils and Protection & Advocacy in FFY 2027. The UCEDD budget is eliminated. The House budget reverses the President's recommendation about UCEDDs.

Council Appointments:

- The Governor's appointment staff have only a few appointments remaining, including two parents, one self-advocate, and the representatives from the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Disability Law Center, the Institute on Community Integration, and a nonprofit.

Disability History Lesson Plan (K-12 Social Studies):

- Mary and Don Harreld met with 11 self-advocates and family members to discuss a "History Lesson Plan" based on the federal court banner, which features the number of years people waited for their rights. The design work is completed, and Lisa Haines created an overall brand and format. Videos have been selected, and permission has been granted to edit them. This project should be ready for testing in the next two months.

Treat People Like People:

- The Treat People Like People campaign has had great success in outreach. Since September 2019:
  - 8,994,081 people viewed social media posts.
  - 7,402,995 people have viewed ads.
  - 3,321,926 people have watched our videos.
  - 291,368 people have clicked on ads.
  - 200,000 branded items have been distributed.
  - 193,078 people visited the website.

Olmstead Plan Status:

- 35 people participated in the online Olmstead discussion groups in April. Several advocacy groups submitted letters and participated in the online survey. The Olmstead Office knows that the Plan must be improved, but they plan to wait for direction from the public feedback process. Several members described their experiences with the planning process. State and federal laws limit state agencies. The public feedback was shared with state agencies in late May.

**X. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Shervheim invited comments and announcements.

- A. Heather Stillwell announced a series of regional meetings to be held in Duluth, Alexandria, Bemidji, Mankato, Rochester, and the Metro area. The purpose is to improve healthcare for children.

B. The Olmstead Implementation Office is hiring a new director.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT**

Shervheim asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION:** McDermott moved, seconded by Bourdeaux, that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Colleen Wieck, Executive Director