



# City of Doral Special Needs Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 23, 2024  
6:00 p.m.

Doral Government Center  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Training Room  
8401 NW 53<sup>rd</sup> Terrace  
Doral, FL 33166

## 1. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

## 2. Roll Call of Board Members

Vinita Tandon, Chair	Present
Elizabeth Dager, Vice Chair	Present
Caridad Bouza Merida, Secretary	Absent/Excused
Nayipzi Gutierrez, Board Member	Present
Jorge Van Balen, Board Member	Present
Angelica Pinto, Alternate Member	Present

## 3. Pledge of Allegiance

## 4. Public Comments

Public members were present, and an introduction was done by each.

Vinita asked the public for comments. What you would like to hear and what you would like to request. Anything they would like to say.

A member of the attendees asked what is going to happen with the summer camps. Vinita stated that it was announced. Erin stated that she would give an update during the department update section of the meeting. Vinita stated that she received an email regarding summer camps that the details would come in May because they would be starting in June.

Another member of the attendees inquired about the status of the ADT. She is aware that it has started but she would like to know how the city would be helping them

financially for their children to attend. Some of the participants do not have Medicaid Waiver or CDC+ to pay for the ADT. Some are not in the system. Vinita inquired if the person was asking on her behalf or on behalf of a group of parents. There were several who share the same sentiment and would like to know how the city will be subsidizing ADT for its residents. This will also be addressed in the department update.

## **5. Approval of Minutes**

### **a. January 31, 2024**

Motion to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2024, meeting made by the board. By consensus, motion passes unanimously.

## **6. Discussion Items**

### **a. Update on Adult Training Program**

Erin informed the board that Nerea is on maternity leave, and she will be giving the department update this meeting.

ADT did start and it is designed for there not to be an out-of-pocket cost for the participants. We do hope it will be covered under their insurance, i.e. Medicaid Waiver or CDC+ where they register the ADT program to their insurance. These issues were discussed with the mayor. A meeting was held with the provider. The intent is to not have an out-of-pocket expense so they can receive those services. For those without any coverage, the city is looking for other programs to be able to make recommendations on the city-side to see if there is a way to provide this support for these individuals and help them. The city wants its residents to be able to participate in these programs. It doesn't make sense to have a program that no one can participate in. It was never the intent to design a program that would limit the residents' ability to attend. Most individuals have Waiver or CDC. It would be helpful to advise the departments who do not have the ability to pay because they are not on either Waiver or CDC. The city needs to know how many people are in need so they can review and plan how they would be able to help. There are currently 9 individuals who have registered and 5 have started the program.

- a. Vinita suggested starting the process and whichever parent is interested in the program to come forward and state they are interested. A form that would identify how many are interested and who would need financial assistance.
- b. Someone spoke about their experience with the CDC+ they have had for a month. Their son receives therapies, etc. It depends on the ratio; Alex is a 1:5. \$1050 per month in CDC+. If the ratio is lower the cost for the program is a little higher. If the City can help with about 50% of the cost, it is feasible for them to pay the program.
- c. Another person stated they have CDC+. She explained that everyone receives a different budget. The parents decide which services the funding will be used for. The budgets fluctuate and at times are reduced. The typical rate is \$25 a day. Those registered are 1:10.
- d. A discussion continued regarding the number of days a week the participants are to attend begins at 4 days. Some participants are unable to attend more than 2-3 days a week. Some can only attend a few hours and they are required to pay for the whole day.

- e. Erin added that the program includes different areas of daily living. The summer camp part includes art and other types of socialization. The provider is open to having individuals tour the program.
- f. The city is conferring with other cities within the County on how their programs work and are subsidized. The goal is to make the programs work for the residents of Doral. The director asked that families email her with their situations so they have a clearer picture of how the city can help them.
- g. Another resident stated that they spoke with the mayor, she had advised them that there was a budget for Christmas Camp and Spring Break. However, the resident stated that they did not receive the information for those.
- h. Another resident stated that they have been requesting camps for teacher planning days.

**b. Department Update**

Erin informed the board and residents that there will be a summer camp and it will be the same structure as last year. They are open to emails and feedback from last summer. The department will be taking the items to council in May. Once approved, registration information will be sent in mid-May. Seven years and older. The provider can take 5- and 6-year-olds as long as they are potty-trained, and they have a provider with them during the day. The providers must have a background check once the child is approved for the program.

- i. The city is moving forward to expand camp programs throughout the year to include the Winter break. Some are more difficult as to how the dates fall on the calendar. It may be difficult to have good registration for that one.
- j. Teacher planning days are being considered as well.
- k. With Doral Central Park opening towards the end of the year or beginning of next year. This will give the city more indoor space. Once it is open it will be evaluated to see what and how they will be able to accommodate the needed services.
- l. A resident asked about the Cultural Arts said that the acoustics are not good for some of the children with autism. Erin stated that acoustic panels were placed to help with the sound issues.
- m. Option for the City to consider organizing an activity or fundraiser for the city to help raise funds to help these families to help with paying for the programs. They would like to see that the city makes a commitment with the special needs residents of Doral to make sure that there are programs available for them at low to no costs.
- n. The parks department activities that are offered are done with their staff, are done as affordably as possible and are done at the lowest cost to the residents. The ADT is new, and the city is still in the process of evaluating its efficacy and the ability to grow the program. The city is growing all other programs and are finding that they need to adjust some of them as the special needs community ages.
- o. Vinita suggests that parents should work on understanding the other side. As parents could champion events. Where the city provides the space, and the parents take care of the event. These are suggestions for the parents to continue to be involved. Let's think outside of the box to make things happen for our special needs community and their families. But the families should consider to be involved in creating events and making them happen. When programs are open, we need to make sure the programs are full so that they continue. If providers

- have programs which are empty, they will leave the city. Parents need to work together to make all these programs successful, so they are here perpetually.
- p. The director asked again for them to reach out to her by email so that they can work on these issues and find solutions for the special needs community. There may be some things that do not need council approval and when they come across them, they can make it happen.
  - q. A discussion came about regarding the financial costs. The consensus appears to be the lack of flexibility with the ADT program. The provider needs to know how many participants will be attending on what days and how long the day. The program needs to be filled. The provider is not flexible on the days of the week. The provider is paying the rent for the space for the ADT.
  - r. The director stated that she is paying rent because her program is paid for by insurance, e.g. Waiver and CDC+.
  - s. A parent suggested that the city perhaps lower the rent so that the prices for the program are lowered so that all the residents have the opportunity attend the program.
  - t. Elizabeth explained that the provider is charging the insurance. They are still working on seeing what the provider would charge the insurance less if she is getting the space for free or less. CDC+ is a budget. You need to show what is being spent. Since it is a set amount you get. The city is trying to see what the provider would charge the insurance if she is getting the space for free.
  - u. The issue is for those who do not have Medicaid or CDC+.
  - v. Moving forward, we need to gather the names of those who are interested in the ADT and the days and hours they can attend. Please email the director and give specific information on how the individual will be attending.
  - w. A parent asked if it is out-of-pocket can they pay for the only days that they go? The director explained that it is a staffing issue which is why there is the need to pay for the full week.
  - x. This is the reason why the city needs the data to approach the provider.

Another parent stated that there was proposal for holidays where the special needs community has a day where they can celebrate and they exclusively have time to take pictures with Santa, Easter Bunny, and enjoy Halloween party.

It was discussed where the city and the schools have a disconnect specifically those with special needs programs. Create something that something for donations. Share information on organizations within Doral which provide essential services for special needs individuals. The director stated that they can share information with the schools, but they cannot make the schools disseminate the information.

Autism awareness in April. A parent attended a resource fair in Sunrise. A parent suggested having a resource fair in Doral.

## **7. Discussion of Next Meeting Agenda Items**

- **Adult Training Program Update**
- **Summer Camp Update**

## **8. Next Meeting: June 2024 at 6:00 p.m.**

**9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Caridad Bouza Merida, Secretary

Motion to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2024 Special Needs Advisory Board Meeting made by Board Member \_\_\_\_\_ and seconded by Board Member \_\_\_\_\_.

Vinita Tandon, Chair  
Elizabeth Dager, Vice Chair  
Caridad Bouza Merida, Board Member  
Nayipzi Gutierrez, Board Member  
Jorge Van Balen, Board Member  
Angelica Pinto, Alternate Member

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APPROVED and ADOPTED this 25<sup>th</sup> day of June 2024.



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Vinita Tandon, Chair