

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
APRIL 21, 2008  
MINUTES**

- Location:** First Floor Conference Room  
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA
- Members Present:** Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healey, James C. Noschese, John Tague
- Members Absent:** Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Janet Evans, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, Paul O'Hanlon
- Others Present:** Tom Byrnes, Holly Dick, Dianne Gallagher, Chuck Keenan, Richard Meritzer, Pat Moorhead, Charles Morrison, Teresa Nellans, Anne Nalepa, Matt Pavlosky, Tamara Siegert, Robin Smith, Terry Reynolds, Joe Wassermann

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:04 PM.

**Introductions:**

Everyone introduced themselves. Mr. Parker read the agenda.

**Approval of the March 2008 Minutes:**

A motion was made by Mr. Tague and seconded by Mr. Noschese TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Financial Report:**

CART expenses have been \$1,950 above estimates while interpreter expenses have been \$448 below estimates. ~~We will have a surplus of over \$1,000 at the end of the year and the funds we accrued last year will be used for the retreat.~~ This leaves us with \$1,000. We can use the \$1,000 we did not use for the Annual Meeting for the retreat. Ms. Goldstein moved TO ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT. The motion was seconded by Ms. Healy. The motion passed unanimously.

**STAFF REPORT**

Mr. Meritzer informed the Task Force that both Ms. Bormentar and Ms. Jenkins are graduating and leaving for bigger and better things. He informed them that the Law Department has still not given approval for the changes in the special event permits. He also updated them on the hospital compliance project. He is planning to set up meetings with hospital administrators and separate meetings with insurance companies.

Dr. Seelman requested the Ms. Nellans be brought into those meetings. Ms. Nellans is concerned that people with hearing loss will be able to keep their hearing aids. The assistive listening issue should be part of the discussion. Mr. Noschese added the State Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing is also involved in hospital compliance. Ms. Nellans is involved in this project as well. They are developing a guide to hospital ~~accessibility~~-accessible. Dr Seelman said we need to get into the hospitals and train people. She has been involved in disability issues her whole life. You just need to do training again and again. We will always be busy. This project should be just the beginning. She wants to deal with issues regarding the sight impaired community ~~of persons with visual disabilities~~ as well.

### DISCUSSION ON CABLE PRICING AND WASTE WATER BILLING

Mr. Noschese reported that the issue with Comcast has been resolved. However, analog and digital cable is different. Analog captioning is fine but digital captioning tends to be delayed. As for the ~~waste~~waste water issue, for many years, people who are deaf or hard of hearing have had situations where water is running and they can't hear it. Some companies bill every three months. He wants to have them bill monthly because if your toilet is running and you can't hear it, you can get bills of \$300 or \$400, so if the bills were sent monthly you could catch that quicker. He called one of the water companies and asked them to change their billing procedures and they do not ~~want~~what to change. He is asking the Task Force to request the change.

Mr. Parker ~~read the bills that Mr. Noschese provided to the Task Force and mentioned~~pointed out that all the bills were from the Wilkinsburg – Penn Joint Water Authority. The bills were from September 14, 1999 for \$306.07, April 12, 2000 for \$454.30 and for April 16, 2008 for \$94.85. Mr. Noschese pointed out that the last bill was a normal bill. Ms. Healy pointed out that if we ask them to bill every customer ever month that would triple their costs. She asked if the meters were read by a reader or electronically. Mr. Noschese responded they are read electronically. He has met four times with the company and Paul Costa, his representative to the State House. Ms. Healy went on to say if they can electronically view the usage they can alert the customer if their usage increases. Mr. Noschese added a lot of people have that problem. Ms. Goldstein said her apartment building has that problem and the residents can't control that. They may not notice it even if they hear it until they get the bill. She suggested people put a little bell on the toilet flow. Ms. Healy asked if Mr. Noschese was asking the Task Force to join with him on this project. He said yes, other companies send out monthly bills.

Mr. Parker asked what the Task Forces responsibility is with Authorities. Mr. Meritzer responded Authorities are independent single purpose governments, the Task Force would advise them just like they would advise any other government entity. Mr. Noschese said he called the Public Utility Commission, but Wilkinsburg has an independent company. Ms. Healy suggested we met with the Mayors of Wilkinsburg and Penn Hills. Mr. Parker said we need a motion and volunteers to meet with them. Perhaps we should set up a system to call them. Dr. Seelman responded we could not use a regular phone; we could use email or TTY. Ms. Healy pointed out just having them at a meeting with an interpreter would be an eye-opener. Dr. Seelman said they could argue this is not a representative sample of the community. There is a problem here as to how we handle it is the question. Ms. Healy responded we could ask to meet with them as we did with the Prison.

Mr. Noschese continued we should invite the water companies here. Ms. Healy asked if the ~~Wilksburg~~Wilksberg-Penn Authority is the only one Mr. Noschese is concerned about. He responded yes. Dr. Seelman asked if there were problems with the hard of hearing community. Ms. Nellans said yes. She further pointed out water usage is how they find people growing marijuana. If they can use it to find people growing marijuana, they can contact other people whose usage has spiked. She added Fox Chapel also sends out bills every three months. Ms. Healy suggested we invite ~~Wilksburg~~Wilksberg-Penn, Fox Chapel and Millvale to the next meeting. Mr. Parker ~~and~~questioned why they would come. Dr. Seelman ~~discussed encouraging their attendance~~suggested the possibility of a new story if they did not. She moved to ~~INVITE WILKINSBURG~~INVITED WILKENSBERG-PENN, FOX CHAPEL AND MILLVALE WATER COMPANIES TO THE NEXT MEETING. Ms. Healy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Noschese, Dr. Seelman, Ms. Nellans and Anne Nalepa volunteered to work on this project.

Dr. Seelman expressed a concern that in the switch from analog to digital television, people with the black box may have a problem with older television sets. They are required to convert. But she is unconvinced that all televisions support captioning with equal capacity. If either the deaf or hard of hearing communities are having a problem, we should bring in the cable companies. Mr. Parker said we should continue to monitor the situation. Dr. Seelman added you ~~could~~can keep your old television and convert with a black box, which is complicated, or buy a new television, which may or may not be technically equal. Matt Pavlosky said he has a contact at the cable company and would be happy to contact them

#### DISCUSSION ON HOME OWNERSHIP

Ms. Healy reported that the Peale Center started a home ownership work group last April. They are looking at what public benefits exist for people on SSI including the Home Ownership Voucher Program through Section 8. The recipient only pays a percentage of their income to cover the mortgage, taxes and insurance. The program also sets aside some money for repairs. Currently there are no vouchers available. The recipients need a large window for planning. This would work best for young people. People who receive SSI ~~can~~can not have more the \$2,000 in assets. Once you get to \$2,000 in equity you loss your SSI. They brought the State Office of Disabilities Programs in. There is a Pilot Program for people who receive Mental Retardation services in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. It provides options for people with cognitive disabilities. This program can demonstrate that a person with disabilities can stay in their house even if it needs major repairs. They give a two-year commitment. There was a meeting with both counties to see who is eligible. They are still working out the program. It should start July 1<sup>st</sup>. A waiver program, Homefinder, helps pay for the house and figures how to prepare for the repairs. There will be more information once the guidelines are completed.

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Mr. Parker asked which waivers they are using. Ms. Healy responded through the state office. Pennsylvania just hired Jack Hilliard as the person responsible for the waiver programs. She went on to say as soon as they finish the brochure they would like the Task Force to disseminate the information. Mr. Noschese pointed out that section 8 vouchers are still closed. Are they planning to open them? Ms Healy responded that comes from HUD. There must be more money put into the program. Mr. Parker said we ~~could~~will do everything we can to support this program. Dr. Seelman added the Quality of Life Technology Center is doing a panel on a home of your own. We should push accessible houses. Blue Roof is a local resource. Ms. Healy said some county staff feel their responsibility is for health and safety, not accessibility. They have limited money. There ~~are~~is other funding sources for accessibility. Mr. Parker pointed out other waivers ~~that are initiating pilot programs allowing waiver~~allow money ~~to be used towards purchasing homes~~for purchase.

## DISCUSSION ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS

Ms. Healy asked that we strategize on getting involved in the process. Mr. Parker reported that the ~~time~~table was just released. Mr. Tague agreed to develop a presentation draft, which we could then send to the County. We need to set up a meeting with them. Mr. Parker added that Donna Joyce attended the April 2007 meeting. We asked her how we could work into the schedule. She said the Dennis Davin and Paul Exler were her bosses. Ms. Healy had ~~begun the process with a first draft of~~ drafted a letter ~~to initiate the process and provide~~ that was never sent. Ms. Joyce ~~with information~~ wanted something she could use to work with her supervisors. Ms. Healy suggested we start the process for next year. Mr. Parker pointed out that ~~Achieva~~ they had been contacted ~~them~~ by Acheva about their concerns. ~~Ms. Healy added this was Paula Rule.~~ Mr. Parker said ~~Paula Rules~~ she invited us to come to look at ~~their~~ the program. A small committee of Mr. O'Hanlon and Ms. Healy was set up to get together all the information from last year. Both Dr. Seelman and Ms. Goldstein said they would like to be involved. Mr. Parker pointed out the United Cerebral Palsy has a sophisticated phone conferencing system. Dr. Seelman responded that meeting by telephone would be great. Mr. Tague added the City also gets block grant money. Do we want to work with the City as well? Other municipalities get this too. Dr. Seelman asked what the interrelationship is between the City and the Authorities. Mr. Meritzer explained they are independent single purpose governments. The block grants they would get would be intergovernmental contracts between them and the City or County.

## TASK FORCE UPDATES, INFORMATION SHARING, VOX POP

Sarah reported the retreat will be May 17<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at the University of Pittsburgh. She had heard from everyone but Ms. Evans and Mr. Henderson. Mr. Parker pointed out that Mr. Tague sent an email on suggested topics. Ms. Healy said she ~~can~~ not make it. She has the outcomes of the last strategic planning process and will send it out. Dr. Seelman pointed out food was still an issue. Ms. Goldstein asked if we could bring in food. Dr. Seelman said yes. Ms. Goldstein said she would bring breakfast. Mr. Parker suggested this be worked through the committee. Ms. Goldstein asked if we should discuss the meeting time and day. She suggested quarterly evening meetings.

Dr. Seelman brought us the issue of Mayview. Said she wants to hear more from the Mental Health Community. Mr. Parker responded we did submit a letter of support on Mayview. Dr. Seelman said we still don't have a bill passed requiring the money follow the individuals who leave Mayview. Ms. Goldstein responded that a committee has been set up for the sale but the bill has not been passed. Ms. Healy pointed out that when Western Center was sold they tried to get the money sheltered. They got nowhere and the land was sold under the assessed value. Now it has been developed. A number of state institutions have been refocused, but MHMR still pays for maintenance. Mr. Tague added this is what the legislation is to address. Ms. Goldstein reported that on May 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. there will be a meeting of community members at Mayview. There are no community members on the committee, just developer and school board representatives. Bill 1448 needs to be passed so that the property can be sold at fair market value and the money can follow the consumers. Mr. Tague pointed out this is a concern of ours. We want to use the money for housing.

Ms. Healy stated tomorrow is Election Day. Is there any election information? Ms. Dick responded that Mr. O'Hanlon sent information out.

Mr. Parker reported that Mr. McGann is concerned that Pitt and CCAC are not promoting the interpreter programs. He wants to talk about this at the next meeting. Mr. Noschese said he has been tracking the advertisements for the political campaign. 85% of Senator Clinton's ads are captioned while 35% of Senator Obama's ads are captioned. None of the other political advertisements are captioned.

Ms. Goldstein announced that she was promoted to the position of Community Care.

Mr. Keenan announced the LHOT meeting in April will discuss nursing home vouchers from PHFA. These vouchers will be for two years. The housing authorities of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County and McKeesport will pick up 75% of these vouchers. Dr. Seelman asked if the LHOT will be keeping records on the use of the waivers and problems. Mr. Keenan responded PHFA just provides money for housing costs. They will still get waiver cost through the state separately. They will see how much money they can save the state. There will be a significant demographic ~~data~~[data](#) base.

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Charles Morrison reported that the bulk of the work the City Human Relations commission does is enforcement. People moving from facilities out into the community may have a problem, and this is a fair housing issue.

Tom Burns announced the first annual brain injury event will be next Monday in Harrisburg. The Department of Public Welfare will provide the funding. ~~He explained he has a brain injury, received his degree from Duquesne and~~[He then explained he had attended Penn State. 20 years ago he was in a car accident which resulted in a casing closed brain injury. His brain works faster then he can speak. Through services he received he has regained his life. He now works with the](#) Brian Injury Association of Pennsylvania. [He works with providers of services for the Mental Health Association. He received his Masters Degree from Duquesne.](#)

Dr. Seelman moved the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Goldstein seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00PM

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: June 16, 2008  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219