

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
AUGUST 21, 2006  
MINUTES**

**Location:** First Floor Conference Room  
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Members Present:** Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Eugene Barton, Aurelia Carter, Janet Evans, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, Paul O'Hanlon, John Tague

**Members Absent:** Linda Dickerson, Liz Healey

**Others Present:** Jennifer L. Behun, Brenda Dare, Holly Dick, David A. Engel, Mary Figlar, Rachel Freund, Diane Gallagher, Noor Ismail, Chuck Keenan, Lindsey Kryzwick, Amanda Lapina, Danielle Lenge, Lashanna Martin, Denise McArthur-Turner, Richard Meritzer, Damitra Y. Penny, Dana M. Phillips, Larry Powell, Michelle Sullivan, Jason Tigano, Mary Esther Van Shura

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:02 PM.

**Introductions:**

Everyone introduced themselves.

**Approval of the June 2006 Minutes:**

Ms. Evans moved TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES. Mr. Barton seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Allegheny Places Planning Team Presentation:**

No one was able to attend from the County. Mr. Meritzer was asked to resend the email on the County Plan.

**Presentation on the Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities:**

Larry Powell reported the Governor's committee was formed many years ago. This is the 53<sup>rd</sup> annual conference. It rotates every year between Pittsburgh, Harrisburg and Philadelphia. The conference will be on Wednesday, October 4<sup>th</sup> in Green Tree. There are four tracks. At the end there will be an interactive theatre piece. The Keynote speaker will be Dr. Rory Cooper. Mr. Powell then handed out packets.

Mr. Barton asked if the packet is available in Braille. Mr. Powell said no, but he can get it in Braille or text to speech. Mr. Parker pointed out that we have an active Employment Committee who should go. Mr. Powell responded that this conference is really geared to businesses. Mr. Parker then asked if there were any employment trends. Mr. Powell responded that there were no trends on a positive note. Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act the unemployment rate for people with disabilities has been stable. Why hasn't it moved?

Mr. Henderson asked what is "show me the money". Mr. Powell said it is tax incentives for companies to hire disabled people. Mr. Tague asked if there were any presentations on accessibility for Job Links. Mr. Powell said no. The focus is on employers getting the disabled employed. Dr. Seelman point out that the Task Force Chair is on the Board of the ERC. Mr. Barton asked what the segment on technology was. Mr. Powell said they were quality of life issues. New technologies can do things more quickly and economically.

Brenda Dare asked if there was any scholarship money. Mr. Powell said there was no scholarship money available. They were funding student helpers. Ms. Carter asked why student helpers and not people with disabilities. Mr. Powell said they wanted a consumer component but it was nixed. Ms. Carter responded there "shouldn't be anything about us without us."

Mr. Henderson said that since the last conference on employment four years ago there has not been much change. Is change gong to happen? Mr. Henderson responded they are working with the Pittsburgh Technology Council. They are using a list of 1500 people electronically. In the past they used snail mail. Michael Fiore will speak on employment. Mr. McGann asked if there are any surveys on why employers are not hiring the disabled. If you can help us to understand the advantages of hiring disabled people, we can educate employers. Mr. Parker asked if it would help if we got out registration information. Mr. Powell said it would and he can get it to us digitally.

#### **Let Our Voices be Heard voter awareness event:**

Rachael Freund of the Mental Health Association reported that this is a cross disability advocacy issue. They are working on voter registration and holding an awareness event on August 31<sup>st</sup> at the Holiday Inn in Oakland. She came to ask us for a representative for this event. They are getting service organizations to recognize their role in getting disabled people registered and informed. People with disabilities are not getting their voter information updated because most updates are done through the driver license registrations.

Dr. Seelman asked who enforces the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) on the local level. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that he was not sure. No one may have the responsibility of enforcing this act. People with disabilities do not drive at the same rate as people without disabilities. So disability organizations were added to the law to fill this gap. But organizations are to remain non-partisan and they see that as non-political so they do not pursue this duty. Dr. Seelman added if there is no enforcement there is case by case law. We must make sure people know about these events. We do not have a disability calendar. Holly Dick said there is enforcement at the state level. Access asks every client about registering to vote and must report on this quarterly.

Mr. O'Hanlon said the Department of Transportation is geared up for this. The Human Services agencies are missing. There is a need for education. They do not value this work and this reinforces the lack of voting power. There has been no change in behavior since 1993. Mr. Baron said other state departments have the same requirements. We must deal with apathy.

Mr. Parker said Mr. Tague, Mr. O'Hanlon, Mr. Barton and he will be involved in this event. Is there something we can do to support it? Mr. O'Hanlon responded that on the micro-level each agency must do a voter audit. When can they capture voter registrations from their clients? On the macro-level we need to get service organizations more involved. It behooves them to do this. Ms. Evans added the Hosing Authority asks everyone if they are registered to vote. What about the campaigners themselves. Mr. O'Hanlon pointed out they don't have a legal responsibility to register voters, but service organizations do. If we don't register politicians will ignore us. Senior Citizens vote and the politicians care about their issues. Motor voter registration has increased the number of drivers who vote, but has not helped us as much. Ms. Evans said that she was asked about her voter status when she got her state I.D. People with disabilities should get their state I.D. and register. There is transportation to the polls and the new voting machines are excellent. They are easy to read.

Dr. Seelman added there needs to be a strategy. Without enforcement no strategy can work. Mr. O'Hanlon responded disability service organizations get their funding through the County. We should encourage the County to pursue this. Mr. Parker suggested we could advise the County to alert, recommend, and encourage services organizations to do voter registration. Mary Esther Van Shura, representing the County Executive said she can see if this is required in their contacts. Mr. Barton asked if these agencies have voter registration forms.

Mr. McGann said the situation sometimes seems complicated. Election staff does not like to see disabled people show up. Disabled people don't understand the issues or how the candidates differ. The deaf community has had enough with voting because they don't get the support they need. He would like to see the new voting machines. Dr. Seelman recommended that we put a representative from County Executive Onorato's office on the agenda to discuss this problem and find out what they are doing about it. She is speaking at the County Council meeting tomorrow and will bring it up there. Diane Gallagher added we should ask the deaf advocacy groups to explain political issues. They are not aware of the lack of information. Mr. Henderson said voter education is important.

#### **Educated Newly Elected Officials:**

David Engle reported that in the 1980s there use to be meetings under Title 19. These meetings brought money in that was distributed by the legislators. The Legislature met once a year in Allegheny County. The leadership of the Legislature is now changing. He suggested an education program for the State Legislators. This would be a short power point; no more than 10 or 15 minutes per subject. This was done a number of years ago and it got us introduced to the Legislature. The time line for this is December or January.

He is not just coming to the Task Force. He is looking at a combination of governmental agencies, non-profit agencies, and advocacy groups. He wants individuals with expertise. In the past 10 years there has been a drop in people involved in hearings. There is not much in the newspapers. The Task Force should get out information on hearings. They should get money

from foundations to fund educational materials. Mr. Parker asked if he was putting together a coalition. He answered yes. People have specific issues that we need to bring into this. Mr. McGann can communicate this idea to the deaf community. The only thing that all disabled people have in common is the frequency they go to their doctors. We need to develop lines of communication that are more inclusive. Ms. Carter said she would support this activity but she wants constituents involved. Mr. Parker added we don't always know what everyone else is doing. On September 21<sup>st</sup> Let Our Voices Be Heard is having a legislative breakfast. A month ago three busloads of constituents went to Harrisburg with Let Our Voices Be Heard. There is a disabled voting coalition beginning to form. We need to create structures. Mr. Engel explained they would have 5 to 10 people do a presentation to bring up issues. These presentations would be targeted to get specific results. It will include constituent representation. Legislators have not been seen at community functions. Seniors were organized by Mary Esther Van Shura through the Senior Centers. Mr. Henderson disagreed that disabled people are not a good voting block. They are not doing what needs to be done, but they are voting. Mr. Engle added that people do not like to be identified as having a disability.

Dr. Seelman stated *must* be nonpartisan. She moved THE TASK FORCE HELP SET UP THIS COALITION. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. Mr. McGann said a lot of people are not physically disabled, but they are disabled. Ms. Carter said she will support it if disabled people are involved. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### **Leadership training for young persons who are deaf:**

Mr. Parker said that Ms. Ivey, who was not present at this meeting, was very interested in this topic and asked Mr. McGann if they could postpone it until the next meeting. He agreed.

#### **Sponsorship of Voter Education Events:**

Mr. Tague reported that the Task Force requested we invite Governor Rendell and Lynn Swann to an event. The Task Force had met with Governor Rendell four years ago. He has contacted Senate and House of Representative Candidates. All candidates were invited. He needs participation and is looking for cosponsors. He asked the Task Force to cosponsor the event on the 30<sup>th</sup>.

Dr. Seelman asked what questions the candidates would be asked. Mr. Tague responded that deciding what to ask would be part of the process. He is trying to make this as cross disability as possible. Mr. Barton moved THE TASK FORCE COSPONSOR THIS EVENT. The motion was passed unanimously.

#### **Vox Pop:**

Mary Esther Van Shura announced that the County will be doing additional voter outreach in the fall. They are looking at dates between October 16<sup>th</sup> and October 31<sup>st</sup>. There are 1305 accessible polling places, more than ever before.

Demitra Penny, disability coordinator for Saint Benedict the Moor Church, is trying to get a disability coordinator for every church. They will be having a Disability Mass on November 19th. Mr. Parker said he would meet with her after the meeting about what information can be distributed.

**Annual Meeting:**

Mr. Parker announced the Annual meeting will be Monday September 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 on housing. It will take place at the Three Rivers Center for Independent Living. There will be three panels: Housing Past, Present and Future. The past panel will be Paul O’Hanlon, Chuck Keenan and Stan Holbrook talking about Housing Authority Projects. The present panel will deal with nursing home transition. The future panel will be Blue Roof. We still need moderators.

Ms. Evans said she would be a moderator. Dr. Seelman said she would be a moderator if she is there. She pointed out that Pitt is a cosponsor of the Quality for Living Center. They have rich groups of talents we could use. Mr. Parker said he hoped we would use this meeting to get action started, like the Voter Registration Panel at the Annual Meeting last year.

**Report Card Implementation:**

Ms. Carter reported that she has a meeting of the committee today to come up with next steps. She asked Mental Health / Mental Retardation Board members to be involved. Mr. Parker urged her to keep the momentum going.

**Staff Reports:**

Danielle Lengle reported that the assistive listening equipment would cost \$4,675.00 for the basic system and there are some additional options that cost more. Mr. Meritzer will send out the email on this subject. The Law Department is looking into changing the special events permit. We have met with the City Cable Station regarding a Television show and are moving forward. We are meeting with the consultant who does the City Summer magazine and are discussing which symbols they should use.

**Tasks from the July 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting:**

John Tague:

- \* Sent Letter on supporting the Birmingham Bridge Bike / Pedestrian Lane to Bike Pittsburgh copies to the Mayor and PennDOT. – Mr. Parker said he would write it.
- \* Will upgrade employment links on city page (with Committee) – In process.
- \*Contact appropriate person from county Department of Human Services about how to encourage human service agencies to get the disabled to vote (transportation, etc...) – discussed earlier in the meeting.
- \*Talk to Reggie Young about a voter education event. – Done.
- \*Set up Annual meeting. – Done.
- \*Formulate questions for the Forum. – Discussed earlier in meeting.
- \*Set up meeting with DHHBHTF and Partners for Justice. – Done.

Richard Meritzer:

- \*Continue to look into getting link to ADA on county webpage. – In process.
- Add ADA Celebration to Web Page. – Done.
- Pursue Assistive Listing Devices for meeting. – Discussed earlier in meeting.

Aurelia Carter:

\*Work on brochure with Liz Healy.

Liz Healy:

\*Work on brochure with Aurelia Carter.

Jeff Parker:

Set up meeting with Warden. – Done.

Get cost of CART. – Done.

Milton Henderson:

\*Write and submit quarterly reports on Housing to Jeff Parker.

Employment Committee:

\*Discuss issue of young adults with disabilities looking for employment.

\*Left over from previous meeting.

**Announcements:**

Dr. Seelman announced she was getting a proclamation from County Council tomorrow at 5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:**

DATE: September 18, 2006  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Three Rivers Center for Independent Living  
800 Rebecca Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15221