

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
AUGUST 18, 2008
MINUTES**

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

Members Present: Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Janet Evans, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Sarah Goldstein, Rich McGann, James C. Noschese, Paul O'Hanlon, John Tague

Members Absent: Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson

Others Present: Judy Barricella, Nathan Eber, Holly Dick, Val Gawlas, Carol Horowitz, Charles Keenan, Joe Kleppick, Jessica Knoche, Linda Lee, Shari Mamas, Richard Meritzer, Bill Newland, Matt Pavlosky, Lucy Rooth, Tamara Siegert, Lucy Spruill, Joe Wassermann

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:00 PM.

Introductions:

Everyone introduced themselves. Mr. Parker read the agenda.

Financial Report:

The Task Force has the same budget as it did in 2007-2008. The only expenditure in July was captioning for the Task Force meeting and the Hospital Compliance meeting. Ms. Evans moved to ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT. Mr. Noschese asked if THE FINANCIAL REPORT COULD BE PRODUCED IN BRAILLE for Mr. McGann. He can not read the report. Mr. Parker said it could. Ms. Goldstein seconded the motion. Ms. Healy asked if it could be provided in text before the meeting. Both Mr. McGann and Mr. Wassermann said yes. The motion was approved unanimously.

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT AND ELECTION OF NEW OFFICERS

Ms. Healey reported she sent out four emails to Task Force members about nominations and most of the members responded. The nominations are:

Chair – Paul O' Hanlon

Vice-chair - Dr. Katherine Seelman

Treasurer – John Teague

Member at Large - Aurelia Carter, James "Chris" Noschese and Janet Evans

Ms. Goldstein moved THE REPORT OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE BE ACCEPTED. Mr. Henderson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Healy moved to ELECT PAUL O'HANLON AS CHAIR OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH / ALLEGHENY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES. Mr. Tague Seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Healy moved to ELECT DR. KATHERINE SEELMAN AS VICE-CHAIR OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH / ALLEGHENY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES. Mr. Parker Seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Ms. Healy moved to ELECT JOHN TAGUE AS TREASURER OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH / ALLEGHENY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES. Ms. Evans Seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Tague asked that Mr. Noschese and Ms. Evans be allowed to speak. Mr. Parker felt this was inappropriate since the other candidates were not asked to speak. Mr. Tague pointed out the other candidates did not have opposition, but agreed that since Ms. Carter was not here the other candidates should not speak. Ballots were handed out. Later in the meeting Ms. Healy announced the WINNER OF THE MEMBER AT LARGE POSITION OF THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH / ALLEGHENY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES WAS JAMES "CHRIS" NOSCHESE. Mr. Parker congratulated him.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Judy Barricella reported that she distributed a flyer asking people if they wanted to tell their story. For 10 weeks she received calls constantly. She had 59 interviews with individuals, families and parents. These interviews covered all disabilities in the counties of Allegheny, Armstrong, Washington and Westmoreland counties. There are still 89 people on the list who have yet to be interviewed. All interviews are transcribed and being edited. The deadline for completion of this project is November. The project will highlight the similarities in people's lives. There will be a CD which will just be the audio transcripts and a DVD with pictures and video clips. They will also have a website at www.voicesofourregion.com. Every interview lasted over half an hour. When you click on the picture on the website you will hear the edited interview.

Ms. Evans asked if there was going to be an event. Ms. Barricella said the premier will be November 20th. They are expecting 500 people. Ms. Goldstein asked if each interviewee was asked the same questions in the same order. Ms. Barricella responded that every interview started the same way and during the interview they were all asked the same questions. Mr. McGann asked if any of the interviews were with member of the deafblind community. Ms. Barricella said there were. Mr. Parker said she did a very good job of interviewing. He asked if she found any trends. Ms. Barricella said a lot of people talked about employment discrimination and G-d. When the project is completed she will identify service gaps (such as medical appointments) for the Department of Human Services. Mr. Noschese asked if all the interviews will be captioned. Ms. Barricella said they would be. Mr. Noschese then asked will there be an interpreter or captioning at the premier. Ms. Barricella responded both. Mr. McGann said there will be people there unable to see the captioning. Ms. Barricella said people can call and they will make special arraignments.

Mr. Parker then asked if she had any other disability related issues. Ms. Barricella responded that 2 years ago Dr. Seelman asked that a Disability Events Calendar be set up. She has not been able to do that. Mr. Tague said he thinks this is important. Ms. Goldstein added her agency puts out a calendar. Mr. Meritzer sends out notices of events. Mr. Meritzer added the calendar can be interactive to pull up events by type of disability or kind of event. Ms. Healy said this could be a news feed. People can post events and Ms. Barricella can edit the information. Ms. Barricella pointed out that Dr. Seelman originally suggested this would be for community wide events. She asked what people want. Ms. Evans said she likes the information Mr. Meritzer sends out. She agreed with Ms. Goldstein that she wants more selection.

Mr. Parker added that the positing should be related to disabilities. They can glean the information from Mr. Meritzer's emails. She asked if this should be housed on the Disability Connections Web site. Mr. Tague added the technology to do this is there. Ms. Evans asked what the audience thought. Both Lucy Spruill and Gawlas said they were interested. Bill Newland said the information need to be accessible. Ms. Healy added that when we send out the newsletter, it should not be in PDF. We should send out the link instead. Mr. McGann agreed with Ms. Healy. If it is in PDF it needs to be changed. Also don't use PowerPoint. He wants plain text. Mr. Noschese added plain text is much clearer.

STAFF REPORT

Mr. Meritzer introduced Linda Lee, who would be starting next month as the ADA Intern.

Ms. Corkum reported since the last meeting they had met with West Penn / Allegheny Health System. Topics of discussion were the facilitation of interpreters, technology of TV and Web cams to get patients and the nurses station information, and use of Deaf Talk. We also discussed the possibility of changing computer privacy information for patients who are deaf. Often the computer screen is the best way to convey information but in some hospitals this is considered confidential. We still need to meet with Veterans' Hospital. We also met with Highmark insurance regarding insurance coverage for doctor appointments and outpatient procedure. They expressed an interest in meeting with other insurance companies to develop a regional policy.

Mr. McGann stated interpreters are important. He had received complaints from employees of UPMC. Many supervisors of deaf employees do not understand Act 57. What can we do about getting more interpreters registered? Mr. Noschese added he had a conversation with an insurance company employee. Glasses are covered but laser eye surgery is not. Hearing aids are covered but cochlear implants are not. Often this is decided by the doctor. Mr. O'Hanlon pointed out lawyers have a program where they pay interpreters out of a pool from their professional fees. Doctors' offices are small businesses. They could establish the same sort of program. Ms. Corkum said we would look into that. Mr. McGann said the Center for Hearing and Deaf Services was not involved in the discussion. We should set up a committee to look into this issue more. Insurance companies need to be educated. Mr. Parker asked how we continue with these projects. Ms. Corkum said the next step is to resurvey the community. We have done education with the hospitals. Hopefully we will get a meeting together with the insurance companies. Ms. Goldstein said we have to talk to insurance companies. Community Care is billed at a higher rate automatically. Mr. Noschese asked that we not use the term hearing impaired.

TASK FORCE UPDATES - BROCHURE

Mr. Parker reported that the draft will be given to Ms. Healy and him next weekend. Tina Calabro is working on it. It will be ready in September.

TASK FORCE UPDATES – SEQUEL TO SMALL DIFFERENCES

Mr. Parker reported that he met with Chaz Kelleme and Tony Buba. Mr. Buba is also working on the Voices for Our Region project. After that project is done they will finish the sequel. They have done some of the filming. They would like to have two meetings with Task Force members to get direction and focus. He asked for people to volunteer to be involved.

TASK FORCE UPDATES – ISSUES WITH THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COMMUNITIES AROUND WATER AUTHORITIES

Mr. Parker asked the members of the Task Force to appoint him to reactivate the committees. Mr. O’Hanlon moved that MR. PARKER BE APPOINTED TO REACTIVATE THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH / ALLEGHENY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES COMMITTEES. Mr. McGann Seconded the motion. The motion passed.

TASK FORCE UPDATES – GROUP HOME LICENSING

Mr. O’Hanlon reported the legislation before County Council states that any new or existing group home (defined as a residence of three or people who receive some supportive services) would be required to register with the County. The Public Safety Committee of County Council held a hearing. The Chiefs of Police were invited to present evidence. They have promised a follow-up hearing. About 10 years ago the community went through the process with the City to modernize the zoning code based on Fair Housing requirements. The County never went through that process. We were not able to get on the speakers list for the first hearing because there was no formal process. The whole process is terribly confusing.

Ms. Goldstein asked if the requirement is for residence with 3 or more unrelated individuals. Mr. O’Hanlon responded that the legislation does not speak to the relationship. Mr. Henderson asked as the official body to speak on disability issues, why were we not allowed to speak. Mr. O’Hanlon responded that Mr. Parker drafted a letter to County Council requesting to speak. We could invite the proponents to a meeting. Mr. Parker continued County Council members James Burn Jr., Dr. Charles Martoni, and Chuck McCullough attended the hearing as did Mr. Tague, Mr. O’Hanlon and Mr. Parker. They spoke to the Council members after the hearing. Mr. McGann agreed with Mr. O’Hanlon. At the hearing who would cover the expense for interpreters. Mr. Parker stated we would request that County Council make meetings accessible. Mr. Henderson pointed out that these meetings are open to the public and interpreters should be there. Mr. Tague added Jane Miller spoke at the hearing. She tried to separate group homes from the legislation. Council member Burn was scheduling a meeting with the Department of Human Services.

Mr. Parker suggested the Task Force draft a letter opposing the ordinance. Mr. Henderson asked if the testimony before county Council was NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard). Mr. O’Hanlon said they invited people to tell unverified horror stories. What is misguided is that the County will be sued under the Fair Housing Act. We should try to stop this legislation in its tracks. Mr. Henderson suggested we bring in State Officials. Mr. O’Hanlon said this legislation was primarily motivated by the Swissvale Drug and Alcohol program that rents out apartments to clients. Mr. Parker added this touches on Section 8 issues, group homes and the closing of Mayview State Hospital. We have good luck focusing on issues at our annual meeting. This could be the theme of the annual meeting. Mr. O’Hanlon said that sounds like a good idea. Ms. Goldstein asked about safety around this housing. Mr. Parkers asked how real the safety issue is.

TASK FORCE UPDATES – ACCESSIBLE VOTING

Mr. O’Hanlon reported next Tuesday the Department of State is doing training on agency voter registration. One in five people have a disability. The Nation Voter Registration Act was passed to make it a regular opportunity. Pennsylvania has failed to implement it. There are no registrations from MH/MR programs or the schools. Statewide there are only 17 registrations from schools. The Training next Tuesday is the first in six years. People who have contact with agencies serving the disability community should demand they be there.

Ms Goldstein added we can march all we want but unless we register they won't hear us. Mr. Noschese stated he has gone to two groups and everyone says they are registered. But are they being included in the disability community? Mr. O'Hanlon asked if they were registered where they live. Many seniors are not registered where they live.

VOX POP

Lucy Spruill announced she was now the Director of Public Policy and Community Relations, a new position created by United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) to become more involved in community affairs and public policy. She will be assisting the Task Force. UCP will be hosting a viewing of a Presidential Forum. They also appointed Roslyn Maholland to coordinate voter registration for the next four months. They will be submitting comments on new guidelines. Anyone can contact her to visit groups of people with disabilities. Mr. Parker asked if she was visiting other agencies. She responding she will go to advocacy groups and support groups. She has talked to the School for the Deaf and MS support groups. She has also gone to the We Count target organizations. She is intensely interested in getting involved in County legislation. Why have an ADA Coordinator when the City is grappling with issues.

Val Gawlas announced she, too, was in a new position, with the food bank. She is doing Gap studies. They have distributed over 20 million pounds of food, but they have not met the needs of the disability community. She distributed handouts. She is trying to reach agencies to educate staff. She is available to go to staff meetings. Or they can come to the Food Bank. They need insights as to the needs of the community.

Mr. Henderson introduced Lucy Rooth of 100 LTD Homes. She announced the Lots of Hope program to create community independent housing and provide accessible green homes. She is getting donated empty lots to build accessible homes on. These homes will be wired with adaptable technologies. Ms. Goldstein asked how old the company is. Ms. Rooth answered one year old. They have done housing in North Versailles that is not yet affordable.

Mr. McGann said that before we close he wanted to thank the outgoing officers, Mr. Parker and Ms. Healy.

Mr. Noschese requested we look at problems with the Airport. Mr. Parker asked him to get Mr. Meritzer more information. Mr. McGann said staff does not understand about people who are deaf. We need to educate staff.

Mr. Henderson moved the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Goldstein seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 P.M.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: September 22, 2008
 TIME: 1:00 P.M.
 LOCATION: Large Conference Room
 200 Ross Street
 Pittsburgh, PA 15219