

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
AUGUST 15, 2011  
MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Janet Evans, Sarah Goldstein, Richard McGann, James C. Noschese, John Tague, Joe Wasserman

**Members Absent:** Aurelia Carter-Scott, Linda Dickerson, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman

**Others Present:** Adolphine Birescik, Amy Hart, Larry Hockenberry, Bingbing Hou, Elijah Hughes, Lawrence Johnson, Robert Kohlmeyer, Charles Morrison, Richard Meritzer, Teresa Nellans, Matt Pavlosky, Gerald Penna, Gary Reynolds, Lucy Spruill,

The meeting was called to order by Paul O'Hanlon at 1:00 PM.

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Review and approval of June Minutes**

Ms. Evans moved to accept the minutes. Mr. McGann seconded the motion. They were approved unanimously..

**Review and approval of financial report,**

Mr. Tague reported , there's not been a written financial report sent out. Our funding, which i've said a number of times comes through the human services development fund, which was initially eliminated in the governor's budget and some of it was restored and there was a thought that i think 85 percent of it was going to be restored, which led to an e-mail that i received from john from the human services, the budget for the task force and for disability was \$18,931. Subsequent to that, the hdfd funds were restored, but only two-thirds or a third of the funds were cut, which meant that the money for the task force and disability connections was being cut 23 percent. That means it was cut to \$15,144.

One of the things that happened in the meantime, there were funds that were also going to ucp class, and to certain programs that they have. And those were also cut. So if i understand this correctly, because there were a number of hands in the pot when i was up at edinboro last wednesday, thursday, and friday. There was a number, a conversation that went on, and what judy agreed to do was cut her funds and -- which means that she'll get less money, but additional funds for the task force that, leaves. The issue really is how much money remains. And initially i had a conversation with joyce at ucp about what i thought that there was going to be \$10,000 remaining for task force activity and for the disability connections. But then subsequently talking to jeff parker, he wasn't sure whether it was 10,000 or 9,000. The upshot is what judy agreed to do was accept \$1,000 plus her expenses for the cell phone that she gets as part of this. And there was some expenses from /aeulg 365 for interpret /ters, rather. So i estimated those costs to be around \$2,500. So if you take \$2,500 off of \$9,000, you have \$6,400 remaining, which means -- \$6,500 remaining, which means that we would have nine or ten meetings. Last year we had ten meetings, no august meeting or february meeting. There was some changes in cost for cart, significant changes to run a meeting, if we use full accessibility costs about \$640 a meeting. We're talking about nine or ten meetings that we would be able to conduct.

The report is that we have between \$7,500 and \$6,500. The question we have to decide is whether we reduce or number of meetings. And one of the things that i wanted to do last year and we didn't get around to it because we were tied up, was to have an annual meeting. We haven't had an annual meeting in two years or four years.

We needed brochures because we're out of brochures. Staff had gotten some estimates on that. What we were looking at was \$719 for 700 -- \$719 for 5,000 but that's not included in the budget. What's included in the budge set just services for accessibility. Ucp eliminated their fee that they normally get, which would be 10 percent of the budget. So whatever money remains is for accessibility. But that gives you an indication of what we're looking at as far as number of meetings that we can conduct. That doesn't include an annual meeting unless we decide to take one of the meetings and shift some of the money to that and have an annual meeting.

Ms. Evans said i think it's important to have an annual meeting. There are issues we need to get out, elections or whenever we need to do.

Mr. Mcgann stated you said about the cart cost. You said \$600. Now, that the cart service was that for the retreat or for the meetings here, that cost? Mr. Tague responded what i was talking about was \$640 was the average cost of a meeting if we had interpreters or cart or what i said for accessibility. What happened because of what staff did, we were paying \$400.

Mr. O'hanlon summarized so i gather that the dust hasn't exactly settled on kind of how this money shakes out from this year's allocation and we're right now working with rough estimates. So maybe if we could try to have a full report at our september meeting. We could probably have a better sense of where we stand.

Mr. Tague: asked do you want us to begin work from a budget standpoint for an annual meeting? Mr. O'Hanlon: answered well, i think that probably there's a shared sense that we should have an annual meeting. I don't know yet that any of us knows what that would look like yet since we haven't planned it. We don't have a theme or a subject yet or a location or any of that. So i think that -- why don't we include kind of like a place holder for that until we know exactly what we're doing for an annual meeting, it's going to go kind of hard to plan the expense of it.

Mr. Tague added we have obviously a meeting schedule set up. Last year we didn't meet in august but we're meeting in august. We're going to have to make a decision if there's some meetings that we don't do, so that we could first of all, do the annual meeting, if that's the case, or in which case, eliminate it. Mr. O'hanlon responded i guess my sense is that the report that i would request that you prepare for the next meeting lays out, what number of meetings we could in effect afford and we'll have to go from there in terms of scheduling. I realize that we're leaving you with making some guesstimates, but i this is sort of a dance. So, until we know exactly how much money we're working with, it's hard of us to plan. I know it's hard for you to plan without knowing how many meetings you're planning for. If you could work out the amount of money we're working with and how many meetings we could afford, i think we could kind of go from there. Mr. McGann asked is it possible that we could set up maybe a small committee, a subcommittee that would be able to work on that budget situation, and that way we can try to work on ideas for saving money that we might be able to outlay in the future. Mr. O'hanlon: responded this is all hot off the presses in terming of knowing what our allocation is going to be. We kind of know that, but it's still not really clear. But i think that you're right, we could probably do a huddle among a smaller group of us that work out some proposals and come to the task force to put that forth. Ms. Evans volunteered

She then moved to accept the treasures report. It was passed unanimously.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Air Port Accessibility**

Monica Jones, the ADA Compliance officer for the Airport was not there. Ms. Goldstein asked that it be moved back in the agenda.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **Hearing Loops**

Ms. Nellans presented a slide show on hearing loops (attached). She also provided handouts. There are 36 million people in the united states that have a hearing loss. There are 1.7 million in pennsylvania and there are over 400,000 in the southwest area or around pittsburgh. That number is growing because of aging, because of noise, and they don't know what the other reasons are. It's of the motion common conditions, present at birth there are two to three percent. 16 percent of school-aged children have hearing loss. One of five u.s. teens have hearing loss. It's the most common condition in people than 56. Almost all combat veterans from iraq and afghanistan have noise-induced hearing loss from eeds. Hearing loop provides access for individuals with hearing loss.

What is it? It's literally a copper wire that loops around a periphery of a loop, allowing a hearing aid or cochlear implant t-coil to function as an antenna directly linking the listener to the facility's sound system. The hearing loop functions to get people in the loop by providing access to help individuals with hearing loss, understand in hard to hear environments such as at a distance and background noise and poor acoustic environments. The picture is of a church and the presenter is at the pulpit and the presenter is miked. A magnetic field is generated in the loop driver present on the back wall. The sound travels around the room by way of a copper wire and that sends signal to the individual's hearing aid or cochlear implant. What is a t-coil. That's an /opt in most hearing aids and it's built into most cochlear implant processors. A t-coil is used to receive the magnetic signal transmitted. The signal is then processed by the hearing aid or implant and passed to the auditory nerve for sound. The sound is heard by the individual already corrected by the hearing aid to match the wearer's hearing needs. But if you don't have a t-coil, consistent with the American with Disabilities Act, you can get a list of hearing loop devices that's available with loop places.

The issue is ambient noise. And this is a picture that will show arrows where the noise comes from. Somebody's talking, people are walking so there's footsteps. Children could be coughing. And the reverberation from direct sounds that goes from walls and ceilings and then comes back. That's called an echo, and this can be measured. The measurement is probably 1.5 to 2.5 seconds. Reverberation or echos are less where you have carpets and higher when you have reflective surfaces such as windows and metals. Speech recognition is better when you have less reverberation. You can use neck loops to listen to the television, cell phone and personal fm systems and also to pp 3 players. Can you use them with computers, with tvs, with alarm systems.

There's a symbol that is put on the wall or on a stand of a slash through an ear and it has a t on it. That means that you're to turn on your t coil because there's a hearing loop. The new standards say there has to be a map on the wall saying what area of the room is covered. Where do you find the loops? In the Heathrow airport in all concourses and in the Michigan airport, you find it looped. Taxicabs in New York and almost all taxicabs in London have loops installed. In London, all the tube windows and customer information points in the tube are looped. New York City is in the process of installing loops in a large portion of their subway information booth. The Michigan State University /stupa has been **looped**. **A lot of places for worship are looped, meeting rooms and checkout counters, you can get a small portable loop that's just 11 by 11 on a stand. And when you register at a hotel or want to pay at the pharmacy then you could put on your t-coil and hear better.**

**I attended the second international hearing loop conference, which was attended by about 11 countries, in June. And the slides and videos -- the videos aren't there yet but slides from this conference are available. I'm going to tell you which speakers were the best. Well, I might make a mistake. You want to go to the web site & then you look for the date and the time. Looping the London tube has 29 slides, but they go into detail on the problems they encountered and how they did it. It's the largest**

metro in the world with 1 billion passengers. Galster talked about present and future wireless hearing technology. One of the arguments, there's wireless or blue tooth, but it won't really work as well as have the-coils and the t-coil will be the standard for over ten years. With blue tooth you always need another device to transmit. With wireless radio, you can have a number of hearing aid manufacturers and they all pick a different frequency so it's not universal. You can go from the airport in the united states to london to belgium and use your t-coil. Another presenter was the head of the Audiology Association Academy Of Audiology that was presented by the Hearing Arts Association. Consumer advocacy was done by David Mires and he points out how 11,500 post offices in england all have loops. So some of the places you can get assistance are at [audiology.org](http://audiology.org), [hearingloop.org](http://hearingloop.org) or [hearingloss.org](http://hearingloss.org). And I put the telecoil brochure for the most frequently asked questions and a copy of my presentation is on the back table.

Mr Tagus asked how does the expense work? How expensive is it? Does it depend on the size of the loop? How does that work? Ms. Nellans responded yes. For example, the Michigan Stadium costs thousands and thousands of dollars because they had put in three loops. A hundred thousand people are going in there. It's gigantic. If you get one for a small group, such as around this table, then it probably only costs about \$400. The loop in our room at Depaul there the Hearing Loss Association meets, is an expensive amp fire and that costs the most, around \$800. The wire itself was inexpensive. What they're saying is you don't have to and people like just pressing the button on their hearing aid, so you don't have to get more battery. You don't have to sanitize your receivers. You don't have to keep them on hand. So in the long run, they're saying that it's cheaper than some of the other means. I don't recommend it for some of the music things such as Heinz Hall where music covers more frequencies so you get better fidelity in Heinz Hall with the system they have, which us infrared. There are other devices which I provided you in the handout. I don't want to say that loops do everything. The airport is one of the primary places that I would argue for because people are coming and going. There's no way they're going to pick up a device and drop it off then they got on the plane. It's advantageous in places like that.

Mr. Mcgann asked who are the people that did not follow the ada policies, who were those people, like businesses or is that what you meant that some of the businesses didn't accept or follow that system? Ms. Nellans responded i don't remember exactly mentioning the american with disabilities act, however, hearing loops and t-coils are one of the accommodations mentioned in the ada. They just haven't been popular in the united states whereas they have been popular in other countries. Mr. Mcgann continued i have a question for lucy, if i could. Do you remember at the riverside center when they talked about march 15th, 2011 that all of the judges had to follow the ada? Ms. Spruill responded i don't remember that being said at that training. It may have been. That's not what i remember. What i remember about march 15th is new guidelines for recreation and outdoor spaces, swimming pools, and that sort of thing that hadn't previously had standards before, but i don't remember anything that was said about judges.

Larry Hockenberry said and I was reading about deaf culture. But I want to ask you, did you study anything about deaf culture? Ms. Nellans responded yes, I've probably read about 25 books, and I worked with people who come from deaf cultures for about 20 years, but I myself am not from deaf culture. I lost my hearing after I learned to speak and after I was in school. Mr. Hockenberry continued but I want to ask you -- I wanted to ask you if you just focuses on hearing and speaking, if it said that parents who have children and don't know what to do with a deaf child, they go to a hearing specialist. And a hearing specialist said says to them, well, I think it would be best for your child to receive a cochlear implant because that would help to "fix" the problem or cure it, but that's not the perspective, because you cannot really restore hearing loss to a deaf person. They're selling these items out of greed. They're selling this kind of solution because of the money involved, and that needs to come to a stop. So who are they to say that sign language is no good? Who are they that it's only for people? Who are those professionals to say that? That should be illegal. But in the hospitals, what they say to the parents, has nothing to do -- they should have nothing to say about whether the parents choose a cochlear implant, a hearing aid or sign language. That should be a parental choice. Ms. Nellans replied I understand you have an opinion on this. In fact, I think I read it from the minutes of one of the task force meetings. However, my presentation is about hearing loops and it's very specific. So I think this is something that sometimes I chat about with people, but I don't want to get into it right now.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked are there locations in Pittsburgh or Allegheny County which would be on your sort of top five lists of places that should be looped that aren't currently looped? Ms. Nellans answered the airport is number one. Number two, probably places where people get together to talk.

It's not so much music, because I think the fidelity formal spectrum. I think this is something that I've been talking to people about it. We always know that our airport is our first priority. Mr. O'Hanlon added I guess one of the things I would point out as being a person that doesn't use or depend on hearing loops, I wouldn't know whether a room is looped or not. So you know, there might be places that I would think, oh, this is obviously a place that should be looped. I would have no way of really knowing if it's looped at the moment. You know? So, you know, to some extent, we would need, you know, you and kind of hearing loss community to inform us of those places because it's a little about it hard to know whether a place is looped right now or not. Ms. Nellans responded I don't think any places are looped right now, so you don't need to.

Ms. Spruill asked if a room is looped, does -- is it still beneficial to provide cart as well? In other words, can people with severe hearing loss get all of the information they need through the loop, if they have a t-coil or an assisted listening device be, or is it still advisable to provide cart? Ms. Nellans replied that's a good question. You're still need captioning for those people who have a profound loss. Although they may get some vowels through the t-coil, where a room is looped, use the loop and I can get an idea of what's going on, and then I also need cart. That's two

percent of the people with hearing loss. So there are many more that don't need cart or need interpreters. But still need interpreters or cart for those who have a profound hearing loss or are deaf.

Ms. Evans added that was a very good presentation. I never heard of the hearing loop, but it could be an answer to seniors who go to seniors' centers or who live in a high-rise. Now, my question is, how would you go about getting something like this, like for a community room? Like a room like this? Ms. Nellans answered we have a lot of work to do and this is the first step.

**WE HAVE TO FIND A GOOD AUDIO FIRM IN PITTSBURGH.**

**I HAVE THE LIST OF MANUFACTURERS, FROM THE**

**CONFERENCE, BUT YOU NEED GOOD AUDIO FIRMS THAT**

**NEED TO BE TRAINED.**

**BECAUSE A LOT OF MISTAKES HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE**

**PAST.**

**I DON'T KNOW WHO THOSE ARE.**

**SO WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO.**

**MS. EVANS: CAN YOU E-MAIL ME**

**THAT LIST?**

**I'D LIKE TO HAVE IT FOR MY RECORDS.**

**I HAVE SO MUCH INFORMATION ON EVERYTHING ELSE.**

**AND YOU CAN FIND MY E-MAIL WHEN YOU RECEIVE IT**

**FROM RICHARD.**

**MS. NELLANS: I CAN E-MAIL YOU  
AND GIVE YOU THE WEB SITE /TKHA LIST VENDORS.**

**MS. EVANS: THANK YOU.**

**>> JUST ANOTHER QUICK QUESTION.  
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THESE AUDIO FIRMS NEED  
TRAINING IN INSTALLATION?  
IN PROPER INSTALLATION?  
YES.  
OKAY.**

**MS. NELLANS: RICHARD HAS ONE**

**MORE.**

**MR. MCGANN: WONDERFUL,  
WONDERFUL.  
IT'S SO IMPORTANT, YOU KNOW, TO IMPROVE  
TECHNOLOGY.  
YOU KNOW, FOR EXAMPLE, PAUL, YOU KNOW, JOE, COULD  
EXPERIENCE HEARING LOSS AND THEN, YOU KNOW, WITH  
THAT SPECIAL, YOU KNOW, HEARING AID COULD MAKE  
IMPROVEMENTS ONLE TELEPHONE.  
YOU KNOW, IF THERE ISN'T REALLY THAT IMPROVEMENT,  
YOU ARE STUCK WITH JUST USING CART.  
IT'S IMPORTANT FOR THE FUTURE TO GET THAT  
IMPROVEMENT IN TECHNOLOGY.  
YOU KNOW, I'VE SEEN, YOU KNOW, MANY MILITARY THAT**

**COME HOME FROM THE WAR AND THEMSELVES ARE DEAF.  
THEY DON'T KNOW SIGN LANGUAGE.  
SO IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO ENCOURAGE THOSE  
IMPROVEMENTS AND ENCOURAGE THAT, YOU KNOW,  
IMPROVED DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY SO THAT WE  
COULD BE MORE PREPARED FOR THE FUTURE.  
YOU KNOW, ONCE YOU'VE GOTTEN THOSE HEARING AIDS  
AND SUCH AND YOU CAN IT IMPROVES PEOPLE'S AD  
CONSTITUTES AS WELL.  
THANK YOU VERY MUCH, TERESA.**

**MS. NELLANS: THANK /UL, RICHARD,  
FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**

#### **STAFF REPORTS**

Mr. Meritzer reported that his Hospital Compliance project intern is gone for personal reasons. Ms. Shirley Shi will finish her summer internship in ADA office soon and will transfer to Transportation Group of Department of City Planning. High School Student interns will leave before the next meeting. The good news is Mr. Elijah Hughes will continue to another term, doing building accessibility. He has number of applicants in the fall. Ms. Bingbing Hou will stay for a little longer.

Since last meeting, Mr. Meritzer reported, they have done a couple of building surveys. They have met with ACHIEVEA and UPMC to start the discussion about the next hospital compliance manual for the intellectually and developmentally disabled. They are starting the work on that.

Ms. Shirley Shi has been attending all of the special events committee meeting and making sure the events are accessible as they can be.

Mr. Meritzer will go out to do a roll through of downtown for accessibility for the 2011 Wheelchair Games. They are going to all the places of games to make sure there are not any barriers.

Mr. Meritzer is going to interview all the interns for the fall term in next week.

They have been an increasing number of issues about trees and sidewalks that are making the sidewalks too narrow. They are meeting with Forestry, Public Works and a variety of other staff people in the City to figure out how to make sure that sidewalks remain accessible when the trees grow too big.

Mr. Meritzer urged everyone to attend Wheelchair Games and schedules were sent out yesterday.

Ms. Shirley Shi reported on there will be two guests in next Task Force meeting concerning Airport Project. One is Pittsburgh International Airport ADA coordinator and another is from Homeland Security. About Accessible PGH, the next two shows are in the process of determining the topic and guest. Basically, one show will be on Discrimination in Housing because of disability. Another show is about the police's training of how to communicate with people with disabilities.

Ms. Bingbing Hou reported that the Beach View Lion's Club support audible traffic signal project and she will set up a meeting as soon as possible.

Mr. Dennis Briggs reported on Comprehensive Plan. There is an event where they have to go to set up different booths. It's a competition of who has the best brunch type of thing. They have been coming up for different ideas. There is African-American Arts Group coming up. He will ask his brother's group and see if they can do it.

Mr. Quaishawn Whitlock reported on building surveys. He went out to a couple buildings throughout the South Side. Some of the senior centers and other buildings are not accessible at all.

Dr. Seelman asked if this has been introduced to the head of area agency on aging. She suggested they should do it.

Mr. Meritzer went over the last strategic planning committee meeting. The committee will start to put the redacted minutes on the website so that they will be publicly viewed. Secondly, they put up the ideas of next two shows of Accessible PGH. One show will be on Discrimination in Housing because of disability. Another show is about the police's training of how to communicate with people with disability. The next meeting will be in three months.

Mr. Wasserman asked if the City's 10 percent fund is still included in addition to Lion's club's funding. Mr. Meritzer said they hope it will be included in the ten percent a year so that they will reach their goal in ten years. While the City agreed in principle to do ten

percent each year, they still have to find the funding each year so that it will be easier to reach their goal.

Mr. Noschese commented about training in police department of how to communication with people with disabilities. He thought it was very important and has ever written a letter to the chief of police to explain the situation and needs of people with disabilities.

### **VOX POP**

Ms. Dianne Gallagher from Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services talked about the police training. There were two short training, Devin from OVR and some other people worked together with it. They did the interpretation of it. They did it already two times.

Ms. Nellans raised two items. One is about hearing loops, a universal assistive listening system that are popular in Europe and England and will work for probably over the next ten years. She wanted 10 minutes to present it in next Task Force Meeting. Secondly, she commented that the workshop about accessibility to public art is costly and nobody is involved to inform them the accessibility system in Pittsburgh Public Art.

Mr. Meritzer will contact FISA to give them this feedback.

Mr. McGann commented about the visible disability and invisible disability. Usually, people with deaf or hard of hearing are hard to be identified.

Ms. Baricella asked about the big plan in Market Square. Mr. Meritzer responded that he was not involved in until the plan is complete. He tried to fix the problem during the construction but it still remains a lot of problems. Ms. Baricella also asked the update of sandwich boards on the sidewalks. Mr. Meritzer said the sandwich boards are not legal anywhere. However, the City is not about to remove them. The position he is taking is that if they are in the way, they should be removed. Therefore he has actually physically moved a number of them. The Council and Mayor are both know about it. Somebody has to produce some legislation.

Mr. Noschese raised the time limitation of parking meter for people with disabilities. He thought one hour is not enough for them. Ms. Baricella responded to it and said if someone has a handicapped plate, and he will get an hour extra at a meter without paying.

Mr. McGann said he tried to call 311 to inform them about a problem with a car parking in a handicapped spot.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING**

**DATE:** August 15, 2011

**TIME:** 1:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:** Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street