

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
FEBRUARY 19, 2007  
MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Aurelia Carter, Janet Evans, , Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, Paul O’Hanlon, John Tague

**Members Absent:** Linda Dickerson

**Others Present:** Elizabeth Brown, Ed Buran, Tina Calabro, Alysha Carroll, Mary Figlar, Amy Hart, Larry D. Hockenberry, Amanda Lapina, Danielle Lengle, Denise McArthur-Turner, Richard Meritzer, Charles Morrison, Teresa Nellans, Dana Phillips, Kenneth Puckett, Terry Reynolds, David Rosenblatt, Paula Lackore Rule

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:06 PM.

**Introductions:**

Everyone introduced themselves.

**Approval of the January 2006 Minutes:**

Teresa Nellans corrected page 3 of the minutes to say “There are 13 chapters in Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania is one of 12 states that have state Hearing Loss Association Offices.” Ms. Evans moved TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED. Mr. Parker seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Financial Report:**

Mr. Parker passed out copies of the report. The budget was adjusted to include spending for CART. The Task Force has spent \$5,496.71 through the end of January. Mr. O’Hanlon moved to ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT. Mr. McGann seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. Parker announced that Gene Barton, a member of the Task Force, passed away in January.

**Information About the Availability of Presentation on Disability Rights:**

Tina Calabro reported that this is a power point presentation that lasts 1 hour. People do not know the history leading up to the Americans with Disabilities Act. Her email to set up a presentation is tina.calabro@verizon.net.

Mr. O'Hanlon added that the archival photographs Ms. Calabro came up with are amazing. Ms. Goldstein suggested that they write a paragraph on the presentation on the cover page / hand out. It's a wonderful thing but with that descriptive information they could present this program more often. Mr. McGann said it sounds interesting. He asked if he could get it as an email. Is this before the ADA Law was approved? Ms. Calabro responded that the presentation starts in the late 1700s. She will send the presentation to Mr. Meritzer and he can send it out. Mr. O'Hanlon added that every problem has been a solution to an earlier problem. This goes far enough back to show this.

Ms. Calabro pointed out that they are the first local people to do a presentation like this. The audience they are looking for are people that do not know this history, such as elected officials and students. From this people can talk about voting rights and housing rights. Mr. Parker suggested we take this information back to our agencies. Ms. Goldstein added the more they give the presentation, the better they will get at presenting. Ms. Evans suggested they contact TRCIL. Mr. Tague pointed out that David Engle was here to discuss setting up something with the 16 new state legislators. That will be happening in March. Dr. Seelman suggested we could put in on an automatic loop and run it as a background show. Ms. Calabro wants to make sure that everyone is credited. Ms. Brown said the Heinz School does convocation every Wednesday. She volunteered to be the liaison for this.

#### **Director of Hearing and Deaf Services:**

Mr. Parker introduced Amy Hart, the new Director of Hearing and Deaf Services by saying he goggled her name and the first thing that came up was the November Task Force minutes. At that meeting Mr. McGann suggested we invite her to speak.

Ms. Hart reported that she has been on the job 3 ½ months. The Center for Hearing and Deaf Services is the only non-profit agency for the deaf and hard of hearing communities. They provide interpreters, behavioral health services, life skill training and services to deaf youth. They provide comprehensive services. They are working with a group, including Mr. McGann, to set up a program for people who are blind / deaf. She has also worked on issues with the County Jail.

Ms. Healy asked where they were located. Ms. Hart responded they have two locations, Greensburg and 1945 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Pittsburgh. Dr. Seelman asked what their ability was to send information out to the deaf and hard of hearing communities. Ms. Hart said they use deaf events and their web page. They are trying to work with the hearing loss community. They are looking at all sorts of ways to communicate.

Ms. Cater asked what is the age range they provide services to. Ms. Hart answered any age, but they do not service that many children. Dr. Seelman asked if they get questions from the aging hard of hearing population. They are involved in a hearing loss program that goes to senior centers and schools. Their audiologist dispenses free hearing aids and they distribute TTYs. Ms. Goldstein suggested she dialog with Allegheny East. Ms. Goldstein said she was trying to get the hospitals to be more user friendly for the deaf community. The issue is people going into the hospitals can't get interpreters. McGann added he understands what Ms. Goldstein is talking about and what Dr. Seelman is wondering. Previously Marlene Roberts was Executive Director. She set up a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Committee. The next Executive Director did nothing. Now Ms. Hart is working with them again.

The Psychiatrist working with them is Dr. Kim Mathos. All the therapists they work with are fluent in sign language. This helps to get the participants' services met. Mr. O'Hanlon said that the League of Young Voters has a transit Event and they asked if there are free or below cost interpreters. Ms. Hart responded it is against the Code to provide free interpreters. They will work with groups on pricing. Mr. McGann pointed out that Dianne Gallagher is in charge of interpreter services. Mr. Hockenberry added that there is not TTY accessibility in hospitals. He visited a friend in Presbyterian Hospital and could not make a TTY call from the emergency room. Mr. Parker pointed out we have had this issue brought before us and we should be working with the hospitals.

### **Allegheny Corrections' Response to Concerns About Inmates With Hearing Disabilities:**

Mr. McGann reported on the situation since he, Mr. Puckett and Mr. Hockenberry met with the Warden. Communications need to be improved in the Jail. A friend of his who was educationally limited was arrested. Staff was misinformed about him. The problem is the law. If he could have gotten a good lawyer it would have helped. It is important for deaf people to have use of the TTY. Prisoners can not use it and they get stressed out and are often hospitalized or sent to Mayview. There should be a social worker to work with the Jail and Dr. Mathos.

Mr. Puckett added that Mr. McGann explained what is going on. He went to a meeting which Mr. McGann and Dr. Seelman also attended. Half the people at this meeting were vendors. After waiting two months for the next meeting, he contacted the Warden. A deaf person with serious mental issues was in jail for two months before he heard. Nothing is changing in the Allegheny County Jail. Last Friday he received an email to come to a meeting and they will be doing a contract for interpreters. The Warden's Secretary was sent a list of people who should be contacted. He received no response. It's been awkward. He will get a contract together that is a good short term solution. The communication has not been there.

Dana M. Phillips, Chief Operating Officer of the Allegheny Correctional Health Services, Inc. added there are so many different players and who can say what to whom. First when you get arrested you are in holding. Then you go to the magistrate. This could take several hours until you are processed into the jail. Then you have access to a TTY. Often the deaf individual goes to Court where there is no interpreter. There are now calls for the Court administrator to have them redo the hearings. There are new large signs as to how to access interpreter services. Often severely hard of hearing people do not what interpreters because they are embarrassed. There was a deaf person who wanted to use the Pennsylvania Relay Service but they don't take collect calls. Prisoners phones are all set up to make collect calls. They can use an office phone by appointment. They have installed 6 phones with TTYs on each security level. But there are so many different entities.

Dr. Seelman asked Ms. Phillips if she was developing a plan in the jail for problem solving such as bringing in a State Trainer. Ms. Phillips responded that Allegheny Correctional Health Services has an interpreter contract. They can't spend money for Jail services. Dr. Seelman went on to ask what we can do about multiple linkage individuals. Ms. Phillips responded that it is complicated by mental health issues. They can not call the family. They notify the service unit. Dr. Seelman continued if we did not have mental health issues would we not have a multiple linkage problem? Ms. Phillips responded there would still be multiple linkage issues. We are developing education plans particularly for the Hard of Hearing community. Training for correctional officers is long and expensive. The Jail must pay overtime for training.

Ms. Goldstein pointed out that if there is abuse the abused person can not do the interpreting. They need to have good interpreters. Mr. Henderson said we need to find out who the players are and what the rules are. We may be creating more problems. Mr. Parker asked Ms. Phillips to get the Task Force such a list.

Mr. McGann thanked Ms. Phillips for coming to the meeting. He said he received an email from Joanne Lengle that SLIP has a contract with the Jail. He asked if they served any deaf people before they were transferred to Mayview. Danielle Lengle said the contract is new. There is a new law, Act 172, regarding certified legal interpreters. Under Act 57 all interpreters must be certified and adhere to a Code of ethics. Carol Horowitz wants to talk to the District Attorney's and Public Defender's office.

Mr. O'Hanlon thanked Mr. Puckett and Ms. Phillips for coming to the meeting. They are dealing with new problems not old problems. When Ms. Phillips listed the players they are all County agencies. We need to kick this high enough to get to someone with overall responsibility. Mr. Hockenberry asked if the County Jail had an ADA coordinator. Ms. Phillips said Allegheny Health does but she does not know about the Jail. She did an inventory of signs and is getting the missing and defaced signs replaced. She is looking at how to get the TTYs available. Initially they would put all the deaf people in one unit on the mental health floor. Mr. Puckett said some issues are internal to the jail system. He agrees we should take this to the County Executive. Mr. Puckett said he was there to provide resources. Ms. Phillips suggested that Judge Donna Jo McDaniel, the head of the Prison Board, convene a meeting. Dr. Seelman asked if Judge McDaniel will come to a Task Force meeting. Ms. Phillips said she would ask her and get back to Mr. Meritzer.

#### **Task Force Brochure:**

Ms. Healy handed out a rough draft of the brochure. She talked to David Steidle. He said he could design it for \$100. The text still needs to be completed. It should be inclusive of the wide arrays of disability communities we serve and the successful projects and issues we have been working on. Mr. Meritzer will submit the section on Community Events. We can include both accomplishments and challenges on the same issue.

Ms. Lengle suggested we sum the work up in one word - accessibility. Mr. Henderson wanted to include affordable housing. Dr. Seelman said the work is a step on the way to inclusion. We need to recognize who we are. Mr. Meritzer suggested the Web Site be included and put everything in the brochure on the web site. Mr. McGann added we need to stress events need to be more accessible.

#### **Governor's Budget and Cabinet for Persons with Disabilities:**

Mr. Tague reported that there were positive elements in the Governor's Budget. They increase Mental Retardation funding to eliminate the backlog. There is a movement for more money in home based care programs. But there was no increase for rural transportation. The Shared Ride program should be statewide. They reduced the funding for centers for independent living and for assistive technologies. Currently Adult Basic care does not include mental health care, but the Governor is recommending including it. Transportation is important. There are three options for dedicated sources of funding. There is no additional money in the budget for Transportation.

He went on to report the Cabinet for People with disabilities is made of high level state officials. Evelyn Stypula and Mr. Tague are talking with Secretary Richardson about staffing.

Ms. Carter asked what the qualifications were for the Executive Director. Mr. Tague said they could not tell Secretary Richardson who to hire, but they have made it clear they want it to be a consumer. Ms. Carter then asked if the Western Region will be included in the Advisory Committee. Mr. Tague responded that he will bring this up to Secretary Richardson. Dr. Seelman pointed out that this agency was created by Executive Order. We need to prepare for it to continue under the next Governor.

### **Task Force Work:**

Mr. Parker related that Judy Barricella could not make this meeting but had three issues she wished to present to the Task Force. She would like suggestions on how to deal with them.

- Emergency Services comes to the house and a family member wishing to accompany the patient is in a wheel chair.
- The person being taken to the hospital is the care giver to the person left behind.
- Someone downtown in a wheel chair is taken to the hospital. What should be done with the wheelchair?

Dr. Seelman said she hopes Ms. Barricella comes to the next meeting. We should put this on the agenda.

### **Meeting Scheduling:**

Mr. Parker reported that in the past we have advanced the monthly meeting to the next week when the third Monday was a holiday and the building was closed. Today is a holiday, but the building is open.

Dr. Seelman suggested we look at the calendar at the beginning of the year and move any meetings that fall on holidays to the next Monday. Mr. Tague said we have a process but not a procedure. Mr. Meritzer said if we are going to move the meeting we all need to be proactive in communicating that to the community. Every year he gets calls or emails about the meeting that is changed because of Martin Luther King Day. Mr. McGann asked what if there is an emergency situation the day of the meeting. Mr. Henderson responded that if the City is closed we will reschedule for the next Monday. Mr. Parker asked if March 19<sup>th</sup> is O. K. Everyone agreed.

**Nominating Committee:**

Mr. Parker reported we have two vacant slots on the Task Force. The last two appointments were Ms. Evans appointed by the Mayor and Ms. Goldstein who was appointed by the County Executive.

Dr. Seelman said we should take into account the communities not represented. The Nominating Committee is Ms. Carter, Ms. Healy, Dr. Seelman and Mr. Tague.

**Vox Pop:**

It was decided that we would follow up on the conversation regarding CDBR at the next meeting.

Dr. Seelman announced that the Thornburg Lecture has been cancelled. She will let everyone know about the new date.

Mr. O'Hanlon brought up the transportation funding issue. Who will be affected by the proposed transit cuts? We could organize something. Do we want to sponsor or cosponsor an event? Dr. Seelman said we should support something. Mr. Parker pointed out the public hearings were just completed. The cuts will start July 1<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Seelman said we need a strategy. Mr. O'Hanlon added he talked to the decision makers. They are all throwing the problem to ACCESS. Only 2% of the residents are registered with ACCESS. There is no plan. People with disabilities have no options. Mr. Henderson pointed out that when they started to require two tickets for each trip, they told people to take the bus. That slowed down the system. We need to get more support and attention. Dr. Seelman moved TO SUPPORT AN ACTION SET UP BY A SMALL GROUP ON THIS ISSUE. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

Ms. Evans moved that the meeting be adjourned. The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:**

DATE: March 19, 2007  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219