

CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
February 22, 2010
MINUTES

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

Members Present: Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Aurelia Carter, Janet Evans, Rich McGann, Jeff Parker, John Tague

Members Absent: Linda Dickerson, Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, James C. Noschese, Katherine D. Seelman

Others Present: Adolphine Birescik, Stephanie Boczar, Holly Dick, Dianne Gallagher, Chuck Keenan, James Kindler, Danielle Lengle, Lisa Mendler, Richard Meritzer, Charles Morrison, Teresa Nellans, Gerald Penna, Tamara Siegert, Sally Jo Snyder, Joseph Wassermann

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O'Hanlon at 1:05 PM.

INTRODUCTIONS:

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY'S MINUTES:

Ms. Evans motioned to accept the minutes.

Mr. McGann seconded.

All in favor.

FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Tague reports that the State cut 13% for HSDF. The County said it would cover the cost. There is another 13% proposed cut. The county has now decided all 28% would be passed along. How much money is left for the rest of year? Analysis based on: changed rate of fiscal age. It can charge no more than 10%. Took all expenses we have paid except Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services. There is \$100.00 for support of the ADA celebration. \$3900.89 is about enough money to conduct three or four meetings. It takes on average \$1100 a meeting for 2 interpreters and closed captioning. There are five meetings left. It would cost \$1300 to \$1500 dollars more to conduct the May and June meetings.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Because of cutbacks in funds from HSDF, we are scrambling to cover expenses. We should ask Judy for any leftover money. Get back to the Task Force at the next meeting.

Mr. Tague: Last August, we did not have a Task Force meeting. Half of September 2009 was paid for by City Planning. More cuts are expected. We could start next fiscal year in the hole.

Mr. Parker has a good contact with the County. They are aware of the Task Force and its budget. Keep reinforcing contact with information and discussions. The person implied the cuts would be the same next year.

Mr. Meritzer clarified: I requested money but a bulk of money. Any request from the Task Force needs to be requested from that bulk sum. The Director and Assistant Director are very supportive. However, there are two things to be aware of:

1. Other people want that same money so we need to ask before it is gone.
2. When the Task Force was set up, the County was to fund and the City to staff.

I hope that all avenues for money from the County are exhausted before the Task Force asks for money for a Task Force meeting.

John: We are going to develop process for that.

FOLLOW UP: Snow Removal from Sidewalks - Paul O'Hanlon

Mr. O'Hanlon explains that last meeting the issue of snow removal was discussed. He is frustrated that some neighbors do not shovel snow. During last month's meeting the Operations manager explained a policy of only citing business but not residences. We want them to enforce the law. We need sidewalks to be cleaned. We got a coerced agreement from him but were later asked to submit a letter of justification for a change in policy. The letter is attached to the agenda. In it, the case is made for why the law should be enforced for businesses, transit, and people getting out of the house, including exceptions. Mr. O'Hanlon provided these analogies: with handicapped parking spots, people will use them unless there is some sort of enforcement. During street cleaning when handicapped people cannot move their car across the street, there is an exception. We make accommodations so it should be enforced against all property owners allowing exceptions for the aging and handicapped. Mr. O'Hanlon proposed to send out the letter with Dr. Seelman's amendments (which were not included in the document at the meeting).

Mr. Tague seconded.

Discussion about letter?

Mr. McGann: proceed

Ms. Carter wants to make sure that those who cannot clean up sidewalks are not affected. She has neighbors who are unable to and would not be able to shovel.

Mr. McGann: It is a communication situation. If there is a neighbor that cannot do it, I would be more than willing to help.

Mr. Wasserman: How many people is the letter going to?

Mr. O'Hanlon: Rob Kaczorowski, Director of Public Works

Mr. Tague: The issue is in municipalities as well and we are just addressing the city. Are there solutions? How do you selectively go after people? It would be very difficult. How would you know that someone can't shovel their walk?

Mr. O'Hanlon: I notice residences with impeccable driveways, and icy and snowy sidewalks. This is a sign that they are able to shovel. Years ago, Lucy, maybe UCP, could do snow removal for seniors in the Oakland area. Since there is no demand, there has been no response from nonprofits and religious entities. There is a cascade effect where we have become uncivilized about snow removal. We do not want to cite people who cannot shovel. There are good analogies like street cleaning.

Mr. Meritzer found out during the latest snowstorm that you can fill out a form if you cannot take garbage to the back alley, and can then put it in the front. He does not see why Public Works could not develop a form for this. Public Works does a good job keeping files.

Mr. McGann lives on the border of Brookline and Mt. Lebanon. Mt Lebanon dumps snow into his property.

Mr. Kindler: Before people are fined, they get two warnings?

Mr. O'Hanlon: City policy is if they get a complaint about a block, they will send a notice to all the residents of that block. We can encourage people to call in.

Ms. Carter asked about city owned property, if it is not shoveled, then what? In the past we talked about forming a subcommittee to work with the City. Is there still an option to do so?

Mr. O'Hanlon explained that he did not recall that but who would we work with?

Ms. Carter: In some point in time, there was some identified person.

Mr. Parker clarified that Guy Costa did appoint someone.

Ms. Carter said that she was supposed to be a co-chair of that committee but never heard who was appointed.

Mr. Parker: we can go back and see but a lot of the players are not involved.

Mr. Meritzer: I hope that the Public Works representative on the ADA strategic planning committee, Rob, and me would be involved.

Mr. O'Hanlon: We are scheduled now for Wendy Urbanic.
Moves to table discussion till after Ms. Urbanic's discussion.

Wendy Urbanic joins the table

PRESENTATION – Mayor's 311 Response Center Wendy Urbanic

Mr. O'Hanlon: I know there is going to be a lot of snow issues, but we are interested in hearing about the 311 call center and how it works. You were invited as a suggestion by Richard Meritzer. People talk about how you get in touch with the City to do this or that. Call 311. Educate us about what you do, and how do you use it. Walk us through when a call comes in. I have a sense that 311 is a system that the city looks at for data and statistics for planning. It would be better if we knew more.

Ms. Urbanic: There are different fallacies about what we do. 311 started in 2006 and it took over the old mayor's service center. The Grand opening was in October 2006. There are two types of calls. 1. Information about an entity, like what department deals with certain information. 2. Service requests: tree pruning, road salted, vacant property inspected. Any city department that you need a follow up for, you will get an assigned service number. We will send the request out and get a response back. We process quite a few requests. During the last snowstorm the staff doubled to 24/7. Emergency Operation Centers and the National Guard were helping out during the snowstorm. We were concerned about: 1. if people needed to get out of their houses for chemotherapy or dialysis, 2. if people were without medicines that they needed 3. If people were without heat and getting them to a warming center. The National Guard was

able to get to them. It was an intimidating experience because normally we deal with non-emergency city services. The call volume went through the roof. City volunteers were helping us who did not have experience. Everything went smoothly, and we handled the calls. Most 311 centers have an emergency backup, but we are hoping that this event will bring that to fruition. Its popularity, call volume, electronic correspondence is harder to keep up with it.

Environmental services: TOTE forms are signed by a doctor, which say that a resident is unable to take the trash out.

Sidewalks – Last year, the city cited less than a dozen people for snow removal on sidewalks. There are six inspectors and are currently down one inspector. They have a lot on their plate. They understand the importance but do not always get to it. I understand it is a huge problem, but I do not know how much the City can help. During the last snowstorm, the Council Office got together a group to shovel sidewalks. Emergency Operation Centers and the Fire Department also helped for awhile. With Act 47, the City lost 25% of its workforce. ACT47 = financial recovery plan, had to cut back expenses. I can see the impact. Nothing that frustrates me more than those who are able who do not shovel sidewalks. For a citation to be issued, it has to go to housing court. It can be a drawn out process.

Ms. Evans: You helped me with the Arts Festival and they did get their act together. I know some people have called 311 because our caretakers were unable to come during the snowstorm.

Ms. Urbanic: Everyone became disabled in this snowstorm. From our position, it is hard to determine who is being legitimate.

Ms. Evans: The secondary streets were not plowed and buses would not go so my caretakers could not come.

Ms. Urbanic: It is scary to hear those calls. Public Works and safety officials see the places where they went wrong

Ms. Evans – I am glad the Housing Authority had the National Guard come up.

Mr. McGann: When you said it started in 2006, where is TTY? I dialed on Friday and I called and waited and waited.

Ms. Urbanic: We do have TTY. I will look into it. Thanks for bringing it to my attention.

Mr. Tague: What is staffing like normally?

Ms. Urbanic: Three full-time and four part-time. During the snow emergency, we got it up to 15 phone lines.

Mr. Tague: If some are calls asking for shoveling, do you have resources? You mentioned one of the council districts having a list of volunteers. If I needed someone to shovel my walk, could I contact you?

Ms. Urbanic: We do not give out contacts due to liability. When we started, we would do whatever. The shoveling thing was thrown together at the last minute by a Councilwoman and we were glad to participate. We do refer folks to social service. We would like to get to the point where we could do more.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Who was the Councilwoman?

Ms. Urbanic: Councilwoman Smith

Ms. Evans: The Port Authority and the City do not have a good communication line. The buses still were not coming up once the streets were clear.

Ms. Urbanic: The Port Authority should have a government liaison. If I need something from the Port Authority, I have a good rapport with them.

Ms. Evans: The Port authority website updates slowly.

Ms. Urbanic: Thank you for letting me know.

Mr. McGann: Thank you, I wanted to ask Gerald Penna, I was curious, some deaf and hard of hearing use a video phone, is it possible to use on TTY or a video phone?

Ms. Urbanic: It is something we could ask for, and is worth asking for.

Mr. McGann: How will I know when you are ready?

Ms. Urbanic: Email me. I will leave my card. I will make sure it makes my attention.

Ms. Carter: Could this TOTE form be adapted for a snow removal?

Ms. Urbanic: Contact 311. There are two different divisions so it may not be adaptable. Folks do not realize that City employees are pushed to their limit. I am worried they could not keep track of the forms. The whole process needs to be revamped.

Ms. Carter: The TOTE form should be publicized on the calendar. It would be nice for people to know about it.

Ms. Urbanic: I will put it on the website, the calendar, great idea. TOTE doesn't come out again till January. With sidewalks, it would be hard to track and maintain a database of that nature, with a lack of personnel. The process needs to be revamped. Once it is, it should include something like that.

Ms. Carter: It would be one less worry for residents unable to shovel.

Ms. Urbanic: I understand. Seniors do worry about that.

Mr. Tague: Is it feasible for 311 to contain a list of folks who can and cannot remove snow?

Ms. Urbanic: I know we do not have the staff. It is not something we are able to take on at this point.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Using the 311 system for planning purposes: there are a lot of properties in many neighborhoods that are city-owned. If we called that in to 311, what will that accomplish?

Ms. Urbanic: It depends on the circumstances; it would be low in priority right now. We could send a note in. But 311 would be appropriate. With overgrown lots, we are lucky if they get cut twice a year. We have a contractor to do it.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Are there boundaries? Use 311 for this but not that?
Another issue that we discussed last meeting was one-step barriers; it would be great if the City made funds available to eliminate them. Can we call 311 for that?

Ms. Urbanic: Yes. We would refer it to URA...or then Richard (Meritzer)

Mr. Meritzer: I work very closely with Ms. Urbanic.

Mr. McGann: Even if Mt. Lebanon is pushing snow onto Pittsburgh property, can it be stopped?

Ms. Urbanic: I do not know if it can be stopped. We could send a warning. 311 is available to all landlines in the City and to most cell phones from within the whole county. The number is 412-255-2621. We receive emails from around the world. We try to help everyone even if they are not a resident of the City.

Ms. Carter: Are there any other social marketing materials, where the aging can see the number and website?

Ms. Urbanic: We have magnets; we went to the Health Fair. The website is pgh.gov.com. One of the biggest concerns is when to call 311 or 911. If a car needs to be dispatched, call 911, otherwise, 311. We do abandoned vehicles. We do handle some noise concerns but the Police are more effective.

Holly: Is there a website of who owns streets?

Ms. Urbanic: If it is not one of ours, we inform the requester.

Citations have to go to housing court. Is there a simpler process?

Ms. Urbanic: We do not have that level.

Mr. O'Hanlon: What is the email address?

Ms. Urbanic: We recently changed it. (The email provided on the website is askpgh@city.pittsburgh.pa.us)
My personal email is Wendy.urbanic@city.pittsburgh.pa.us All inquiries come into the database where staff can see them.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Are there any other questions?

Ms. Urbanic: Thank you so much for having me.

Ms. Urbanic leaves the table.

FOLLOW UP: Snow Removal from Sidewalks - Paul O'Hanlon Continued

Mr. O'Hanlon returns to the topic of snow removal and explains that we have short-term memory with snow. When snow is a distant memory, he will not want to think about it. It is one of those winters where he cannot use the bus for months. It is a real limitation in his life. He wants to make a structural change before next winter. As a city, as a people, we have gotten lazy about snow. It is not limited to one neighborhood, one street. It does not seem to be a priority for religious, civic, politicians except maybe Theresa Smith. It is not a consequence of age, but a consequence of people not shoveling their walks. He is feeling a certain urgency to push this issue. He has toyed with going to city council to address this issue. Folks can come to regular council meetings on Tuesdays or standing committee on Wednesday. Both are at 10 AM. You do not have to pre-register. You get 10 minutes to speak. Tuesdays start with proclamations and

then comments. Wednesday has comments first. Anyone else feeling an urgency or interest later or now. He is picking recruits to come up with a strike team.

Mr. Tague: I thought about going to council. I talked about going to council and about forming a committee. It is a good idea. We need helpful folks to help with this process.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I heard from many different forums, as the storm was bearing down that the City was not going to enforce sidewalk shoveling. But I never heard when the ban was lifted. The message for snow removal is not getting out.

Ms. Carter: The City is understaffed and overwhelmed but it must be across the board.

Mr. Tague: Does the County have a 311?

Mr. Meritzer: No, there is no one on the County level to cite people; it is by municipality. We would have to convene a meeting of all municipal officers to discuss other municipalities. It is a higher level of activity.

Mr. Tague: I am wondering about Mt. Lebanon with plenty of sidewalks.

Mr. Meritzer: Different municipalities put it on a different level. It is better than attacking the issue globally. When ready, send an email to the Task Force saying if there a municipality we should be working with.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I have a deep concern: what comes out of the investigation of EMS? There is a lot of press about Mr. Mitchell who died. Another woman was asked to walk to an emergency vehicle with two babies. It is not civilized. We should not be leaving people on their deathbeds.

Ms. Evans: Concerning Mr. Mitchell, I thought the Fire Dept. was on standby to come to the house first, and then paramedics. The rescue squad was right across the street, two blocks away, why didn't they come?

Mr. O'Hanlon: They are investigating, but it seems clear that in two incidents residents were told to deal with the emergency themselves. If my power went out, I could not get to the bus, I could not get to the bus. It is a false security that the police would help me.

Mr. McGann: Another problem with EMS, who would interpret for the Deaf and Blind and Hard of Hearing?

Mr. O'Hanlon: Hundreds or thousands of people in the city, if they did not have people to come to their house to assist them, they would be in an institution. The National Guard, Police, Fire, EMS, ACCESS. There are resources. If you need to get to the hospital you could call the hospital but your assistant could not.

Ms. Evans: They ask us to have backup help.

Mr. O'Hanlon: That still requires someone to come to your house.

Mr. Tague: I talked to Mike Parkins (UPC), and asked if he had any problems with that. He said mostly not, that all service coordinators are on call if the backup could not make it. We should probably address what to do if your backup cannot make it.

Mr. McGann: What about ACCESS during the snowstorm?

Mr. O'Hanlon: You can request same day.

Ms. Dick: What was closed was the 65th on Disability component run. ACCESS was still running. They do make same day requests.

Staff Reports

Update from Interns

Justin Lamorella is working on the making changes to the Hospital Compliance Manual and then the next step will be its distribution both online and in print. He and Richard are in the process of reviewing all city facilities for the ADA Strategic Planning Team. He is also working on implementing audible pedestrian signals, and to help make a ten-year plan for their installation in every signalized intersection in the city. He also helps to respond to 311 requests that come to Richard.

Mr. McGann: I spoke with Mr. Meritzer about the Stadium and Convention Center Authority about getting captioning and interpreters.

Justin: I am working on setting up that discussion with the Convention Center, could possibly include the Stadiums.

Ms. Lengle: Wouldn't the contact be Joan Stein?

Mr. Meritzer: Ms. Stein deals with design issues but the issue at the Convention Center is dealing with operation.

Christina and Romeo are both absent today but Christina is working on Visitability issues like the One-Step program, a brochure to let businesses know how to eliminate their barriers. She is working on finding architects to do the work for free or a reduced price.

Romeo, the grants intern, is finding grants for the following projects: funding the hospital compliance manual, a federal request for the transport for scooters, Braille (partnered with HDS), and the accessibility of the Greenfield community center, partnering with the Greenfield community organization. There is a lead there with the Greenfield Association. He is also making a federal request to have audible pedestrian signals funded quicker.

The ADA Strategic Planning team is evaluating all city facilities to put together a package for the budget department to see what needs to be done. It has not been done in 10 years. I am monitoring Special Events to make sure all events have interpreters and am making sure the program is all-expansive. Special events permit is finalized. City block parties will also have to fill out form. There is a learning curve with special events. People never thought about interpreters, signage, and handicap port-a-johns.

Once again we are doing disability mentoring day. Six students from city schools will follow around city workers. The second week in October 2011 will be wheelchair veterans' days. I am honored to be on the committee. High school students from Pittsburgh Public Schools, Allegheny Intermediate have to be prepared. Take them out for a day.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Someone should fill in for the Mayor.

Mr. Meritzer: There are a number of locations in Highland Park that should have curb ramps, and we sent that to public works. I have not been back to check because of the snow. At some point in the evaluation we will do parks. But they are more extensive to do. The high priority is: senior centers, community centers, and emergency services centers.

Mr. McGann: Will parks be accessible for even the blind? A rail?

Mr. Meritzer: That is a good suggestion and we will look at it.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Japan makes good use of paths that blind people can follow. It is a tactile path to assist blind people.

Mr. Meritzer: That is something to look into.

Vox Pop

Mr. Morrison: The ADA is 20 years old. This is a denial of public accommodation. The Commission would ?? the filing of complaints.

Mr. O'Hanlon: We requested a follow-up meeting up with the URA Assuming we get that meeting would you be appropriate to attend?

Mr. Morrison: Yes. I was shocked to find that they are not using money to remove barriers.

Mr. Penna: I have worked at the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for 15 years. I cover 22 counties. I just took over Allegheny, Washington, and Green. I am already in contact with the Convention Center about the Home and Garden show.

Motion to adjourn made by Janet Evans.
Seconded by Richard McGann

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 PM.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: March 15, 2010
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219