

City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County  
Task Force on Disability  
Monday February 24, 2014  
1:00 PM to 3:00 PM  
Meeting Minutes

**Task Force Members in Attendance:** John Tague, Jeff Parker, Janet B. Evans, James C. Noschese, Dr. Katherine Seelman, Joe Wassermann, Richard McGann, Sarah Goldstein

**Task Force Members Absent:** Paul O'Hanlon, Milton Henderson, Aurelia Carter-Scott, Liz Healy, Linda Dickerson

**Also in Attendance:** Paul Mente, Joy Dore, Georganne Feger, Tracy Cummins, Todd Kravits, Kathryn Power, Megan Hammond, Dianne Gallagher, Randy Whitehair, Ali R. Abdullah, Sarah Kinter, Robin Smitz, Joe Snyder, Alexa Shannon, Bo Ai, Ivan Perilla, Alexander Polinsky, Will Cenk, Mai Nguyen, Peter Bombara, ~~Richard Meritzer~~

**Welcome and introduction**

The meeting began with introductions of Task Force members and other individuals in attendance.

**1. Review and Approval of January Minutes and Financial Report**

The November ~~and January~~ and January minutes and financial report were approved by a unanimous vote.

**2. PennDOT Policy on Signage**

Mr. Kravits stated that the policy during construction projects is to make sure that any signs erected are out of the way of all traffic. If there are any issues, ~~pedestrians are urged to contact~~ Mr. Kravits or Mr. Meritzer.

Mr. Wassermann said that sand bags that hold signs often protrude into the sidewalk and obstruct traffic.

Mr. Meritzer asked if PennDOT is working on getting audible signage for construction barriers.

Mr. Kravits said that construction workers have been instructed to find alternate ways of constructing those signs. He said he'd get back to Mr. Meritzer regarding audible signage.

Mr. Noschese suggested that ~~said he would like a~~ digital captioning displays at bus stations could be used to warn ~~ing riders and about~~ pedestrians about upcoming construction. ~~, rather than find out about~~

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~~construction when it obstructs traffic.~~ Such ~~captioning would serve not only the deaf community but all people who would otherwise be confronted with the obstruction.~~ ~~People who are Deaf can't ask strangers about traffic or overhear them discussing it.~~ ~~MsDr.~~ Seelman agreed that better guidelines need to be developed ~~and~~ Mr. Kravits promised to share ~~the Task Force's~~ ~~their~~ opinions with ~~the people doing the construction.~~ ~~the construction workers responsible for the placement of the signage.~~

Ms. Evans noted that two projects near ~~The Walnut~~ Street are using signs that obstruct the path for wheelchair use and mobility. ~~In addition, s~~She noted that, at the Second Avenue Tech Building Project, the sidewalk is obstructed by sandbags that were impossible to maneuver around without going into the dirt and risking getting the wheelchair stuck.

Comment [SKD1]: Unclear what this is. A street, restaurant????

Mr. Kravits stated that the policy says to leave a minimum of four feet of clearance on the sidewalk. Some projects are managed by entities other than PennDOT, but PennDOT will get the message out to them as well.

Ms. Evans suggested that John Shumway should ~~give~~provide the deaf with information ~~on current and future~~ construction projects. Mr. Kravits said he'd look into ~~it~~such action, and stated that PennDOT has good relations with media partners.

Mr. Parker asked if there is a PennDOT switchboard number to call with traffic-related concerns. Mr. Kravits responded that the number is 412- 429-5000, and that traffic concerns ~~will~~would go directly to him.

Furthermore, Mr. Parker asked if construction projects are checked for accessibility. Mr. Kravits said that PennDOT's projects are inspected.

An audience member asked if there is a way for people who are deaf to contact PennDOT. Mr. Kravits said that PennDOT could be reached by email and Twitter.

An audience member asked how information is disseminated about unexpected events like fallen trees. Mr. Kravits said there's an electronic notification process to various agencies and community groups, but if PennDOT is not aware of it, they're not able to report it.

Ms. Evans asked how quickly the information is put out about snow conditions on side streets. Mr. Kravits responded that the city or county is responsible for side streets.

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An audience member asked about how and when PennDOT gets involved with pedestrian signals. Mr. Kravits responded that PennDOT gets involved in all traffic designs, even ones in the city, though the city has jurisdiction over that. He confirmed that PennDOT is not involved in APS. Mr. Meritzer asked what kind of audible traffic signals PennDOT installs. Mr. Kravits responded that PennDOT coordinates with the municipality and adheres to their preference as to which type of audible traffic signal is installed.

Comment [SKD2]: What is APS

An audience member stated that she doesn't believe in special treatment in the form of signage for people who are blind or deaf. Mr. Kravits said that the signs are there in order to alert the motorist, not just to protect the person who is blind or deaf. Mr. Meritzer said that the signs are requested by parents who strongly feel that the signs are necessary. A parent of a person who is deaf spoke in favor of the signs.

Mr. McGann asked if parking is PennDOT's responsibility. He raised a concern about people getting ticketed while waiting for their parking permits to be renewed. Mr. Kravits said that parking is handled by the driver's license bureau, but that he will make contact with them.

### **3. Nominating Committee**

Mr. Tague said that two nominees have been identified. ~~He said that a and that a~~ letter is going out soon to County Executive Fitzgerald and Mayor Peduto. Mary Esther and Ms. Baricella both are copied on this letter to County Executive Fitzgerald.

Comment [SKD3]: spelling

Comment [SKD4]: add last name

### **4. Hospital Services Meeting**

Mr. Noschese stated that the Pennsylvania Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing will be holding a meeting related to hospital services as well as Video Remote Interpreting. Deaf people have been invited to attend and share their ~~complaints~~ concerns. The meeting will be held on March 15<sup>th</sup> at 3 P.M. at 1845 Forbes Avenue.

Comment [SKD5]: Pennsylvania?

Comment [SKD6]: Delete and substitute concerns?

An audience member shared that the Hearing Loss Association Newsletter had an article in February about how to request accommodations during a hospital stay. HealthBridges.net has an accommodation card for people who are deaf who want to request an interpreter or captioning. Mr. Meritzer added that the card can be printed from online.

Comment [SKD7]: Newsletter?

### **5. Staff Updates**

Mr. Meritzer said that Mr. Bombara is working on getting a new handicapped icon officially changed and implemented by the state. Mr. Bombara has been in contact with the congressman in Boston who proposed the change. Private property can adopt the new logo now while public property must wait for it to be officially adopted. The logo communicates that people with disabilities are active and involved in society.

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Mr. Meritzer stated that Mr. O'Rourke, an intern studying at the University of Pittsburgh, is pursuing restarting the Snow Angels program, ~~which had been discontinued for people with~~. Mr. O'Rourke has found an agency which is willing to take it over: Three Rivers Center for Independent Living (TRCIL). He needs to make sure that the waivers the city uses still work for an agency. The City used to provide vests and snow shovels to volunteers. Mr. Meritzer wants it to be up and running by June to recruit volunteers for this winter.

Comment [SKD8]: ?

An audience member asked if the North Hills is considered part of the City of Pittsburgh. Mr. Meritzer responded that although it is not part of Pittsburgh, TRICL is not a city program, and thus may be able to go outside of the city. Solutions will be explored for expanding the snow shoveling program to the county.

Mr. Tague asked for updates on the enforcement of snow removal. Mr. Meritzer said that the Department of Public Works feels uncomfortable enforcing snow removal without a snow removal program for people who are unable to shovel their own walks. The new public works director may be reengaged on the issue.

Ms. Goldstein asked about what would happen if the volunteers were also snowed in, and asked if there is a timeframe for the Snow Angels program. Mr. Meritzer responded that city code says people have 24 hours to clear snow. Many of the Snow Angels volunteers are high school/college students from the local neighborhood, so they wouldn't have to drive to the participant's homes they're assigned to clear.

Mr. Meritzer said that Ms. Agostini is working on disability tax credit. They will both be at the home and garden show this year, handing out Visitability Tax Credit brochures and asking people to consider accessibility when doing renovations. Other people asked to volunteer and were given a signup sheet to answer questions. Yoko Tai designed the brochure.

### **8. Vox Pop**

March 14th is the ADARA conference: "Bridging the Gap in Behavioral Health Service Delivery for People who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing"

Comment [SKD9]: The?

Diane Gallagher stated that the Sign-a-Thon, a deaf awareness event sponsored by the Center for Hearing and Deaf services, will be at Robinson mall on March 29th from 12 to 4. All entertainment is signed and voiced at the same time.

An audience member stated that an ice ~~sleddersledded~~ with disability is competing in Olympics at Sochi. A paper on adaptive sports will be available on back table.

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A motion to adjourn the Task Force Meeting was made, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote.

The next meeting will occur on March 17th, Saint Patrick's Day.