

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES**

July 21, 2003

MINUTES

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

Members Present: **John Tague, Chairperson, Paul O’Hanlon, Co-chair, Ruth Walter
Brenyo, Bill Chrisner, Liz Healey, Penny Perlman**

Members Absent: **Jeff Parker, Milton Henderson, Aurelia Carter, Al Condeluci, Linda
Dickerson, Rich McGann, Kate Seelman,**

Others Present: **Lisa Moses, Chuck Keenan, Raymond Mercalde**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Tague at 1:10 PM.

Introductions:

All members and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of May and June 2003 Minutes:

Mr. Keenan reminded the members that the minutes from May 2003 had not been approved at last month’s meeting due to the presentations by the Chief County Executive and the Mayor. Ms. Brenyo moved to APPROVE THE MAY 2003 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. Mr. Chrisner seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Ms. Perlman moved to APPROVE THE JUNE 2003 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. Mr. Chrisner seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Financial Report:

Mr. Parker submitted a written financial report that Mr. Tague read into the minutes. The report stated that all monies for the 2002-3 budget year have been encumbered and none will be returned to the county. The contract with Jeannine Brinkley has been finalized and her invoices will be paid upon the completion of her remaining work, which includes the completion of a written report, planning and facilitating a public meeting with the Task Force, and paying for interpreters, other accommodations, and materials necessary to hold that meeting.

City-County Task Force Funding

Mr. Tague reported on a conversation that he had with Mr. Jim Roddey, Chief County Executive of Allegheny County, concerning the role of the Task Force and its funding. Mr. Tague stated that Mr. Roddey had told him that the Task Force will continue to advise the City and County administrations concerning matters that affect people with disabilities and will have a role in

advising the new county office of disabilities when it is created. Mr. Tague wants to make sure that this is reinforced with Mr. Thompkins and that he and the County make a commitment to continue to fund the Task Force. Mr. Tague also wanted to clarify the role of Disability Agenda as it relates to the Task Force so that future confusion over budgets and reporting responsibilities could be eliminated.

Ms. Healey wanted to know if the County's proposed budget funds Disability Agenda specifically, or if it will continue to be funded through the Task Force. Mr. Chrisner agreed that the roles and reporting relationship between the Task Force and Disability Agenda need to be clarified. Mr. O'Hanlon reminded the members of the reasons behind the creation of Disability Agenda, namely that the Task Force was not prepared to take on the enormous responsibility of managing the process at the time that it was created. He noted that the Task Force welcomed the creation of a separate entity to perform this function. Mr. Tague noted that the Task Force and Disability Agenda still need to tie up loose ends, regardless of how the two got to this point.

Ms. Healey reminded the members that, especially in light of the strategic planning process currently underway, the two groups need to work together in a coordinated fashion to serve people with disabilities in the best manner possible. Mr. Chrisner still stated that the Task Force needs answers and needs to know what Disability Agenda is doing. Ms. Healey moved that THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEET WITH MR. RODDEY TO DISCUSS PLANS FOR THE NEW COUNTY OFFICE OF DISABILITIES AND THE ROLE OF THE TASK FORCE AND DISABILITY AGENDA IN RELATIONSHIP TO THAT OFFICE. Mr. O'Hanlon seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Skill Building Session Report:

Ms. Perlman stated that the recently held skill building session was a good way for members to get to know each other and about their backgrounds. She felt that it helped members to better find ways to streamline meetings so that members will make better use of their time there. She also liked the suggestions for issuing the minutes and agenda prior to the meeting so that members have a chance to comment and have input into the agenda before it is finalized. Mr. Tague added that he felt it was helpful to talk about other issues, like mental health, that the Task Force had not spent a great deal of time on in previous meetings.

Housing for People with Mental Health Disabilities:

Ms. Perlman reported on the Mental Health Association of Allegheny County's (MHA) efforts to increase housing opportunities for people with mental illness. She noted that MHA has recently formed a partnership with Pennsylvania Protection and Advocacy (PP&A) to work on licensing requirements for personal care homes in the County. She noted that some of these homes are operating with "provisional" licenses due to their failure to meet safety standards. Some of these homes are also "enhanced," meaning that they have additional services, such as mental health, brought into the home. Ms. Perlman stated that the goal of the partnership between MHA and PP&A is to visit those homes on provisional licenses that also have enhanced services so that they can identify specific issues that they face. Other goals are to educate legislators on license requirements and to educate residents on their rights in those homes.

Ms. Perlman stated that there are over 9400 residents in personal care homes in Allegheny County, many of whom have mental health disabilities. She stated that PP&A will be visiting all homes on provisional license and will be issuing a report on their findings from these visits. They also will be issuing a report on ways to identify good homes. Mr. O'Hanlon asked what the Task

Force could do to support these efforts. Ms. Perlman stated that the Task Force could help out primarily by finding organizations that can offer supports, including transportation, staff training, and in-home services, to those homes that currently do not offer such supports. Mr. O'Hanlon asked if they had done outreach to the residents to see if the Section 8 program would be appropriate for them so that they could return to a community setting. The Task Force had a general discussion of this idea, with a resolution to continue to support the efforts of MHA and PP&A in this area.

Voting Access:

Mr. O'Hanlon spoke to members about his work with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). He noted that HAVA will completely alter the way in which Americans will vote in the coming elections, from the types of machines used to cast votes, to polling place accessibility, to voter registration record keeping. He noted that HAVA establishes a three-year process for the states and counties to implement the Act and that new voting machines should be in place by 2006.

Mr. Chrisner noted that the County still has a great number of polling places that are inaccessible. He further noted that the County previously had a list of accessible polling places and that the Task Force should be working with them to increase this number. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that many variables must be considered when determining a polling place's accessibility, including the presence of steps, lever door handles, parking availability, and others, and that all of those are currently treated equally. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that perhaps a better way to classify accessibility is to base it on the priority of barriers that must be removed in order to enter a building and vote.

Ms. Healey suggested that the Task Force invite the County Director of Elections to an upcoming Task Force meeting to discuss their efforts in ensuring compliance with HAVA. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that he would do some investigations and would talk to the County Director of Elections and report back to the Task Force next month.

Visitability Report:

Mr. O'Hanlon updated members on activities that have been undertaken in the last month to help get a Visitability Ordinance passed in the City of Pittsburgh. He stated that last Monday (July 14, 2003) the Council appointed Committee of 15 met for the second time, where they discussed the feasibility of an ordinance versus having an incentive based program. The Committee of 15 also revised their definition of a visitable home contained in the design requirements of the Ordinance. Based on his interpretation of the meeting, Mr. O'Hanlon felt that discussions of the Visitability initiative were taking place in the highest levels of city government.

Mr. O'Hanlon also updated members on his and other advocate's meeting with the Urban Redevelopment Authority. Mr. O'Hanlon reported that, at this meeting, the URA gave general support for the revised Ordinance, but they still had concerns about the ways in which "projects in the pipeline" would be affected by the Ordinance. Generally, Mr. O'Hanlon felt that the meeting with the URA was positive and that they would be willing to support the Ordinance if their issues could be addressed. Mr. Tague noted that legal issues and the possibility of lawsuits brought about by enacting an Ordinance were discussed at both the Committee of 15 and URA meetings.

ADA Coordinator Report:

Mr. Keenan advised members of the upcoming move of the downtown Greyhound Bus Terminal to Second Avenue adjacent to the new County Jail. He noted that the City Planning Commission will be evaluating the plans for a temporary facility at that location at their September 23, 2003 meeting. Mr. Tague asked Mr. Keenan to write a letter to Greyhound's Facilities Management Division in Dallas, TX to ask for a meeting with members of the Task Force to ensure that the temporary facility will be accessible to people with disabilities. Mr. Keenan said that he would write the letter as soon as possible.

Mr. Keenan noted that he looks to the Task Force for advice on ways to improve City services to people with disabilities and would like to know their thoughts on where he needs to set priorities. Mr. Chrisner noted that he would like to see the City install more audible pedestrian signals and work on ways to alert people with visual impairments of the presence of the yellow traffic control boxes that protrude from utility poles throughout the City. Ms. Healey asked that Mr. Keenan work on updating the City's Self Evaluation report and share that report with the Task Force. Mr. Keenan noted that the City is working to identify a standard audible pedestrian signal that it can use throughout the City and that, once it is identified, signals will go up at intersections as they are upgraded. He noted that he will continue to work with the Engineering and Construction Department on traffic control boxes to see if a solution to that hazard can be identified and welcomed ideas from the Task Force members on addressing it. Finally, Mr. Keenan noted that he has been working on an update to the City's Transition Plan from 1992 and will hopefully have some of it finished in the next few months.

Announcements:

Mr. Chrisner announced that Three Rivers Center for Independent Living will be sponsoring their annual Walk and Roll event on Friday, July 25, 2003 at 11:00 AM in the County Courthouse Courtyard and would like everyone to attend. He also announced that there will be a large rally for passage of MiCASSA in Washington, DC on September 17, 2003.

Mr. Tague announced that State House Bill 1859, which outlines the creation of an Office of People with Disabilities in the Governor's Office, has been introduced in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives by Rep. Frank Pistella. Pittsburgh City Council will issue a proclamation in support of the bill at their meeting on August 4, 2003 and Rep. Pistella will hold a press conference to announce the bill on August 6, 2003 at the County Courthouse Courtyard.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:	DATE:	August 18, 2003
	TIME:	1:00 P.M.
	LOCATION:	First Floor Conference Room Civic Building, 200 Ross Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219

FUTURE MEETING DATES:

September 15, 2003
October 20, 2003
November 17, 2003
December 15, 2003