

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
JULY 16, 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: Leslie Cooke, Gary Donatelli, Katherine Elmore, Mary Figlar, Dianne Gallagher, Chuck Keenan, Allison Kurtz, Richard Meritzer, Anne Nalepa, Teresa Nellans, James C. Noschese, Rob Oliver, Terry Reynolds, Sally Jo Snyder

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:00 PM.

Introductions:

Everyone introduced themselves. Mr. Parker announced that Gabe Mazefsky of the Mayor's Office said the Mayor could not make the meeting today but would be attending the August meeting. He also said that Bob Palmosina) from Public works said he would be able to come to the August meeting to address the snow removal issue.

Approval of the June 2007 Minutes:

Ms. Evans moved TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES. Mr. Tague seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Evans expressed her appreciation that they are sent to the members through email.

Financial Report:

Jeff Parker passed out copies of the report. This report includes interpreters for May and captioning for May and June. The balance is \$16,400.00. We have about \$1000.00 left. The remainder could be used for future interpreters. Mr. Tague asked about the Small Differences follow-up video. Mr. Parker said that was being paid for by money from two years ago and profits from the sale of the first video. Mr. Tague asked if we know how much money we are getting this year. Mr. Parker responded as of now we believe we are getting the same amount as last year. Ms. Carter asked if the money carried over. Mr. Parker said no, it needs to be used. Ms. Healy said it can be encumbered. Ms. Healy moved ANY REMAINING FUNDS BE ENCUMBERED FOR THE ANNUAL MEETING. Dr. Seelman seconded the motion. The motion passed. Dr. Seelman moved to ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT. The motion passed unanimously

Staff Update – Task Force Hospital Initiative:

Leslie Cooke reported on the status of the project discussing the survey changes and the return rate. Per the request of the Task Force at the last meeting she sent out the questionnaires to community members for their input on the questions and got one response.

Anne Nalepa questioned that. Ms. Cooke verified that only James C. Noschese responded. He said he went to the community to get their responses. Ms. Cooke added that she had also sent surveys to the interpreters. Dr. Seelman suggested she add assistive listening devices. What may work for the hard of hearing community may not work for the deaf community. They should have separate questionnaires. Teresa Nellans pointed out that an earlier version of the questionnaire included a box for additional information. They could have entered any assistive listening devices they needed there. The new version does not have the box. She added she would like to review the report before it is finalized.

Mr. McGann stated not many hospitals follow the policy about contacting interpreters. Some hospitals have contracts with individual interpreters. Mr. Noschese added that when he was passing out the surveys, some people responded that family members serve as interpreters. Hospitals are taking advantage of this. They are required to provide an interpreter. Mr. McGann continued sometimes an individual needs an interpreter for liability or malpractice. There should always be a certified interpreter there as well.

Dr. Seelman thanked Ms. Cooke for her work. She looked forward to seeing the hospital survey. Mr. Parker asked Ms. Cooke to send the survey out to Dr. Seelman, Mr. McGann, Ms. Nalepa, Mr. Noschese and Ms. Nellans for one more review of the questions. Ms. Goldstein asked if Ms. Cooke sent the questionnaires out by email. She responded she had. Ms. Goldstein suggested she follow-up with a phone call.

There was discussion about the report results. Mr. Meritzer pointed out that we were partnering with the Consumer Health Coalition to do what the City / County Task Force on Disabilities could not. Mr. O'Hanlon said we may not need to hand this off to the Consumer Health Coalition. Dr. Seelman said she would like to see the report before that decision is held. Ms. Evans said she would like a similar survey for persons with physical disabilities. Ms. Cooke said that was beyond the scope of her internship. Mr. Parker said that could be the next project. Also, this topic could be part of our annual meeting. Ms. Healy agreed that this should be brought up when the annual meeting is discussed.

Staff Update – Special Events Permit:

Mr. Meritzer reported the Law Department has still not updated the Special Events Permit. He handed out an email from Yvonne Schlosberg in which she states the issue is what they can request of private groups who have private events on public property. She said she would "have updated regulations to present to the Special Events Committee prior to you next meeting". Mr. Meritzer pointed out that they had discussed this issue in the past and decided that for those groups they would add a disclaimer that these are advisory, not a requirement.

Dr. Seelman suggested we add this item to the subjects we want to discuss with the Mayor. Ms. Healy suggested we could also get City Council involved. However, we want to think carefully about this so as not to create a power struggle. Ms. Nellans said her Executive Committee will consider sending a letter at their meeting this Friday. Mr. O'Hanlon suggested Mr. Meritzer remind Ms. Schlosberg about our conversations on this subject.

Staff Update – Birmingham Bridge:

Mr. Meritzer reported that PennDOT and BikePgh! had come to an agreement to have a bicycle and pedestrian path across the bridge that would be accessible. The arrangement would be a 3' buffer on each side of the bridge, then a 6' path, then another 3' buffer and then two 11' automobile travel lanes. This path would connect East Carson Street with 5th Avenue.

Mr. Henderson pointed out that a lot of busses go up Forbes Avenue and it should connect to Forbes. Mr. Meritzer expressed his concern that the ramps to Forbes were too dangerous.

Dr. Seelman asked that we discuss the Diversity Festival and the 250th Anniversary of the Pittsburgh Region.

Task Force Committee Work – Planning for Future Meeting with the Mayor:

Mr. Parked reported that the Mayor was scheduled to attend the meeting last month but at the last minute had a family emergency. He could not come this month he will be attending the meeting next month (August).

Ms. Carter pointed out the Mayor was appointing members to boards and commissions. What is our strategy? She suggested a small group meet with the Mayor first and get some issues on the agenda. He has been appointing people with diversity but she has not seen anyone with a disability appointed. And she has not heard him talk a lot about people with disabilities. Dr. Seelman suggested that if we meet with him we should have the mission statement. We should ask key staff to attend. This should be our first visit. Ms. Healy added it behooves us to look at the list of boards and commissions and come up with names to suggest. That is how Paul Dick got appointed to the Planning Commission. Dr. Seelman said we should go in with something we want and get it. Ms. Evans pointed out that when you go to see the Mayor, you fill out a form saying whom you are and why you would like to see him. To get him to come to a Task Force meeting she sent him a letter and talked to his assistant. Ms. Carter said some cities have an Office of Disabilities.

Ms. Goldstein suggested that they should send a small group first. Mr. Parker asked if it should be a 2 person vanguard of the Executive Committee. Ms. Cater suggested the Executive Committee. Mr. Parker said he would call Gabe Mazefsky of the Mayor's Office about a small meeting before the next Task Force meeting. Ms. Healy suggested they present it as a brief meeting to give a heads up on issues. Mr. Parker added this should happen as soon as possible because of the window for appointments. Ms. Healy said they should also include the next steps on the Special Events permits on the agenda. Mr. Parker said that is an item for the initial meeting.

Task Force Committee Work – Planning the Annual Meeting:

Mr. Parker reported the purpose of an Annual meeting was to (1) elect officers and (2) approve the fiscal budget. The Task Force is on a two year cycle and officers were elected last year. And the entire budget goes to required accommodations. In the past the annual meeting has been on a topic. Based on the work Ms. Cooke is doing, he suggested that access to medical services be the issue.

Ms. Healy agreed with the topic. It could talk about health care more broadly. We could partner with the Consumer Health Coalition. We could have a formal presentation and feedback. Dr. Seelman asked what our jurisdiction is. Ms. Healy asked does the City and County have jurisdiction? The County should have oversight. Mr. Meritzer pointed out that he has been using his position with the Task Force as an informational tool to help prevent legal action against organizations. He lets them know what the law requires so that they can correct situations before they become issues. Dr. Seelman suggested we get a panel together. Mr. Parker asked if the Consumer Health Coalition could partner with us. Ms. Snyder said she was very interested in working with us. Ms. Evans expressed her approval.

Mr. McGann said there is a separation of rights between hospitals and insurance companies. Who pays for personal care? Dr. Seelman said you should have the support you need. Ms. Healy said that children can get Medicaid dollars but not once you turn 21. Ms. Nalepa said any increase in attendant care requires you to get approval two weeks in advance. If you are not waiver eligible you cannot get services. Dr. Seelman added we target the program a little more through email. Hospitals and primary care programs should be part of the focus. Ms. Healy said we need to determine the focus soon. Do we just do hospitals or do we include long-term care. We should narrow the scope to direct delivery of health care. Mr. Parker said people who are interested in putting this together should start circulating emails. The meeting should be scheduled for September or October.

Task Force Committee Work – Principles for CDBG:

Mr. O’Hanlon reported that we had some discussion last month. “If we are dancing with them, Whose move is it?” Should we draft something for discussion or should we discuss it with them first. Mr. Parker pointed out we said we would provide them with our recommendations. Mr. O’Hanlon said we should talk with them. Ms. Healy responded our role is to be change agents. The tone should be to outline the next steps before moving forward. We should draft a statement and see how they incorporate it. We need to network with the decision makers so we have input before the draft is done. Ms. Healy added Mary Ester Van Shura has been a good spokesperson for the Community. Mr. Parker said he would contact her.

Vox Pop:

Ms. Nalepa announced the ADA Anniversary rally in Market Square on Tuesday July 24th from noon until 1:30 p.m. Also, there will be a civil rights rally in Kittanning on July 25th.

Dr. Seelman announced the Greater Pittsburgh Diversity Festival which will be held August 16-19, 2007. She also pointed out next year is the 250th anniversary of the Pittsburgh area. She pointed out that some people in every ethnic group are disabled. We should be presenting the image that people with disabilities are part of every community. Ms. Carter added that people with disabilities should be part of these activities and we should be contacting them. Ms. Healy asked if the community can have some presence at the Diversity Festival. Ms. Carter said she would contact the organizers to see.

Mr. Henderson announced the Three Rivers Center for Independent Living (TRCIL) dinner on July 26th. Estelle Richman, Pennsylvania Secretary of Public Welfare, will be the speaker.

Mr. Henderson also announced that TRCIL went to Washington to lobby for House Bill 1581 which amended title XIX of the Social Security Act to reduce the costs of prescription drugs for enrollees of Medicaid managed care organizations by extending the discounts offered under fee-for-service Medicaid to such organizations, which was passed. They met with representatives and senator including Senator Casey.

Dr. Seelman announced the Thornburg Lecture on September 27th at the Pitt Law School.

Ms. Carter asked about the relocation of OVR. Gary Donatelli, Assistant District Administrator for OVR said the move is going on as scheduled. There are some who are not happy with the location. The location is felt by some to be not particularly accessible and some would like a location where people can have meetings. They are rallying the community to clean up Grease Alley. Because there is a major bus lane there vans can neither unload nor park. They have begun demolition. The move is scheduled for April 2008. Mr. O'Hanlon pointed out the minutes of last month say no one in the administration of this office are in wheelchairs. How can this be? Mr. Donatelli responded that they do have staff in wheelchairs. People with questions or concerns should contact Stephen M. Schmerin, Pennsylvania Secretary of Labor and Industry. Mr. Parker said we requested the City clean up the alley through the Bureau of Building Inspection. Mr. Henderson expressed his concern about safe egress. Staff would be endangered if gurnees being used for emergencies could not fit in the elevator We should contact the Fire Department and Emergency Medical Service about the elevator.

Dr. Seelman moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Cater seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: August 20, 2007
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219