

CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES

June 20, 2005

MINUTES

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

Members Present: John Tague, Chairperson, Eugene Barton, Ruth Walter Brenyo, Aurelia Carter, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, Viswa P. Mohanty, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman

Members Absent: Paul O'Hanlon, Co-chair, Linda Dickerson, Penny Perlman

Others Present: Amy Anderson, Judy Barricella, Joan Cleary, Brenda Dare, Joe Elliot, Jerry Laychak, Jessica L. Moch, Richard Meritzer, David Rosenblatt, Evelyn Stypula, Stan Swintek

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

Approval of the agenda:

Hearing no changes the Chair ruled that the agenda was approved as submitted.

Introductions:

All members and guests introduced themselves.

Approval of May 16, 2005 Minutes:

Mr. Barton moved that THE MINUTES BE APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Dr. Seelman seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Financial Report:

Mr. Parker reported that we are close to the end of the year. The Task Force has a balance of \$9,240.00. Expenditures for this month include \$189.00 for travel to send Mr. Henderson to a statewide housing conference and \$360.00 to hire a consultant for 3 days to update our Email data base. This leaves the Task Force with \$9,000.00 for the follow up video to Small Steps, about half the cost. Mr. Parker then distributed the Proposed Scope of Work for Working Order. For \$75.00 a month they will manage the Task Force data base. We gave them a data base of 628 names. 183 of these names had addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. 220+ had no email address, but had an address and phone number. 84 of the people are no longer interested. We are still missing 218 email addresses.

Dr. Seelman added that she received addresses from the Enable America Workmeeting. Mr. Parker said he talked to Melba, people gave their email addresses. This would either be a separate one time project or we would add 30 names a month as part of the scope of work. He did a classification of the contact. Under the contract we would get 2 mass mailings a year. Ms. Healy moved TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH MARQUILLA O'KELLY THROUGH WORKING ORDER TO MAINTIAN THE MAILING LIST. She then asked that we get the names of the people without Email addresses. Mr. Parker said he could get that out. Dr. Seelman asked that the motion be amended to require an annual report. Ms. Healy accepted the amendment. Richard Meritzer asked that the motion be amended to request he receive a copy of the email addresses. Ms. Healy accepted that amendment. The motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. Tague brought up the need for a microphone for public comment. It is needed for the Task Force members to hear. The City does not have the money. Mr. Meritzer stated that he had talked to the Chief Clerk of City Planning about ordering a microphone. Mr. McGann said SHHH might have money for that. Ms. Healey said this would be a service they could provide for the City. Ms. Carter said she would hope that we move the Task Force meetings to other locations and this microphone could be used when that occurs. Mr. Barton added that a portable microphone might work with other systems. Dr. Seelman asked that Mr. Meritzer find out about the microphones cost and specs. Ms. Healy moved TO AUTHORIZE MR. MERITZER TO SPEND UP TO \$200.00 ON A PORTABLE MICROPHONE. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Tague reported that he received a call from Amanda of the Consumer Health Coalition requesting our help. They have a bus going to Harrisburg on the 28th to lobby against Medicaid cuts. That bus is full. Another bus would cost \$1400.00. She is requesting that the Task Force contribute to the cost of this bus. The activity is a funeral march in opposition to the cuts. Dr. Seelman asked if this would erode the funds for the video. Mr. Parker responded that it could, or we could spend it out of next year's money. Dr. Seelman pointed out that we do not know if we have a budget next years and if we do what the amount would be. She asked that we hold this discussion until we get to the Medicaid cuts on the agenda.

Disability Connections:

Ms. Barricella congratulated the University of Pittsburgh on the Chancellor's award. She is currently working on a business plan for the new one stop center. They are currently looking for a name. The working name is Aging and Disability Resource Center – One Stop Shop. They can't use ADRC because it is already in use. The office will fill out applications for programs and provide information.

She then went on to discuss House Bill 1595, which would hand over waivers to managed care agencies. She sent out testimony from Evercare. They say it will save the state money. Currently the waivers are housed in consumer oriented organizations. Mr. Tague added that the Health and Humans Service Committee is having a hearing tomorrow. He sent an email asking that the bill be pulled. Representative Wheatly said he would take his name off the bill.

Ms. Barricella then brought up the Celebration of the passage of the ADA. She would like the Task Force to take the lead in this celebration. The community wide celebration of the passage of the ADA occurs on July 26th. Mr. Tague pointed out the Three Rivers Center for Independent Living does something each year in the Courtyard. Chicago has a parade. This could be a collaborative effort.

Finally, she brought up the issue that there were no wheel chairs at the Three Rivers Arts Festival. The Task Force first worked with the Arts Festival on accessibility issue and they were to continue. We might need to put a requirement on the permits. Dr. Seelman suggested that we could ask the Mayor, Chief Executive and both Councils for resolutions on accessibility. Ms. Barricella said the administration of the Arts Festival has not picked up on anything the Task Force started. She asked for some information at the Information Booth and they were able to provide some information (the location of accessible restrooms for example). Ms Healy pointed out that there are so many festivals in the City. We should focus on the major festivals: the Three Rivers Arts Festival; the Regatta; the 4th of July, etc. From there we can build a culture. She moved TO ENTER INTO A DISCUSSION WITH THE MAYOR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE TO DEVELOPE A REQUIREMENT THAT THERE BE ACCESSIBLITY. Dr. Seelman seconded the motion. Mr. Tague said we should be clear about what we want. Ms. Healy responded that there are people who can make a list. Mr. Barton asked if there were wheel chairs at the Information Desk in the past. Ms. Barricella responded not only that, but accessible parking and rest rooms. Dr. Seelman suggested we set guidelines. Mr. Henderson informed everybody that they had set up an accessibility booth two years ago. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Barton suggested we set up a committee to establish guidelines. Mr. Tague asked who would chair the committee. Mr. Barton said he would. Ms. Healy pointed out the Ms. Barricella can help.

Report Card Legislation:

Mr. Tague introduced County Council Member Joan Cleary and David Rosenblatt of Service Employees International Union. Ms. Cleary informed the Task Force that the Advisory Board held a hearing and County Council held a forum. They are now awaiting an opinion from the solicitor about the possibility of losing funding if this legislation is passed. Ms. Healy said she spoke at the forum. A number of agencies and family members spoke. Centers for Medicaid and Medicare can approve waivers. This permits the state to pay for long term care for people in communities. The state requires these services. The Report Card Legislation would not add any licensing requirements. Agencies said passing this in one county would endanger programs across the State. The components of the bill give information to families selecting services. She felt this argument was just an attempt to keep the bill from passing.

Ms. Cleary added that there was a meeting on July 7th. Dr. Seelman asked if the Task Force should provide additional clarification. Mr. Tague asked if we wanted a legal opinion. Ms. Cleary responded that the County Solicitor is looking into the legal issues. Ms. Healy asked if agencies would impact the solicitor's opinion.

Dr. Seelman asked if Mr. Rosenblatt have any input. What information is there on what other states are doing? Does the Union have legal opinions? Mr. Roseblatt said Ohio has similar bills. On both sides no one is getting legal opinions. Dr. Seelman asked if they can help Council out with legal opinions. Mr. Tague asked if we can get an opinion from CMS or anywhere else. Ms. Healy said she has an article with an opinion from CMS. She will send it out. There are some independent legal organizations. She will ask them. Amy Anderson point out the Disability Law Project Executive Director Michael Murphy has sent a legal opinion. Ms Cleary responded that the opinion was negative. It expressed concerns regarding it effect on receiving funds.

City Council Medicaid Resolution:

Ms. Healy reported that she had been working with City Council Member Doug Shields to make public information about the proposed Medicaid cuts and influence legislation. Last Wednesday there was a post agenda on these cuts at City Council. Ten experts spoke. There was an article about the post agenda in the Pittsburgh Post Gazette and on the local report of National Public Radio. Council was asked for a resolution to be sent to the Governor and State Legislature. If these cuts go through, to get proper care patients would have to go into a nursing home. If not they could die.

It is worth spending some money on a bus to lobby against these cut. The limitations will be 6 prescriptions a month, 18 out patient visits a year and 2 hospitalizations a year. Those impacted will be the elderly and people with disabilities. She moved THE TASK FORCE COMMIT \$700.00 TOWARD THE COST OF A BUS SO PEOPLE FROM PITTSBURGH AND ALLEGHENY COUNTY CAN ATTEND THE PROTEST FUNERAL MARCH IN HARRISBURG. The motion was seconded by Ms. Carter. Dr Seelman requested that the money come out of this year's budget. Motion pass

Annual Meeting:

Mr. Tague reported that the theme of the meeting would be voting accessibility. He is trying to get County Chief Executive Dan Onorato and County Council Members David Fawcett and John DeFazio, the members of the County Election Board. He has not received a response from Mr. Onorato. Joe Catanese of County Council asked that we send an email request. Dr. Seelman added that they referred to the issue of accessibility at Enable America. Mr. Parker pointed out that the date was based on the availability of the room as well as the panel. Mr. Tague said he would report be email as to whether Mr. Onorato and the County Council members can be there. Ms Healy said she would ask her Democratic Party Ward Chairperson to intervene. Mr. Parker said as soon as we have a date, he will get a room, get the panel together and do a mailing.

Mr. Tague pointed out that the Task Force has not had an election. He asked for volunteers to serve on the nominating committee. Ms. Healy volunteered to chair the committee. Dr. Seelman, Ms. Cater and Mr. Mohanty agreed to serve on the committee.

Employment:

Dr. Seelman reported that United Cerebral Palsy held a town meeting. Secretary of Labor Schmerin and County Chief Executive Onorato attended. 225 people signed up (the data base is available to be incorporated with the Task Force's data base).

Mr. Tague reported that he is looking into City and County employment practices. The committee will consist of himself, Mr. Parker, a city representative, a county representative and Carol Cunan from the State. The committee will develop a plan for the City and the County which will be forwarded to the Mayor and Chief Executive. There are two parts to this issue: hiring and training of staff on disability issues. He hopes to have a plan by the end of July for the Task Force to approve.

Dr. Seelman asked if the committee was working with Career Links. Stan Swintek of OVR responded that they have a check list compiled. Dr. Seelman added that random checks of Career Links found problems with TTDs. Mr. Swintek responded that every OVR office is accessible. Mr. Tague added that this was being coordinated by Sandy Veto. The committee will look at that but will focus on hiring processes in the County and the City. Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council is working on State hiring. Ms. Healy said that the Work Force Investment Board of the County is hiring an Equal Opportunity Officer. Ms. Barricella responded they hired Shad Henderson. Mr. Swintek said this was a shared position between three Career link programs. Ms. Healy said the City and County are major elements in the Career Links program. Mr. Swintek should be talking with Mr. Henderson about hiring and the culture of disability.

Mr. Parker announced that the Support Helps Others Use Technology (SHOUT) conference will be in Pittsburgh. This group helps vocational counselors work with people using accommodation equipment in finding jobs. OVR pays for the conference, but the funding was cut this year. He asked \$5,000.00 to help with the conference. Ms. Barricella said the Task Force funded scholarships for people to attend, but we never contributed \$5,000.00. Dr. Seelman said she does not know what the guidelines are for this sort of request. Mr. Parker said there are no guidelines. He added the Conference is already planned. Ms. Healy said in lieu of a contribution, we could provide accessible venues at no cost to decrease the cost of the conference. We are not in the position to help fund the conference. Mr. Parker said there are 300 people participating in the conference. It is planned for the Sheraton. Mr. Swintek replied the OVR funding issue is not dead yet. Mr. McGann thanked Mr. Swintek. He asked why they had not set up an advisory board for better planning. Getting deaf, blind and hard of hearing people together will make planning better and communication easier.

Design / Housing:

Mr. Henderson reported that he has not met with the committee. He would like to work on compliance issues. Design is one thing but compliance is important. Dr. Seelman asked if we have a vehicle to work through the URA. John responded that the committee would do that.

Hospital Problems:

Mr. Mohanty reported that a deaf person brought an injured child into the Emergency Room (ER) of Children's Hospital. Prior to arriving at the ER they called and said they would need an interpreter. They waited three hours and the interpreter never showed up. Staff asked at one point if they could set up the relay system. The doctor finally put a cast on the child's arm, gave him a prescription and sent him home. This happens quite often. They have contacted the hospitals. This is an ongoing problem.

Ms. Stypula said that 7 or 8 months ago she brought this issue up with Representative Dan Frankel. He was going to set up a meeting with the Director of UPMC. The Task Force should find out what he is doing. Ms. Cater said she is on the Family Forum of Children's Hospital. She was surprised by this. We should invite the head of UPMC and Mr. Frankel to a meeting.

Mr. Tague pointed out it was now 3:00 and the meeting should be ending. He suggested that we have times on each agenda item.

Dr. Seelman said she has been hearing about these issues for as long as she has had hearing loss. We need to give this issues some time. We need to find out if the hospitals have a systematic way of getting interpreters. It should be put on the next agenda. Ms. Healy responded that about a year ago UPMC got publicity on the work it did with Deaf Talk. She and Ms. Carter have a meeting with the administrator of Children's Hospital on Friday and they will bring up this issue. Ms. Cater said we need to deal with more children's issues. We should deal with this in a timely fashion and move it along.

Internship:

Stephanie Johnson introduced herself. She said she would be working with the committees on setting up meetings. Ms. Healy asked that Mr. Meritzer send the Task Force members her email address.

Letters of Support:

The Task Force sent out a letter of support at the request of Ms. Healy for a Federal grant for a Parent Training Center for Pennsylvania. Ms. Healy pointed out the Ms. Carter is also involved in this project. The Center will assist parents.

The Task Force also sent out a letter of support as the request of Dr. Seelman for an Engineering Research Center. She said she was asking that Mr. Tague be added to the committee supervising this activity. It will work on community based technology.

Announcements:

Ms. Healy informed the Task Force she sent a letter to Don Clark thanking him for extending the selection process for Integrated Service Plan.

Mr. Meritzer informed the Task Force that the County is engaged in their Comprehensive Planning Process and urged members to be involved.

Dr. Seelman informed the Task Force the University Of Pittsburgh Chancellor's 2005 Affirmative Action Award went to the Department of Rehabilitation Science and Technology for subsidizing faculty and students with disabilities on campus and in the community.

Brenda Bare informed the Task Force that Council Member Bill Peduto is recognizing disabled youth. He was selected to represent Pittsburgh at Enable America Leadership 2005. Ms. Healy asked if Three Rivers can help with the Celebration.

Adjournment:

It was moved by Dr. Seelman to ADJOURN THE MEETING. Mr. Barton seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:14 PM

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:	DATE:	July 18, 2005
	TIME:	1:00 P.M.
	LOCATION:	First Floor Conference Room Civic Building, 200 Ross Street Pittsburgh, PA 15219