

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
JUNE 18, 2007  
MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Aurelia Carter, Janet Evans, Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, John Tague

**Members Absent:** Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Linda Dickerson, Paul O'Hanlon

**Others Present:** Steve Chopeli, Leslie Cooke, Holly Dick, Mary Figlar, Doug Glovier, Chuck Keenan, Jerry Laychak, Danielle Lenge, Richard Meritzer, Charles Morrison, Denise McArthur-Turner, Anne Nalepa, Teresa Nellans, James C. Noschese, Amanda Panosky, Paula Lackore Rule, Sally Jo Snyder, David Stragar, Evelyn Stypula

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Parker at 1:05 PM.

**Introductions:**

Everyone introduced themselves.

**Approval of the May 2007 Minutes:**

Ms. Evans moved TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES. Ms. Healy seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Financial Report:**

Jeff Parker passed out copies of the report. The balance is \$12,903.00. \$2,703.00 is for our use. We will have about \$700.00 left after this meeting. Ms. Healy moved to ACCEPT THE FINANCIAL REPORT. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. It passed unanimously

**Consumer Health Coalition:**

Sally Jo Snyder and Mary Figlar of the Consumer Health Coalition Committee on Disabilities came to the table. Sally Jo Snyder reported on the "I am your neighbor" campaign. We need to build community capacity that people can live where they want with resources and support. The State Legislature is currently debating the budget and this budget should include money for this support. She asked everyone to wear the "I am you neighbor" button, send the postcard included in the packets that were handed out, and attend local legislative visits.

She then reported on the “Being a Proactive Patient- A guide to Person-centered care” booklet. Health care must be consumer centered. The Committee focuses on outreach and enrollment for health insurance, education and organizing consumers to assure consideration of both physical and mental health. To this end they came up with a guide. Braille copies are currently being printed. She asked everybody to mention this campaign when they go to the doctor and help get the word out.

James (Chris) Noschese added there is no accessibility for the deaf in nursing homes in Pittsburgh. The problem is there is no money for full time staff to sign. Ms. Snyder responded she knew about this concern and would like to meet with him about this. Mr. Parker thanked them.

**Task Force Hospital Initiative:**

Mr. Parker introduced Leslie Cooke, ADA Compliance Intern with the Department of City Planning. Ms. Cooke explained that we were sending questionnaires to both hospitals and consumers. She will then analyze responses and produce a report.

Mr. McGann said that Dr. Kim Mathos has set up a committee to let police know about communication barriers. They are developing a card for people to have alerting the police to communication situations. Anne Nalepa asked if the hearing impaired community have had any input into the questionnaire. Ms. Cooke responded that both Dr. Mathos and her mother, who is an interpreter for the deaf, had extensive input. But there was no direct input from consumers. Ms. Nalepa suggested she contact Christina Chamberlain of TRCIL at 412-371-7700. Mr. McGann said Three Rivers Center for Independent Living does not have a certified interpreter. Ms. Chamberlain is not certified. Mr. Noschese said he had a problem with the questions and would like to work with Ms. Cooke on how to rephrase them. Ms. Stypula asked if they have considered emergency rooms. Some deaf people get very frustrated in emergency rooms. Ms. Cooke responded she had. Mr. Parker said this was a good start.

**Task Force Committee Work - Nominations:**

Mr. Parker reported the Committee consisted of Ms. Carter, Mr. Tague, Dr. Seelman and Ms. Healy and there were two vacancies on the Task Force. He asked the committee to plan a process to solicit nominations.

Mr. Tague suggested they send out letters. We will use the mailing list from Volunteers of America. This is the process we followed before and it works fine. He will send a letter to committee members. Ms. Healy said they should make a grid and look at the current membership. Then recruit based on need. Mr. Parker summarized the process that was discussed as drafting a letter, conference call, and then a mass mailing. One of the nominees will be from the Mayor’s Office and the other from the County Executive’s Office. He suggested that everyone help to wrap this up next week and get the mailing out.

**Principals for the County Community Development Block Grant Program:**

Mr. Parker reported we need a plan for developing the principles. He distributed a letter we had received from Achieva. He pointed out that Doug Glover was here from the County Department of Economic Development.

Ms. Healy said we are trying to understand the timeline County Economic Development is following. They expect to have the Request for Proposals (RFP) out in August and award funds by the end of the year. We are deciding how we could provide guidelines to evaluate proposals. One of the values is community involvement and participation. Could they incorporate that in the RFP? Mr. Glover said the RFPs have not gone out yet.

Mr. Parker said Achieva would like the Task Force to meet with them and the letter from Paula Rule invites the Task Force to visit their program. Mr. Parker said the Task Force would take Achieva up on that offer.

**Office of Vocation Rehabilitation (OVR) Follow-up:**

Anne Nalepa reported that Carolyn Vidt, who is active on the Citizens Advisory Committee, is working on this issue. The address is 531 Penn Avenue. There is no quick or safe access. Dumpsters are in the way and the alley has potholes. They are forming a committee to work with OVR to insure the safety of consumers. They need people to help work on this project.

Ms. Healy asked if they had moved yet. Ms. Nalepa responded not yet. Ms. Healy asked what solution are people seeking. Do they want safe emergency pathways or to stop the move? If the contract is signed the Task Force can work with the City to move the dumpsters and pave the alley. Ms. Nalepa responded that some of what has been done may not have been legal, but no one has time to pursue that issue. So, yes, she wants to make the alley more accessible. They are only at the brainstorming stage at this point. Jeff pointed out that Mr. Matveiev of the Bureau of Building Inspection was at the last meeting. Mr. Matveiev is informing Mary Fleming, Assistant Chief of Code Enforcement, about the dumpsters. He asked we work with Public Works on the paving.

Mr. Henderson asked about the elevator. Is OVR willing to make it bigger? Mr. Tague said the issue is the second level. The elevator is 36” wide. The cost to widen it to 42” would be \$100,000. He then said the bigger issue is how OVR views the Citizens Advisory Committee. The City should be held responsible for cleaning the back alley. It’s slimy back there.

Mr. McGann added OVR was downstairs in the Kossman Building. OVR should focus more on these issues. Mr. Henderson continued the issue should not be the cost of the elevators. Money should not be the issue. What does the ADA require? Mr. Parker said Mr. Matveiev looked at that and responded. Mr. Meritzer suggested they contact the Fire Department as well as Bureau of Building Inspection and Public Works. Ms. Goldstein said the second floor is mostly administrative offices. No one in the administration would be in a wheelchair. Mr. Tague said no, but the meeting rooms are on the first floor. Ms. Nalepa added people in wheelchairs would not be able to meet with administrators. She went on to say the administration of OVR does not like the building. They do not like that it meets the letter, but not the spirit of the law.

**Vox Pop – Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) funding:**

David Stragar, the Program Manager to the Access to Work Task Force, coordinates the JARC program. It has an \$8 million budget, \$4 million of which is Federal funds; 1 million rides are provided annually with this program, 50 thousand of which are people with disabilities. It is a very diverse program. Three of the participants are non-transportation programs. Currently there is a state transportation crisis. There are no state funds for the non-federal match. If the state does not allocate money by June 30<sup>th</sup>, Ship of Zion, Heritage Health Foundation shuttles and Airport Corridor Transportation Association shuttles will suspend services. Other programs will use up local funds. They have met with state legislators, the Governor's office and Congressional representatives.

Mr. Parker suggested that the best way the Task force could help was to send a letter. Mr. Stragar said that he would like everyone to write letters of support. They should go to the county delegation within the next week. Mr. Tague pointed out that the Governor placed a tax on oil company profits. Would that cover JARC? Mr. Stragar replied this would cover it, but the bills currently under consideration would cover it as well.

At this point Mr. Parker pointed out Gabe Mazefsky was here from the Mayor's Office. He informed Mr. Parker that the Mayor had a family emergency and will not be able to make the meeting. He will try to make the July meeting.

Mr. Stragar continued he would appreciate if the Task Force would send a letter to the County delegation. Mr. Tague asked should the letter support a dedicated funding source or the JARC program. Mr. Stragar responded it should be for Job Access Reverse Commute, the only program for non-traditional transportation city to suburb or suburb to suburb. Ms. Healy asked if the JARC program was competing for funds. Mr. Stragar said Port Authority was a designated recipient. Ms. Carter said she needs more information on the program. Holly Dick informed the Task Force that JARC provides three shuttles for Access. Ms. Healy moved THE CITY OF PITTSBURGH / ALLEGHENY COUNTY TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES SEND A LETTER IN SUPPORT OF STATE FUNDING FOR JARC. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. Mr. Tague suggested that the letter support public transportation, not just a piece of the transportation system. Representative Markosek from our area chairs the House Transportation Committee. James Noschese said don't forget to add communication access such as video telephones. Mr. Parker said we should support a dedicated funding source for an area or program rather than a particular need. Mr. Tague added dedicated funding for disability programs. Ms. Healy asked if Pennsylvania was to dedicate funding for mass transit would there be a Federal match? Mr. Tague said no. Ms. Healy said there is a one to one match for JARC funding. Could we make an umbrella request for transportation and the specifically mention JARC. This was accepted as a friendly amendment and the motion was passed unanimously. Ms. Healy pointed out time was of the essence.

**Vox Pop:**

Mr. Noschese brought up videophone access. This allows people to make calls without an interpreter. He asked that the City have videophones. This would allow communication with elected officials. Mr. Parker asked if other cities use videophones. Mr. Noschese said hospitals in Chicago use them. Ms. Healy suggested the videophones be where an interpreter is so they can use the interpreter from the remote location. Mr. Noschese pointed out all offices have computers. You just need to add a web cam. The cost is minimal. Mr. McGann suggested members go to Video Relay Service in Greentree to see how it works.

Teresa Nellans asked if there could be a fan provided for the next meeting. Mr. Meritzer said he would check with the building management.

Ms. Nellans suggested that the hospital survey be sent to consumers first for their input.

Steve Chopeli said there will be a mental retardation disability public hearing and a hearing on aging issues. Mr. Meritzer said he will put it on the web page. Mr. Parker asked if the web page has been updated. Mr. Tague said it has and now includes a section of links for employment.

Mr. Parker said there will be a meeting on July 16<sup>th</sup>. We will invite the Mayor to that meeting.

Mr. Henderson said there will be a march on July 24<sup>th</sup> at Market Square at 11:00 a.m. to celebrate the anniversary of the ADA. There will be a dinner on July 25<sup>th</sup> at Heinz Field. Mr. Tague added that there was a house resolution proclaiming that week ADA week.

Ms. Nellans asked about the status of the permit changes. Mr. Meritzer explained that the permit changes were approved by everybody, but the Law Department has still not made the changes. Ms. Healy asked if they can be invited to the next meeting. Mr. Meritzer said he can invite both the Law Department and the Permit Office to the next meeting.

Mr. Henderson moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Healy seconded the Motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:42 p.m.

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:**

DATE: July 16, 2007  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219