

CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
May 17, 2010
MINUTES

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

Members Present: Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Janet Evans, Rich McGann, James C. Noschese, John Tague

Members Absent: Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman

Others Present: Adolphine Birescik, Gerhardt Egri, Joe Elliot, Dianne Gallagher, Angela Hadbavny, Megan Hammond, Larry Hockenberry, Maribeth Hook, Chuck Keenan, James Kindler, Danielle Lengle, Richard Meritzer, Charles Morrison, Matt Pavolosky, Noreen Price, Damon Rhodes, Mary Van Shura, Sally Jo Snyder, Joseph Wassermann, Michael Zaken

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O'Hanlon at 1:05 PM.

INTRODUCTIONS

ACTION ITEM

Review & approval of April's minutes

Mr. McGann motions to approve. Ms. Evans seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Review & approval of financial report

Mr. Tague reviewed the 2009-2010 budget. Funding was reduced by 28%, the numbers listed on the budget handout show how that computed. All current expenses were taken off of the total, and the Hearing and Deaf Services have not been included in the report because the bills have not come in yet, but they are estimated. If you average the remaining sum, there are 414 dollars left towards the June meeting. Judy Baricella said that they have an ADA event planned in the budget but she is not sure how much money will be taken from it yet. The expenses from Disability Connections are from phone connections. There is enough money for May, and for half of June.

Mr. Noschese asks if the budget is based from July 1 – June 30 and Mr. Tague confirms. He then asks if the Task Force has the same expectations for the same budget amount for the next fiscal year or will it be cut again.

Mr. Tague said that the answer was not certain. The 2010-2011 budget has not been passed yet. Originally we were told that when the county cut 14 percent, we would not be affected.

Mr. Noschese asked if we are going to need an action to get this process going.

Mr. O'Hanlon stated that we need to make a decision whether we want to have a June meeting but we are going to have to explore our options. One possibility is not to have a June meeting. Wait for an email from Richard as to whether there will be a June meeting.

Mr. McGann asked who the contact person to get help is.

Mr. Tague responded that funds come through the Department of Human Services.

Ms. Van Shura said that she would check on this.

Mr. Tague stated that this does not solve next year's problem.

Mr. Pavlosky said that the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission, through outreach programs could pick up a tab for a meeting and he could let you know by end of week.

Mr. Egri asked if we can we use volunteering services to continue with meetings.

Mr. O'Hanlon responded that everything is a possibility. As we look for resources, we will see.

Mr. Kindler asked if we could solicit funds from CCPH and his organization and the usual gamut of people who have money to spare.

Mr. O'Hanlon responded that he is hoping there are other groups to provide resources.

PRESENTATION

Dis+Abilities Expo Noreen Price

Noreen Price joins the table.

Ms. Price has been an advocate for the disabled community for forty years. She is excited for the Dis + Abilities Expo October 8-10 at the Monroeville Convention Center. Vendors are coming. The purpose is to showcase the products and services available to adults, seniors, and children with disabilities. There will be a Fashion show, dis + abilities Got Talent Show, karaoke from her store, "NP Music n'More", a Senior Idol competition, where last year, fifteen people from Western PA competed. We are hoping someone in a wheelchair will compete this year.

They need help and are offering employment opportunities to become part of the expo. For persons with disabilities, there is a list for non-profits to participate. They would give that person 50 dollars if you got them to participate and for a business to participate would give you 100 dollars.

This is not the first expo. Two years ago they did a small one at a community college. She also did this in California. Maybe they could have a Pittsburgh Miss Wheelchair

pageant or a Mr. If you have any questions let Ms. Price know. It is free to the public. Chesapeake wheelchair is looking to be the premier sponsor. There will be great products for persons with disabilities. They have sent tons of letters to non-profits and businesses. She will know by June 4th how many will be participating.

Information:

October 8-10, 2010

Monroeville Convention Center 209 Mall Boulevard, Monroeville, PA 15146

Friday & Saturday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

Sunday, 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Richard Meritzer will email information out when available.

Mr. Egri: Is there a website to find out more information?

Ms. Price: There is just my website for Music n'More right now. She will be getting some information on there soon.

Mr. McGann: Will other types of disabilities like deafness and blindness be represented?

Ms. Price: Anyone can come. We are working with Steel City Interpreters. If any interpreters here would like to help, I would like your contact info. The talent show is for anyone.

Mr. Hockenberry: If the person who is deaf cannot sign, who can help them communicate in the Dis+abilities Expo?

Ms. Price: When the person who is deaf comes will they bring their own interpreter?

Mr. Hockenberry: No.

Ms. Price: Maybe we could have interpreters there at the information booths, who would like to volunteer and go around with individual.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Email Richard some of those documents and he will get them to us.

Ms. Price: Thank you all.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Is this a one person effort?

Ms. Price: No, I have some friends and other organizations helping me. I live in Westmoreland County, so I do not know all of the resources in Allegheny County.

Mr. Kindler: Do not forget to ask medical supply companies to participate.

Ms. Price: We have Medicare and they said they would participate and Social Security also. If you know of any, let me know. I am on the PA Rehabilitation Council. At the meeting in Harrisburg, I told them they should get out here. They have a survey, surveys

about Occupational and Vocational Rehabilitation and how their services are. We survey how the Governor and the OVR are doing. The survey is in an electronic format as well.

Mr. Meritzer: I will be glad to email the survey out.

Noreen Price leaves the table.

DISCUSSION

Market Square- Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership

Mr. O'Hanlon: Market square has been construction zone. It is now close to grand opening. Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership had a hearing for zoning board regarding some variances regarding outdoor dining. This was of particular concern with disability community and how that would affect accessibility.

Mr. O'Hanlon welcomes partnership to give presentation.

Patty Burk PDP, Maribeth Hook URA, and Damon Rhodes Wilber Smith Associates come to the table

Ms. Burk: Plan view of market square. Four years ago, Mayor O'Connor identified market square as a hole in the golden triangle. PDP as the downtown organization was selected to manage activities here. Merchants and public wanted outdoor dining the most. Public spaces from New York designed the space and opened it up to a public process for a year. There were three designs available to comment on and one was chosen. Now, the square is under construction and is about to open. 21 foot sidewalks, flat like piazza, no cars through middle, but will go around, less parking but there will be parking on the outside.

Mr. Zaken: Will sidewalks extend to street?

Ms. Burk: Sidewalks extended to outer parking spaces

Mr. Zaken: There will be at least 5 ft of clearance on the sidewalks.

Ms. Burk: correct

Mr. O'Hanlon: Forbes will be closed down through the square.

Mr. Zaken: The cars will go around the square?

Ms. Burk: They will go down Forbes Avenue and around to the right. Then out Forbes or McMasters.

Ms. Burk: There will be chairs and tables in the middle, for public use, but there won't be tables in old Forbes Ave.

Ms. Hadbavny: I know that you want a variance for no railings or between seating and sidewalk, supposed to have policeman on duty to make sure they didn't put the chairs out

further. It will not work. Using a railing to contain restaurant space is appropriate. Blind people won't know where people are or where border of restaurant is and can land literally on top of a person.

Mr. Kindler: Will there be a stage?

Ms. Burk: Yes

Mr. Kindler: Why did we turn a green space into a concrete place?

Ms. Burk: There were 3 designs and the public chose this one.

Mr. Wassermann: With low-hanging branches, not even guide-dogs will avoid those.

Ms. Burk: Outdoor dining is one of the features, and we hope it to be the destination. The current legislation is for barriers on 3 sides. We are asking to remove the front barrier. We think the side barriers are visual enough. There will be a caretaker to redo chairs 3 times a day. The caretaker will be there from 6am-7pm. All tables will be handicapped accessible.

Mr. McGann: I have two points. In the square, there needs to be a place available if you are going to have a stage, where people who use interpreters can get close. Have you made accommodations for that?

Ms. Burk: stage is level, not raised, canopy is removable, if stage is raised the event will be responsible.

Mr. O'Hanlon: who manages logistics of providing interpreters, placement. How will deaf community get access to stage to see interpreter?

Ms. Burk: A special events committee will manage the square.

Mr. McGann: Will there be an area for guide dogs? Will square have that type of place to allow guide dogs relief.

Ms. Burk: The Square is dog friendly,

Mr. O'Hanlon: What is the preferred covering for a dog relief area?

Ms. Burk: We don't restrict animal use.

Ms. Hadbavny: Many places would put area with wood chips or with ground cover. So someone doesn't get arrested because their dog peed on a rhododendron.

Mr. Noschese: I've been reading true stories about architecture engineers, set up all over the place, and the engineers have not put sidewalks. We have plenty of buildings but no sidewalks. People who work there make new paths. Let's see what problems develop and address them as they arise.

Mr. O'Hanlon: There is more to be said about sidewalk area, and the street area and surface of each, better description about how all these things are.

Ms. Burk: From buildings out, 21 ft sidewalks are all brick – extension of what is there today, then granite strip – 6 inches. Next, historic cobblestone streets – distinct texture, then granite strip again, and finally the terrazzo – city sidewalk, and trees

Mr. Hockenberry – Rich and Mr. Noschese about deaf people, how many chairs limited to deaf people, how many spaces reserved for deaf people? Can you put up HDTVs? Will there be interpreters for them?

Ms. Burk: We do library cart, farmers market, and children's show. We designed square for power access, for TV, Verizon line for communication. It's all set up for those things. When people are hosting events, they can do that.

Ms. Hadbavny: For the entrances to businesses, with tables, will there be 5 ft ways for power chairs to figure out how to get into business without having to go in between tables.

Ms. Burk: The new legislation states that they must have a 5 foot path to enter business.

Ms. Hadbavny: I am concerned about sandwich boards, flower pots with plants, want city to be aware of this problem that you have to zigzag. Things should be on the building side.

Ms. Burk: The PDP does not like the A-frame signs, guidelines that say it must be within café area.

Mr. Meritzer: Councilman Kraus is getting together a meeting to discuss that issue city-wide. Zoning office, those a-frame signs are not legal anywhere. They are moving to solve problem.

Mr. Zaken: Let me get a mental picture of market square. There will be a street level and sidewalk level--how will I know?

Ms. Burk: The sidewalk brick is smooth and the street cobblestone is very bumpy.

Mr. Zaken: will there be chairs against buildings? How will I get out of Starbucks?

Ms. Burk: If you go straight in five foot way, then 3 feet of tree space.

Ms. Evans: I have several questions. With the Curb cuts, there's only 2 entrance ways. When you walk into the areas, are there going to be curb cuts all around the square?

Ms. Burk: the sidewalks and street will be one level with flat brick crosswalks across all of the streets.

Ms. Evans: The cobblestones are a little bit raised. Is that going to be a problem for people with wheelchairs?

Ms. Burk: The cobblestone street is not for pedestrian crossing, just vehicular traffic. All of the pedestrian areas have brick.

Ms. Evans: how much space is between where the trees and the tables?

Ms. Burk: 5 feet

Ms. Evans: there will be a lot of people who use wide chairs and that will be enough.

Mr. Noschese: this discussion is going on and on, will somebody like Joe try to see if they can navigate with their canes, without any problem, with their canes. See if it works.

Mr. McGann: There should be a warning, got to remember guide dogs are trained for certain types of surfaces. Don't want to confuse them. Want to keep these things in mind.

Ms. Dick: Will buses still be out of market square?

Ms. Burk: same routes as before.

Ms. Dick: may be taking people to market square in ACCESS van, is there no real area for ACCESS?

Ms. Burk: There loading zones, and space for drop zones.

Ms. Dick: I suggest signage for this purpose.

Mr. Zaken: The more I learn what is going on in market square, the better I feel. Why don't we wait, not knowing is scary, because changes can be scary. We want to make sure everything has been thought of, and everything is accessible for everyone. Having a better feeling about it.

Mr. O'Hanlon: From standpoint of wheelchair access, my concerns were alleviated. From standpoint from someone who is blind, inside of sidewalk where there is a 3 foot barrier of trees and lampposts, perhaps there would be some advantage of way finding guide with some sort of strip. There will be regular trees, tree wells and lamppost to navigate around.

Mr. Egri: How about an invisible fence giving out a sound, with a system, way-finding system like that.

Mr. Wassermann: There are barricades at fifth Ave and market?

Ms. Burk: That is a City project--streetscape project

Mr. Hockenberry: If someone gets hurt or injured is there a button to push to alert 911? Is there a phone booth and is there an accessible TTY?

Ms. Burk: There is police officer all day long, and we are advocating for one at night (For the first year). We don't want to have public telephones because they attract drug dealers. When the businesses are open, they can help anyone in need. We have not made that accommodation.

Mr. Hockenberry: Will there be security cameras? Maybe you could have cameras at those areas with phone booths

Ms. Burk: great idea. On June 1 is the soft opening. Try it out let us know. The rest would be open in October.

Mr. O'Hanlon: As of last week had vehicles?

Ms. Burk: open now on Primantis side.

Ms. Burke passes out handouts.

Ms. Burk, Hook, and Damien leave the table.

Mr. McGann: The meeting for the blind where is it going to be?

Mr. Wassermann: golden triangle council of the blind. June 26. Center City Towers where ACCESS office is. 650 Smithfield street. 5th floor.

Mr. O'Hanlon: meeting about market square project?

Mr. O'Hanlon: As of last week had not met with Disability Community. I hope that they are more proactive with the disability community in the future. Had not meet with any group of people with disabilities before today. Met last week because we went to meeting to voice concerns. Still concerned about things that the blind community raised. Hope they take away with being more proactive with the community. Once a project opens it is harder to change things. Hope it works out.

Ms. Van Shura: I just talked to Department of Human Services. Send funding need to Jody Baricella CC Joe Elliot and Van Shura. If there is an issue like this in the future, please contact us.

Mr. Zaken: Can we send legislation out and can I have it?

Mr. Meritzer: It is part of city code. I can send it out. If there are amendments I will send them out.

Mr. O'Hanlon: The city code says that no more than 50% of sidewalk can be used for outdoor cafes. But because the market square café is so wide, they were asking for a variance. They were also asking for a variance for the barrier on the front side. In order to promote open feeling of market square, as long as they police the creep factor. It might actually provide easier access for those in wheelchairs to get to the tables.

Ms. Hadbavny: If there's a specific accessible door, couldn't there be a motion detector to let u know the entrance of the business. It wouldn't have to be loud, or even if it was a little ding, as long as we knew we were in the path to get into a business. It would increase business for everyone because we know they're there.

Mr. O'Hanlon: they could have done a better job to reaching out to disability community. They could have done more.

Mr. Hockenberry: Do people who are blind have electronics for when they're walking to sound alarm when they're outside a certain area?

Mr. McGann: No

Ms. Dick: Has zoning hearing board rendered a decision?

Mr. O'Hanlon: It was a closed hearing, the decision is forthcoming. Will not be taking anymore evidence. We will make decision within 10 days.

STAFF REPORTS

Update from Interns

Mr. Lamorella: Met with Public Works for assessment of facilities. Compiling information on Audible Pedestrian signals. And I am contacting hospitals on distributing Hospital Compliance Guidelines.

Mr. Zaken: I like to thank Justin for work on audible pedestrian signals. And thanks to the City for installing them at Friendship and Howley.

Mr. Stiker: I'm currently working on Ability PGH public service announcement for the government channel. I'm also working the on the One Step publication for businesses and working with the 2011 National Veterans Wheelchair Games.

Mr. Scalamogna: I'm currently writing Grant proposals and working to get community sponsorship for the various projects in the department.

Meetings Scheduled

Mr. Meritzer: Daniel also attends the Special events meetings. I attended the Sign-athon yesterday. 15-16 people signed up for our mailing list. Waiting to hear from Councilperson Krauss about obstructions in the sidewalk. There is a problem with visitability tax credit. When the state passed their enabling legislation and the city made their changes to agree with that. The legislation requires that all restrooms be accessible which was not the intent. Then they were starting to deny people for tax credit. Trying

to get state code to change enabling code so that we could change city code. With the SOAR project, working with Chuck, to get hospitals to provide records more quickly. Expedite getting homeless people in housing.

VOX Pop

Ms. Hadbavny: As a patient at UPMC Magee-Women's Hospital, was there for surgery, had to walk around hospital. Staff was good but they kept asking for a wheelchair but didn't get one until I was leaving. UPMC has a long way to go for accommodating the blind

Ms. Gallagher: Did Susan Schaefer leave? Do they have a replacement?

Mr. Meritzer: Mary Ann Sander is supervisor. They are currently hiring. Replacement has huge shoes to fill.

Mr. Noschese: I will be traveling a lot through 8 airports for 5 months. I will acquire info about services.

Mr. McGann: Make sure you find name of business that is replacing Huntley that provides wheelchair services, supposedly would be available in all airports.

Ms. Evans: Still need to do advocacy. Need to be heard, if not heard, there are programs and other important things might go away in future. I went to a women's health and environment conference for one day. Surprised over 2500 people were there but there was hardly any people with disabilities. I only counted 10% of people there with disabilities. Need to get out there and advocate.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Tomorrow is Election Day.

Mr. O'Hanlon entertains a motion to adjourn. Ms. Evans motions. Mr. McGann seconds.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:55.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: June 21, 2010
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219