

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

**November 17, 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, Aurelia Carter, Bill Chrisner, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Jeff Parker, Kate Seelman
- Members Absent:** Al Condeluci, Linda Dickerson, Rich McGann, Penny Perlman
- Others Present:** Lisa Moses, Will Thompkins, Judy Barricella, Jerry Laychak, Richard Meritzer,

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O'Hanlon at 1:12 PM.

**Approval of Agenda:**

The agenda was reviewed. Will Thompkins was added after the financial report. The City Budget Office representative would speak whenever they arrived. There was a motion to APPROVE THE AGENDA as amended. The motion was seconded and all members voted in favor of the motion.

**Introductions:**

All members and guests introduced themselves.

**Approval of the October 20, 2003 Minutes:**

Dr. Seelman submitted some clerical corrections. Mr. O'Hanlon moved to accept the minutes as corrected. The minutes were approved as amended.

**Financial Report**

Mr. Parker stated that there were no expenses last month. For the year to date the only expense has been for an interpreter twice. It was pointed out that Task Force members could be reimbursed for travel and parking.

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Minutes of October 20, 2003 page 2

**Personal Care boarding Homes:**

Ms. Perlman reported on evaluations being performed of personal care boarding homes. Many of the residents have mental health diagnosis. There are over 90,000 people living in personal

care in this county. The personal care boarding homes being evaluated were those with provisional licenses (new boarding homes or those that had already been sited for not following regulations). They then went back and revisited those with problems to see if appropriate changes were made. A few of these homes had serious problems or would probably be closed. The question becomes what happens to the residents? When ever possible, they work with the owners to bring the facility into regulation. This includes a great amount of state and county cooperation. Follow-up is ongoing. There are 26 facilities that have provisional licenses due to problems in their operation.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked what alternatives people have. The people who live in these facilities can't make their own meals, take their own medications without assistance or do laundry. Allegheny County MH/MR has a supportive living program, but these services are minimal.

Ms. Healey suggested that the Task Force could make recommendations to the City of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. She asked what effect we could have on the work of Office of Human Services and the Office of Behavioral Health on these issues. Ms. Perlman pointed out that the County provides funding for these facilities. In most of these homes there is very limited activity and many are in isolated locations. There is nothing for the residents to do. They get \$60.00 a month to on. They must buy their own clothing, cigarettes and transportation. The Department of Aging has a Dom Care program gives the participant more independence. There are not a lot of placements available. Ms. Perlman will research the cost.

Mr. O'Hanlon stated that the County gives a supplement of \$300.00. Ms. Perlman said this money goes to the personal care boarding homes, not to the person. The estimated cost to keep a resident in a personal care boarding home is \$1,000.00 a month. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that this money couldn't be provided to residents in other living situations. We have had 50 to 70 years of public housing policy that have excluded people with disabilities. This has led to alternative housing systems. There is still no attention to public housing meeting these needs.

Ms. Healey informed the Task Force that a building in Polish Hill has been converted to assisted living. Residents with mental retardation live there. Ms Perlman pointed out that there are not many CRPs (Group Homes). And these facilities limit the time people can reside there.

Mr. O'Hanlon pointed out that this is a big issue with a number of components. Ms. Healey stated that we should provide as much support as necessary and no more. People in personal care boarding homes generally do not have families, but do not need direct supervision. Questions:  
Could the supplement be portable?  
Should the Housing Authority provide more options?

Mr. O'Hanlon stated that in public housing, you get what they give you. The Housing Authority doesn't provide supportive services. Collaboration between the Housing Authority and service providers is not consistent. Ms. Perlman said that Housing Authority called a group together to look at this issue, but nothing seemed to come out of it.

Ms. Healey said this discussion should be reinvigorated. Who would do the preliminary work? Mr. O'Hanlon suggested that the Task Force might be interested in taking this on. Most people are there because they do not have a better option. He said we should invite the County Director of Elections to a meeting. One of our next meetings should be a dedicated meeting with P. C. B. H. Ms. Perlman pointed out the Chartiers has Personal Living Arraignment facilities. These are a bridge between personal care boarding homes. They function like cooperative housing. Mr. O'Hanlon ended this discussion with the determination that we should schedule a meeting to further discuss this issue.

**Visitability Update:**

Mr. O'Hanlon reported that he last meeting of the Committee of 15 is next week. The Committee started the process with a Council Bill and had been working on the bill for six months. Late in the process the developers came up with an incentive program. The committee was split and became polarized. This led to a discussion on a compromise. The compromise is to pursue the tax incentive proposal, a tax abatement up to \$2,500.00 from the incremental tax increase. The would be coupled with a URA visitability plan requirement. Virtually all public development goes through the URA.

Ms. Healey asked if this would result in quotas. Mr. O'Hanlon stated there are a range of concerns regarding this approach.

Mr. Thompkins asked that we keep Allegheny County involved. Mr. O'Hanlon said they would approach the County next. Mr. Thompkins asked that this be done simotaneously. The Redevelopment Authority is part of the Department of Economic Development. Most projects in the County go through this Department. He suggested we meet with Steve Morgan. Mr. Thompkins said he would attend that meeting.

Ms. Healey asked if the next meeting would come out with a recommendation. Mr. O'Hanlon said absent some compromise the committee would report out two bills and the results of the meeting would go to City Council. Council will then pass an ordinance. The incentive system does not work for non-profit housing. HUD recommends visitability, but does not require it. The Housing Authority is a separate entity.

Ms. Healey inquired regarding the URA. Mr. O'Hanlon said the URA seems to be on board. On City Council only Barbara Burns is a "No" vote and she has not been reelected. The next Council will be as good on this issue as the current Council.

**Office of Disability:**

Mr. O'Hanlon informed those present that Judy said she had received a few comments. They have completed the process of defining the mission for the office. It is unlikely it will be located in the County Executive's office. Mr. Roddey prefers to staff Departments. It will most likely be in the Department of Human Services.

Ms. Perlman said the County has a number at the Department of Human Services, the Director's Action Line, which people can call if they have questions on County services. She asked if there was an overlap of services here. Mr. O'Hanlon said that this office will be more focused internally.

Ms. Healey asked if this was a draft. Mr. O'Hanlon said things were generally decided. Ms. Healey pointed out that the White House has a Constituent Outreach office with constituent staff. This model is more inclusive. Other cities have specific offices. Chicago has an office that works well. The Mayor is using constituent services to build a power base. Mr. Parker said he doesn't get a sense that this office will be any more than one person. He asked who and what the advisory board is.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked what is the most problematic element? How will this office relate to issues of physical disability? Will this office make it better or worse? Addressing the issue is not necessarily resolving it. People still have major issues.

Ms. Healey pointed out that all governing bodies are required to have a compliance officer. The County has never identified one. This office does not resolve that issue. They should have a compliance officer. Mr. Parker suggested we spell that out. Ms. Healey volunteered to draft a communication conveying the desire of the Task Force to be the advisory board for this office. Mr. Parker asked if the work of the office could be done by one staff person. The Task Force should look at the budget and staffing levels. Mr. O'Hanlon stated if the Task Force could not be the advisory board, we should develop some formal relationship. Ms. Perlman said that it would be a duplication of services to have both a Task Force and an advisory board. Ms. McCoy expressed her concern regarding the office being housed in the Department of Human Services. Ms. Healey said the liaison has been with the County Executive's office. She will draft a letter and circulate it.

#### **ADA Coordinator Report:**

Mr. Meritzer reported that he spoke with Lisa Moses. She said that someone from the administration should be at the next meeting. He also reported that he had an intern who is evaluating existing accessibility needs of City facilities. Ms. Healey pointed out that when the school board tackled a similar project, they identified the need and set a schedule for making the corrections. He also pointed out that he had advertised this meeting on the City Cable Channel.

#### **Announcements:**

Ms. Healey – Mental health and physical needs no alternatives – should be able to bring to the Task Forces problems of multi-needs issues.

Ms. Healey – Attended with Susan Davis the Western Pennsylvania Conference on Children With Special Needs. Discussion on keeping the children at home. There are many such children out there. The Task Force should have a role in this issue. The Task Forces gave her tentative approval to proceed.

#### **Public Comments**

Mr. Laychak reminded the Task Force that Ms. Carter said more consumers should attend.

Ms. McCoy said she was working on Infrastructure for employment. She is also a church worker who visits nursing homes. She has heard a number of horror stories. She asked what the penalty is for non-compliance for Personal Care Homes. Ms. Perlman told her they would eventually lose their license.

Ms. Healey pointed out that there was money available from the Office of Medical Assistance for outreach. Ms. McCoy pointed out that people fear losing their medical coverage when they get a job. She supports Medicaid buy-in. Ms. Healey pointed out that the proposals are out now for the Outreach grant. This money could be used to educate County Assistance workers.

Mr. O'Hanlon said his organization was suing the Housing Authority because they did not have enough accessible units.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:**

DATE: November 17, 2003  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: First Floor Conference Room  
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

**FUTURE MEETING DATES:**

December 15, 2003