City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County
Task Force on Disability
Monday November 17th, 2014
Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance: , Paul O'Hanlon, Dr. Kate Seelman, John Tague, Jeff Parker, Rich McGann, Milton Henderson, Karen Warman, , Joe Wasserman, J. James C. Noschese, Janet Evans

Task Force Members Absent: Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healy, Aurelia Carter-Scott

Also in Attendance*:* Dillon McManus, Matt Walkers, Sylvia San, Richard Meritzer, Mick Kerulack, Sarah Kinter, Shirley Abreola, Janelle Tipton, Lashaunda Brown-Yancey, Carmen Brown, Bill Bartlet, Judy Barisell, Georganne Lingenfelter

Welcome

Action Items:

Review and approval of Treasurers' Report

Ms. Seelman: This looks wonderful, I move to approve

Ms. Warman: Second.

Mr. Tauge: Thank you, I appreciate that. Our Balance on the account is 6,700 dollars which are sufficient funds through the year. There are 2 projects we're working on the 25th Anniversary and the National Council on Disabilities Meeting which we are able to provide some support for to make more accessible whether it be interpreters or transportation. There are 2 expenses, we have committed $1,000 to the National Council on Disabilities and there was an October adjustment of $500 as well, point being that we have sufficient funds through the year. Any Questions?

Mr. Nochese: When we have the national council comes do we have to register and pay a fee on our own or is that something that is covered under the task force?

Ms. Seelman: The meetings are open without any sort of fee but the reception is by invitation only.

Ms. Evans: Who sends out the invitations?

Ms. Seelman: You would have to ask the local organizing committee that is headed by Tina Collagro.

Report Approved.

Review and Approval of July & September Minutes

Mr. Meritzer: I sent out the minutes last week, I previously sent out the July minutes but there was no quorum so I sent them out again with the September minutes. While I didn't send out all of the

attachments, they are on the paper copies on the back table. We are still in the process of drafting the October minutes and I will get those to you as soon as they're finished.

Ms. Seelman: I have a correction for the Treasurers report in September. The council allocated, here it says $1,500 but really it was $1000.

Ms. Evans: I make a motion for July's minutes.

Mr. Nochese: I second.

Mr. O'Hanlon: do I have a motion for September?

Mr. Nochese: I

Mr. McGann: Second.

July and September minutes approved.

<u>Oakland Accessibility</u> – Jeff Parker

Mr. Parker: I'm coming to the meeting today with a request for the task force about the January task force meeting. Accessible Oakland has been an ongoing committee which started with D.J. Stimbler in cooperation with the Oakland business improvement district. It's meant to encourage the business owners in Oakland to make their establishments more accessible. We have been meeting since April and Richard, John and Paul have been attending them and now are doing a marketing campaign to make business owners aware of how to make their operations more accessible. At the last meeting we had a realization that there is an additional part to our project – we realized that enforcement is difficult during construction.

We found this out as a restaurant owner sold the business and a new owner came in and began renovations. It was requested of me to take it to the task force but Richard and I already being members it wouldn't take it much farther in the city. Richard had a good suggestion, that we encourage people from the planning department and inspections to come to the January meeting, people from out committee and Accessible Oakland would come and we would see if these departments could give any oversight to the businesses when they are developing their plans.

Mr. McGann: I understand how difficult it is to maneuver Oakland. A lot of those buildings are old and accommodations are hard to come by. I think encouraging these departments would be great, just look at Brookline Blvd. and what was done there with some effort behind it from the city.

Mr. Nochese: You're action is key. It'll be a wake-up call for them, I think by doing this you are really getting the ball rolling, kudos to you.

Ms. Seelman: This is a creative initiative and we should welcome it and I think it's a real testament to Pittsburgh's civic engagement. There is a lot of people with disabilities involved including some students

of mine looking at plans for a new apartment building seeing just how it could be made more accessible. Jonathan Duvall was looking at blueprints with architects during one of the meetings and the directions they are going in is very impressive. We should really respect what they're doing.

Mr. O'Hanlon: The Oakland effort is great and a very much needed model for similar business districts. It's a very typical situation; it's not unlike Bloomfield or South Side. The business districts are from another era where disability was not a concern. Right now it looks like the model is being done very well and hopefully it can apply to other districts when it's farther along in the process. The second thing though, it's what gets to an age old debate, about the role of licensing and whether or not the city has any affirmative duty whatsoever in this process so I would like to visit that. My question is do you think we need a pre-meeting before the public meeting with any of these people?

Mr. Meritzer: If the committee from the task force wants to meet in advance I can certainly set that up.

Ms. Seelman: I want to better understand Jeff's proposal, I don't want to stop them in their tracks with the law thrown at them. Can you guide us a little bit here, Jeff?

Mr. McGann: Quick question for Kate, how much property does Pitt own in Oakland? Are they someone the initiative should be looking at?

Ms. Seelman: There is an informal relationship between Pitt and the Oakland initiative. I want to go back to Jeff as well to get an idea of what he is thinking.

Mr. Parker: Our thought was to bring different city departments to the table with members of the Oakland business district to have this conversation about responsibilities so we can learn about their position, they can hear our position and we can come to a meeting of the minds about what can be done. What's the process of submitting plans to the city? What does the city feel they can legitimately do? What our expectation is as well. If something cannot be done officially maybe it can be done through cooperation.

Mr. Nochese: I think the biggest concern, for me, is driving the businesses away with accessibility concerns. It costs money to create accessibility and it might be helpful if we can find ways to help them with that.

Mr.McGann: We definitely need to encourage the businesses to change with the current times without draining their resources.

Mr. Meritzer: When we're dealing with renovations they are required to put in 20% of the registration costs so it's not how to make it completely accessible it's how to make it accessible with 20% of your renovations costs. The idea is that they should work that into the program when they're doing renovations. We do not want any businesses to go out of business but we want them to be more accessible. Many of them already have a copy of the One Step Program and outlines how to reduce the cost of a one-step barrier in front of their building. I think that the cost issue is less of a defense now, although they will lean on it.

Ms. Seelman: I look to Jeff, Richard and Paul to gauge whether this should be a full meeting of the task force or a separate meeting. It sounds like there could be work done before they come here. Jeff, what are you thinking?

Mr. Parker: I'm comparing it to other events in the past, having the Parking Authority in here for example and people expressing their different concerns. It seemed like a good venue to have that kind of conversation.

Ms. Seelman: Who would you bring?

Mr. Parker: The new representative in the new permit department, someone from inspections and someone from planning. From the other community Georgia has volunteered to be here, D.J. will be here and most of our committee for Oakland will be here.

Mr. O'Hanlon: It seems to me the purpose of the meeting is twofold. Number one would be to showcase the Oakland initiative which has been a good collaborative model so far and the second is to highlight the ongoing dilemma which this is a part of – a lack of triggering event to really enforce code. Like the 20% requirement: who is requiring it and who is enforcing it?

Ms. Seelman: It would need to be a well-organized meeting and it's not usually the type of meeting we have.

Mr. Meritzer: There is a precedent for this as we have dealt with Public Works with the snow removal on sidewalks and this is exactly the way we tackled that.

Ms. Seelman: There's Public Works but there's a volunteer organization we're putting pressure on. Like Chris says, I want the volunteer energy to move forward in this. I'm in favor if it's well organized.

Mr. O'Hanlon: It doesn't sound like you're incorporating the fact that OBID is requesting that this be brought up. They've recognized the renovation of the restaurant and lack of change during the process.

Ms. Seelman: I move that we invite them but it be a well-organized meeting.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Agreed, and I'm wondering if this cries out for a pre-meeting.

Ms. Seelman: Yes, and Richard would be the one to set it up. For organization purposes I believe it would be good.

Mr. Parker: We could at the Accessible Oakland/OBID meeting, dedicate one to the planning of what will happen in January.

Mr. Meritzer: That sounds good but it is not a substitution for briefing the two directors and their staff and I will set those up.

Ms. Seelman: Great. All I'm trying to do is make sure everyone is on the same page.

Mr. O'Hanlon: So what I'm hearing is that Richard will try and set something up with the new directors and Jeff is going to look at the next OBID meeting for planning, looking to dedicate the January meeting to this.

Update on 2015 Meetings:

Mr. O'Hanlon: In the next calendar year we agreed to: skipping the December meeting and depending on whether we skipped another due to inclement weather, we will skip the August meeting so we can have 10 meetings in the year.

Mr. Wasserman: I vote me move to accept the decision of the executive session.

Decision Accepted.

Disability Agenda 2000 Retrospective:

Mr. O'Hanlon: I wanted to spend a little time on the Disability Agenda 2000 Retrospective. In addition, one of the sections was about community and businesses I believe and the January meeting will be very relevant to that.

Ms. Seelman: It also covered employment and transition, we could use it as an organizing tool.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Let me clarify what Kate mentioned. A number of us met in a meeting earlier to hash out scheduling and in the process of finishing that up we started to talk about what people were interested in working on in the next year and one of the issues was around employment with people with disabilities. One aspect is looking at what the data says in terms of city & county employees and whether it is collected at all. The second thing was, in the big picture of employment there is something called transition, when you've got people transitioning from high school to adult life. Around that there are things like mentoring and internships that we felt like we're better situated to have an impact at that phase than other elements of employment.

Ms. Warman: What if you were to come by a house that could not facilitate an accommodation?

Mr. O'Hanlon: One of the things we did was design a process. It was a big event at station square, there were architects from everywhere. There were people who said "you will never be able to do this house" and we asked if we could make it visitable and all of them agreed that we could.

Ms. Seelman: In relation transition & employment, I've been reading the Disability Right's transcripts and one of the issues that came out about parents with children with severe disabilities is that some will not work and that they will acquire skills for everyday living.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I also have a concern for those people in my life time will not be able to work. But let me move into the discussion about the agenda. Let me start with people who weren't around 15 years ago. We had a yearlong process called Disability Agenda 2000 and the idea of the process was to identify what we called key sectors of society – education, employment, housing etc. We looked at, first off, where were we in those areas and secondly what could we hope to see happen in the near future. In

2000, one of the things we were aware of is that society had a way of thinking about specialized housing, that people with disabilities were all going to live in one high rise and what we started to look at is why is only 5% of houses we are looking at are accessible and the others are inaccessible and all of my families activities are in this in accessible house and there was a large experience of social isolation. We looked at what we called "visitability" no house is harmed by having one accessible entrance. We got state authorization for a visitability ordinance for the city and the county and this is an example of a result of the process. Now that we're on the 25th anniversary of the ADA we would revisit the process – what recommendations did we make then and what has happened in those sectors since? In some areas I think we'll see a lot of exciting things have happened, others we'll see nothing and it's a process that's worth going through to see where we've gotten tracking and where we haven't and where we need to refocus. Does anyone have any questions so far? I think the next step is to talk about what we'll do next.

Mr. Wasserman: I like the idea but have you thought about the difficulty about acquiring data to show what has happened between then and now? We're going to be putting a lot of faith in various departments to accurately report.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Well yes and no. Think one of the parts of this process is identifying some of the key individuals to invite and to some extent what you're saying is an accurate dilemma but I think there is some institutional knowledge too.

Ms. Seelman: I think that the focus at the moment has been on physical accessibility. Of course when talking about technology it will focus on other areas not just housing. It might focus on the cultural district or movies. Even in 2000 communication and translation technology wasn't what it is today so the questions for people with cognitive are different, what are the criteria and how complex is the information. I just wanted to bring up the other kinds of problems here.

Ms. Baricella: I think what Paul is asking is did we do these things? Not trying to figure out how to make it better right this second, but did we do them?

Ms. Evans: It seems like society has changed and people with disabilities have moved up a little bit. Socially I know I have moved up and transportation has changed but things such as employment haven't. Perhaps starting with the strengths first would be good and then saying where do we go from here and what needs to be worked on?

Mr. Nochese: his task force should be proud. You have someone who is deaf and another who is deaf-blind on the task force. If you look at a place like Philadelphia they have no one from that community. We are a very unique task force and I think we need to give ourselves kudos for the diversity of our members.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Here, here. We should be. To go back to the agenda, as an outline, we have 11 sectors that were in this: Culture and the Arts, Employment, Families, Children and Seniors, Healthcare, Higher Education, Housing Planning and Design, Media, Public Relations and Marketing, Neighborhoods and Communities, Primary and Secondary Education, Professional Services, and Research and Technology. Each sector had co-chairs – one of which was a person with a disability and a key community expert.

What I'd like to do at this point is set up a steering committee that would help coordinate this. We want to scope out how many sectors per meeting we could handle, what would be the process, look at who we would invite etc. I would target at least 1 key person for that sector and also scope out who we should invite from the city/county political establishment. My expectation for the steering committee would also look to see how we can get more people out to these meetings with folks from each sector.

Ms. Warman: I'd be willing to be on that committee.

Ms. Evans: I would as well.

Mr. Wasserman: As would I.

Ms. Seelman; I'll work on higher education and transition. I'll have plenty of help with Richard on higher education so we can get working on that.

Mr. McGann: It would be helpful to set these meetings up ahead of time so we can plan and set reminders as well.

Mr. Nochese: He and I are on a lot of committees, we just need to know the schedule ahead of time so we can let you know if we can be involved or not.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Okay, great. Thank you for that. I'll set these meetings up via email or another public way so everyone can know when they're happening.

Ms. Seelman: Does everyone have a copy of the agenda? Can we have it copied?

Mr. O'Hanlon: I'm not sure. It's tricky to find an electronic copy. The discs used 15 years ago can't be used anymore and the technology is hard to overcome.

Ms. Seelman: I would need to get scanned in then.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Yes we would need to look into that.

Mr. Parker: Back on to the meeting for a second, do you think we need to schedule a conference call to get that started?

Mr. O'Hanlon: Yes, that's a good idea.

Mr. Meritzer: We have been having conference calls with Title II coordinators and that is something Dillon and I could set up.

Mr. Parker: That would be a great way to go.

Mr. Nochese: I do a lot of interpreted calls and I have meetings about every 2 weeks and that works perfectly for me.

Career Links Survey:

Mr. O'Hanlon: We have a Career Link Survey up next.

Ms. Sun: Richard and I did an ADA accessibility survey of Career Links on October 20th. The facilitators and managers were in attendance as well. We did not find any major issues except that there was no accessible communication in the elevator. The elevator was not ADA compliant as there was no communication system usable without voice communication. It was highly recommended to install a phone in the elevator. To address the lift, there is a receptionist at the entrance who can see from where they are and would be able to assist anyone who needed to access the facility.

Mr. Meritzer: Are there any questions for either Sylvia or me?

Mr. Nochese: did you see any phones that were accessible for the deaf?

Mr. Meritzer: We did not check that because there were no public phones so that would not have been an issue.

Mr. O'Hanlon: How's that supposed to work for a deaf person.

Mr. Meritzer: It's not but it's an accommodation for other people. It's in the rules that way and we checked what the federal government has people check. You'd be surprised about what the ADA doesn't cover.

Mr. Henderson: When we were down there before we spoke about a light or something similar being installed was that brought back up? Secondly I don't agree with the comment with the ADA not covering something. If it's not covered by the ADA we need to make sure that it is so that the facility is accessible by all.

Mr. Meritzer: I was there only to perform an ADA audit and I'm also not sure if the technology exists for a video phone.

Mr. Henderson: It doesn't necessarily need to be a phone, maybe a light or something like we were speaking about before.

Mr. Meritzer: There is an emergency signal too but the phone is for you to communicate the emergency.

Mr. O'Hanlon: But that would be unavailable to someone who is deaf.

Mr. Henderson: There has to be something to address that.

Mr. Meritzer: We will check that.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Also it seems like it stated that someone is can see the front door to help those who need assistance. In my experience that never works because they aren't looking at the front door. They are doing other things like answering phones and other duties. My question is can the lift be individually operated?

Mr. Meritzer: No.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Why is that?

Mr. Meritzer: I'm not sure, we did not ask that.

Mr. O'Hanlon: What if there was someone on break, how would that be addressed? Is there a way to get someone's attention if they do not see you?

Mr. Meritzer: They told us that the desk is always covered. I do not recall, Sylvia do you remember.

Ms. Sun: I do not think so.

Mr. Henderson: That's something we spoke about before and they were to look into that.

Ms. Seelman: It seems to me the weakness here is communication between the user and the recipient and it's odd that it would be outside the ADA. I think that's something that will need to be checked into. It seems like there is a simple solution here. Richard – where will the report go once you have it ready?

Mr. Meritzer: It will go to them and everyone who was at the meeting. We'll send a letter to them stating that we took it to the task force and here are the recommendations we have.

Ms. Seelman: Will it also have a place in the law? Is there anything to refer to?

Mr. Meritzer: Yes we absolutely will. It may be difficult because the ADA doesn't cover everything and where it covers entrances and exits, it's certainly not in the title 3 specs because that's what we checked. So we'd have to look in the title 2 specs for where it is or the title 4 specs. It will take a bit of research.

Snow Angels Updates:

Mr. McManus: the updates are brief but fairly substantial. A couple of weeks ago the mayor's office sent out the press release to their media outlets which signifies the official recruiting season and when they are able to take applications. Family Services of Western PA has been in the process of hiring a Snow Angels Coordinator, I'm not sure if they have someone yet but they were down to about 3 people as of 2 weeks ago so they should be near a hire. Volunteers and applicants can officially register and can do so via the city website, the programs website or you can all 412-863-5939 or email allegheneysnowangels.org.

Mr. Nochese: Do people who have registered in the past have to re-register?

Mr. McManus: I'm not precisely sure but I can certainly find out.

Mr. McGann: When you use the word media are you talking about newspaper and Television?

Mr. McManus: Yes.

Mr. Meritzer: I saw an article in the Post-Gazette about it this weekend and we have been doing a lot of social media around this too.

Mr. McGann: I had no idea. It's hard sometimes to get news in the deaf-blind community, that's great.

Mr. McManus: What would be the best way to reach out to that community?

Ms. Seelman: Well for the hard of hearing the Hearing Loss Association of America or the AAA and other senior networks for folks who eventually get hard of hearing.

Mr. McGann: I've got nothing from HLA so far, I'm not sure if they know about it.

Mr. Nochese: We have a deaf events email list and website so we can get that information out.

Ms. Seelman: Has this gone out to various civic organizations?

Mr. Meritzer: I sent it out through our mailing list but we obviously need to do a better job and we can do that.

East Liberty Busway Station Accessibility:

Mr. McManus: Richard, Patrick and I took a field survey of the East Liberty Busway construction site with the aim of identifying problem spots and bringing them into compliance. We had a meeting with Action United, Craig Stevens, Paul Alessio and Rebecca Shenk from URA, John Edel a construction consultant was there and Todd Tussic from Port Authority was there. The first point of contention was crossing the busway – the speed of the busses and the crosswalk/curb ramp's not matching up being the chief issues. A light was shot down and the responsibility to look at it landed on port authority. In addition we found that a few of the audible crosswalk indicators did not work properly – we're still in negotiations about how to approach that.

The largest and most heated discussion took place at the corner of Shady and Ellsworth Ave. There is an island in the street to use as the crosswalk. On the construction side of Shady there was a sign that said "Sidewalk closed" The problem being for hard of seeing folks who aren't able to read it and walk into the street only to be stopped in traffic when they get to the sign. There was some debate on what to do with the sign and it ultimately came to perhaps putting it on the traffic light on the island and helping guide direction but we're still trying to find a happy middle ground. On the corner of Ravina Street there were no curb ramps either on either side of the street, a memo has been put it and is ready to be sent to address those.

Mr. Nochese: Last month I saw Joe around there was able to help him find where to go as I could see the issues out front but there was no protection for him if he was alone.

Mr. O'Hanlon: There was another representative who wanted to speak correct?

Ms. Brown: Yes, thank you. My name is Carmen Brown and I'm from Action United and was there with the meeting with the developers. I believe that they didn't really look at the accessibility issues when

they started developing and because we had concerns we wanted to bring it to the task force to see if there were policies within the ADA to look at development plans.

Mr. O'Hanlon: This is a very informative report. The question is do we do anything today on this?

Mr. Meritzer: We can certainly consider more issues. One thing that everyone asked me was if I took a look at it, which was no. I wasn't asked to and I didn't know it existed until I got the call from Action united telling me that the busway was terrible for accessibility. The thing is that it's not a department, it's an authority and URA does not contact me, the question is should authorities use the ADA coordinator for things like this.

Mr. Henderson: We should contact URA, they are using federal dollars and they are not exempt. We need to let them know that it is required for them to comply.

Mr. O'Hanlon: If we could ask for a report in our January meeting on where things are would be good. There is only so much we can expect to happen overnight.

<u>Schenley Park Green Lane: -</u> Richard Meritzer

Mr. O'Hanlon: The situation as I understand it is the bike lane and the changes to handicapped parking at Phipps and questions about that.

Mr. Meritzer: There are 2 separate issues. A complicated one is handicapped parking and drop-off, we have negotiated with Public Works to paint the handicapped decals in the street. They have work orders to put down decals but also do demarcate the spaces which was a major negotiation because we don't demarcate on any city street, this was a one-time deal.

Mr. Parker: So they are going to paint the HP indicator right on the street like in parking lots?

Mr. Meritzer: Exactly like in parking lots. And Kristin, the new Bike Ped coordinator is looking into best practices so this does not happen again.

Mr. Parker: What about access - letting people on and off?

Mr. Meritzer: That's the other issue. There's no space that allows for access to get off except for the bike lane. The ramp goes into the bike lane and impedes a travel lane and Karen says that by law they can't let people off in a travel lane so Kristin and Amanda are looking to what could be done about that. I think we warn cyclists and just do it but Karen has the concern that technically it is illegal.

Ms. Lingenfelter: That's what they've been doing and we've never had a problem.

Mr. Parker: Could the parking island there be used as a drop off?

Mr. Meritzer: The issue is that they would have to be paring on the far side of the island to hit the island side then negotiate around the island.

Mr. Nochese: I was there to check it out and I see a solution. You have Phipps on one side and the road on the other. There is a new driveway that circles around there and there is parking. I think that land there is big enough to set up a drop off space.

Mr. Meritzer: The question is that driveway part of Phipps? If so, we can't use that because it is Phipps and have consistently said they are not providing parking because there is street parking, I suspect it is a loading dock for Phipps.

Vox Pop

Mr. O'Hanlon: I think this is an interim report as it stands and we can approach it as issues arise. Is there anything else anyone wants to bring up that we weren't able to address?

Ms. Warman: just a comment: I was talking to someone about planting trees in downtown and I'm hoping to get more information about how that will affect the sidewalks and the accessibility of them, so I'm going to do some research on that and hopefully developing a report on that.

Adjournment.