

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
OCTOBER 17, 2005
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, Liz Healey, Viswa P. Mohanty, Jeff Parker, Penny Perlman

Members Absent: Eugene Barton, Linda Dickerson, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, Katherine D. Seelman

Others Present: County Council Member Joan Cleary, Brenda Dare, Amanda Leppina, Richard Meritzer, David Rosenblatt

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Tague at 2:08 PM.

Approval of the Agenda:

Item IV was changed to reflect the Task Force was voting on the approval of the Minutes of July and September, not May.

Ms. Perlman added the Task Force Retreat. Ms. Healy said a time frame was necessary. Ms. Perlman responded it would be in the winter.

Ms. Carter said we should continuously engage the new Mayor.

Councilmember Cleary asked that we put her legislation on the agenda.

Approval of the July and September 2005 Minutes:

Mr. Parker asked that the spelling of his name be corrected on page 1 and 2 of the September minutes. Mr. O’Hanlon moved that THE JULY 2005 AND THE SEPTEMBER 2005 MINUTES BE APPROVED AS AMENDED. Ms. Carter seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Budget:

Mr. Parker reported that the budget was prepared with previously used amounts. The total is \$25,500. \$10,500 of that goes to Disability Connections. In July the Task Force spent \$90.00 for interpreters, \$75.00 for Working Order and \$121.16 for postage and printing. Annual meeting costs included transportation for Jim Dixon at almost \$1,000.00, \$200.00 in cab fare and \$200.00 in catering. He had spoken to Tony Buba about the video but wanted to meet with the other members of the Committee (Ms. Healy and Dr. Seelman). We have \$13,000.00 to do the video. This includes the income from “Small Differences” and \$7,500.00 left over from previous years.

Mr. Tague asked Mr. Parker to inform the Task Force of the request of Judy Barricella. Mr. Parker reported that the County was having a disability art event and was having trouble finding a sponsor. Ms. Barricella has the details.

Ms. Carter pointed out that the materials for the meeting were not prepared in Braille for the blind members. We need to be able to make those materials available. Ms. Healy pointed out that Good Will can Braille material. Brenda Dare said the Center can also Braille material. Mr. Parker said he would put money aside to alternative formats.

Legislation:

County Councilmember Joan Cleary pulled the Report Card Legislation (#1885) in July. She is working with Jim Flynn, County Manager and Mr. Chernoff to prepare a more acceptable bill.

Ms. Healy asked if they are proposing an administrative process. Ms. Cleary responded they were, but they want it in legislation. She is also working with the County controller regarding how to get information. Mr. Tague asked if the Task Force should still maintain its support for the concept. Ms. Carter said we should. Mr. Tague said we would continue to support her efforts.

Voting Accessibility:

Mr. O'Hanlon reported that the County has been looking into this issue much more in depth and with much more detail. The plan of action is more appropriate and County Council has gotten involved.

Regarding the purchase of new voting machines, there was a vendor fair the week following our Annual Meeting. Advocates attended including Rachael Friend and Mr. Barton. We are now requesting a public event. The State must certify any machine first. So far the State has only certified two machines. First there should be a structured sample group with a range of visual problems, a range of mobility and dexterity issues, mental health problems and learning disabilities. They have identified a University of Pittsburgh researcher who can provide a research instrument. Tim Johnson says the County is interested, but so far no action has occurred.

Regarding Election Day procedures, Access will provide same day rides. There is one accessible location. We are asking for one in each County Council district. The County will create four additional sites, probably at the regional Kane Hospitals. Ms. Healy pointed out that voting at the alternative polling places would be with alternative ballots, which are like absentee ballots.

Regarding parking accessibility, we will be meeting with someone from the City.

Ms. Cleary reported that County Council has sent out a whole packet of information. Mr. O'Hanlon added that they were mailed to every Judge of Elections and included a list of buildings as alternative locations. They are recruiting Judges to help.

Ms. Healy asked if the Judges in accessible polling places are checking for alternative sites. Mr. O'Hanlon said no. Ms. Cleary said she will suggest they also get a list. Mr. Tague added that they are looking at physical barriers, but not at other barriers. However, he is pleased that the County is taking leadership on this issue and working with County Council.

Ms. Healy said the \$1,500 spent on the Annual Meeting has generated a great deal of work on this issue. She commended the people who worked on the Annual Meeting. Mr. Tague agreed. County Council Members David Fawcett and John DeFazio, who are on the election board, were there. Ms. Healy added the Election Board relies very heavily on staff. From John DeFazio's comments he did not appear well informed. We should pressure the administration more. Ms. Carter said the Annual Meeting went well. Mr. DeFazio comments were not well received. We should work to educate our elected officials on disability etiquette. Mr. Tague said he will talk to Joe Cantinize. Port Authority has a page on people first language. Ms. Carter said we should work with everybody.

Employment Committee:

Mr. Tague reported that the Task Force started working on this with the Disability 2000 Employment Pledge. This was not taken seriously. Since then they had started working with the City and County, including city and county staff. The next phase will be to work with Authorities. The first step is to make job opportunities known to the Disability Community. This is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. County Executive Onorato and County Council will be presenting a proclamation. Dr. Seelman had brought up the issue of Career Links. FISA gives a grant of \$45,000.00 to Career Links. They also get \$15,000.00 for the purchase of accessibility equipment. They are also taking with the City about staff training.

Ms. Healy asked if they know what equipment they are going to buy. In the past Project Raise Up did an extensive memo on what equipment was needed and where was the best place to get it. Each center got money to buy accessible equipment and they used it for other purposes. Mr. Tague added Port Authority Drivers get training. The City can use their training modules. Cost is the issue. Ms. Healy asked who is doing the training. Mr. Tague responded that they are not at that point yet. Ms Healy said it would be helpful to ask who is doing the training and what will they be doing. Mr. Tague reiterated there was no money for training. The training would be both how to use the equipment and how to deal with diverse groups. The next Employment Committee meeting will be November 20th at United Cerebral Palsy at 9:00 a.m.

Mayoral Forum:

Mr. Tague reported it went well. Ms. Dare, Ms. Carter and Mr. Rosenblatt all attended. There were a number of Task Force members there. Ms. Cater added that it went well. She thanked Mr. Tague and Mr. Parker for organizing it. Both candidates saw a very diverse group. Neither candidate was very aware of the issues. She asked how we begin to build a better relationship with the City. Mr. Tague pointed out that participation at City Council helps. Bob O'Connor said Lucy Spruill may be on his transition team. Ms. Healy added the Task Force has engaged City Council on both the visitability legislation and Medicaid Cuts.

Mr. Tague agreed. He is thinking more about attendance. Should we form a committee on how to relate to the new administration? Bob O'Connor is concerned about legislation. We should recognize people who are champions of the Task Force. Ms. Healy pointed out that City Council Member Sala Udin has been a friend for a long period of time and we should honor him. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that Mr. O'Connor is looking at how Boards and Authorities (public entities) are appointed. We should get him recommendations, including specific nominees for these entities. Programs like CDBG programs are longstanding and there is no disability component. It's a zero sum game. How can we present the new administration with options for including us? Ms. Healy suggested we get a list of positions available and make recommendations. We should request City Council evaluate all groups that are funded by the City for how they use their money with relation to the disability community. Mr. O'Hanlon added the public participation process for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a sham. It is hard to find out about the hearings. Most of the money is used to make buildings and services more accessible, which should come out of the regular budget.

Mr. Tague asked how we move on this. Mr. O'Hanlon said with the administration change there can be a fresh look at the procedures. Ms. Healy moved WE ASK CITY CONTOLLER TOM FLAHERTY AND COUNTY CONTROLLER MARK PATRICK FLAHERTY TO DO A SECTION 504 AUDIT. The request should be more then a letter, we need a meeting. Seconded by Mr. Parker. Passed unanimously.

Mr. Tague said we should send a letter on November 8th recommending people to boards and Commissions. Mr. O'Hanlon pointed out that Council Member Bill Peduto has proposed legislation to increase diversity. Mr. Tague said Richard Meritzer will get the list of Boards and Authorities and circulate it.

Ms. Carter bought up the issue of inclusive activities for children. Recreation Centers are no welcoming to children. We must work with the Mayor on this issue. This should be included in the letter. Mr. Tague said we should look at the ordinance. Ms. Cleary brought up the fact that the City and the County may not be able to audit CDBG funds. Mr. Tague said we will check this out.

New Issues:

Mr. Tague asked if we were having a December meeting. Ms. Healy said it would be on December 15th. She suggested we have a Pot Luck. Richard Meritzer would get permission.

Announcements:

Ms. Carter announced that Ruth Brenyo's sister passed away. Two of her family members have died and she is receiving flowers from other organizations. We should send her something. Mr. Tague added we need to figure out a way to remember those who have passed away.

Mr. Tague reminded the Task Force that the Visitability Legislation is still languishing in the Sate Legislature. We should review whether we need State approval. Ms. Healy suggest we contact Senator Ferlo about how we can help.

Ms Healy moved THE MEETING BE ADJOURNED. There was not opposition. The meeting was adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: November 12, 2005
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: First Floor Conference Room
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219