

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
OCTOBER 16, 2006  
MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Jeff Parker, Chairperson, Katherine D. Seelman, Co-chair, Janet Evans, Liz Healey, Milton Henderson, Sarah Goldstein, Rich McGann

**Members Absent:** Eugene Barton, Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Paul O'Hanlon, John Tague

**Others Present:** Steve Chopek, County Council Member Joan Cleary, Holly Dick, Mary Figlar, Marilyn Gelzhiser, Amanda Lapina, Lashanna Martin, Kevin Maxwell, Denise McArthur-Turner, Richard Meritzer, Michelle Sullivan, Mary Esther Van Shura

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

**Introductions:**

Everyone introduced themselves.

**Approval of the August and September 2006 Minutes:**

Dr. Seelman said the minutes should have included a report on the meeting with the Warden at the Jail and that the minutes were incomplete as written. She moved TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS INCOMPLETE. Ms. Evans seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Allegheny Places Planning Team Presentation:**

Marilyn Gelzhiser reported that the County Comprehensive Plan is a physical plan. We are the last county to do our Comprehensive Plan. This allowed us to add economic development and equity and diversity elements to the plan. The Plan is a policy document. The final draft is expected to be done in 2007. There will be five public meetings to review the composite scenario in November. The process started with an analysis of existing conditions. They did a survey and looked at things like affordable housing, access to work and safe communities. They discovered, for example, that there are currently more jobs in the County than ever before. The reason for this is more women are working and more people are driving from other counties to work here. There has been an increase in housing while there remains a stagnant population. The reasons for this are people are living in smaller families and old houses are being abandoned. The Plan has to promote growth where it would be most beneficial to the greatest number of people. They looked at four scenarios: good old places, hot new places, river places, and transit places. It became clear at the meetings that people liked reusing infrastructure and using what was currently there.

She went on to say that the process was skewed toward City residents, but other wise it was a good cross section of the population. From this process came a composite scenario. Once the plan is finalized County Executive Dan Onorato will present the plan to County Council. Then it will be official County policy. The state is demanding consistency in decision-making. The County could be a resource to help with decision making in development. The County currently does not have a greenway system. Having a greenway system in place would help with development.

Dr. Seelman thanked Ms. Gelzhiser for attending. She asked if the County was keeping a data base on sample size. Ms. Gelzhiser responded they were keeping track of who attended meetings and filled out questionnaires. Dr. Seelman then asked if the plan would be endorsing economic development plans including technology. Ms. Gelzhiser answered no. Dr. Seelman added that park trails should be accessible. She commended the County for adding Equity and Diversity. Ms. Gelzhiser then said the County has basic performance measures, but will need the Task Force's help with the measurements. Dr. Seelman added that Pittsburgh has a lot of information on smart houses like Blueroof.

Ms. Healy asked if the County can enforce the plan. The City passed the visitability ordinance. The County should do this as well. But the County can not control zoning. Ms. Gelzhiser said the plan is not regulatory. However, the State is pushing consistency and will not fund projects that do not comply with the County Plan. The Plan must be cooperative. A lot of education is needed as well. Mr. Parker added that transportation is a critical element. Dr. Seelman pointed out that the Task Force has put a lot of time in promoting voting accessibility. Mary Esther Van Shura added that the County currently has less than 10 inaccessible polling places.

Ms. Evans asked if all the information is on the Website. Ms. Gelzhiser said most of it is. The options survey is no longer there. Dr. Seelman asked if it was accessible. Ms. Gelzhiser responded that the Website was done by Michael Baker. They are trying to make it more readable for the blind. Mr. Henderson asked if the five meetings are different. Ms. Gelzhiser said they will all be looking at the composite plan. Look at what we are getting in the next 20 years and decide where we want it to go.

Dr. Seelman stated that employment is an issue. Our aging population is dovetailing with disability issues. Ms. Gelzhiser said the Diversity Summit in December will deal with this issue. Ms. Goldstein added that sometimes work makes people well. There are now programs in which people can keep their benefits and work part time. Mr. Henderson added the H. R. 1158 is being heard today or tomorrow. He asked everyone to send emails to their representatives. Mr. Parker thanked Ms. Gelzhiser for coming. He asked staff to put the dates of the County meetings on the Website.

### **Leadership Training:**

Mr. McGann reported that the environment is not conducive for developing leadership. In the past there was only the Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf (PSAD). Now there is more activity, even in rural areas. Pennsylvania has become very organized. Pittsburgh has the Association of the Deaf with over 500 members. Also the Catholic Church has an office for the deaf. But the number of leaders is dwindling. People who are hard of hearing have set up their own groups.

Mr. McGann continued by saying we need to have an organization for the deaf and blind. There is not enough support or sharing information within this community. PSAD set up a Leadership Training Program. There is more technological access for people who are blind and deaf so they stay home more. We need new leaders. We need more support and need the blind, the deaf, and the blind and deaf communities to work together.

Mr. McGann suggested that he would like to give workshops. Mr. Parker asked if he was asking that the Task Force fund workshops on leadership for persons who are deaf given by Mr. McGann and Mr. McGann answered yes. Mr. Parker asked for a discussion on how this fit in with our mission and goals. How does this fit in with our mission and goals? Ms. Healy said it might be difficult to find the population of people for this workshop. What age groups are we discussing? If we are talking about school age children the schools can send out the information. Mr. McGann said he wanted to work on the concept. Ms. Healy responded the Task Force should be involved. We could not support an ongoing organization, but we could support a workshop. We need a place, publicity and refreshments. Mr. McGann added we need to think more about this. Ms. Goldstein said she just co-lead a dialog of deaf consumers and Allegheny West. They should be involved. She suggested we contact Kim Mathis. Mr. Parker welcomed Ms. Goldstein to her first official meeting as a Task Force member. He then went on to suggest they include interpreters and CART in the cost. This is in the concept stage. He asked if Mr. McGann and Ms. Goldstein could work together on this. He requested they do more exploration, more development and report back at the next meeting. Ms. Evans suggested they contact Christine Chamberlain at the Three Rivers Center for Independent Living. Dr. Seelman suggested Ken Puckett as well. Ms. Healy added Teresa Nelcon should be involved. Mr. Parker ended by saying we should start working on this together.

**Old Business:**

**Voter Awareness:**

Ms. Van Shura reported the County is currently doing voter outreach. They are going out with voting machines to train people. Last week they did a training session for the blind, tomorrow they will be doing a training for the deaf, and they are also doing a training session for mental health patients. If anyone has a request they should just email her. Untied Cerebral Palsy emailed a request today.

She went on to report on Kane Hospital. The County Executive responded to the Action Plan. Nursing home transition will proceed. He supports the expansion of the Continuum of Care. The full report is on the County Website. This includes housing increases and culture of service changes.

Dr. Seelman thanked Ms. Van Shura. We need to capture report to support the County. Ms. Healy asked if we can still evaluate and support the report. Mr. Parker pointed out that Mr. Tague worked on the report. Ms. Van Shura added that County Council Woman Joan Cleary was also on the panel. The workforce is an issue. Mr. Parker added that Rachael Freund asked that the Task Force attend a Voter Awareness event and he attended. We must educate agencies that they can register people. Ms. Van Shura pointed out that contacts with the Department of Human Services speak to this. But the Department of Human services does not supervise the programs for the aging. Mr. Parker suggested we discuss this more when Mr. O'Hanlon is here.

**Annual Meeting / Housing Committee:**

Mr. Parker said the meeting was very successful. We can now reconstitute the Housing Committee and keep it going. He asked Ms. Evans to co-chair the committee with Mr. Henderson. He asked them to call a meeting. We have two new people who signed up for the committee.

Steve Chopek said the Local Housing Options Team (LHOT) has incubators. Subcommittees are working on specific issues. He will get staff information on their next meetings.

**Meeting with the Warden:**

Mr. McGann reported that he, Dr. Seelman, and Ken Puckett attended a meeting with the Warden. The Warden was very interested in TTYs and captioned televisions as well as interpreters for doctors' appointments. We need to educate staff. Some deaf people act as if they are hearing to avoid drawing attention from the other prisoners. This makes it hard for the staff to pick out prisoners who may need assistance. If the deaf community knows there are accommodations for them they may use them.

Dr. Seelman added she just pulled up an email from the jail. Dana said deaf people are also having trouble with the court system. Interpreters are not always available. She has a contact at the Courts and we may ask them to come to a future meeting.

Ms. Goldstein said that Mental Health participants are examined at hospitals without interpreters and they don't know what is going on. Deaf people get the wrong services. Dr. Seelman said we would need to identify the hospital administrative structure from those hospitals. Mr. McGann said regarding the courts, many deaf people are confused about the different types of interpreters. There is never an interpreter during an arrest. Ms. Cleary stated once anyone gets to the hospital the hospital should get them an interpreter. They are not good at that. Ms. Goldstein said she will check to see if she could use dialog to go to the hospitals. Dr. Seelman added this is an ongoing problem. Ms. Evans said Magee Hospital has a disability program. Mr. McGann said when had eye surgery he had 24 hour interpreter service at Presbyterian Hospital, but he had to fight to get it.

**Member Issues:**

**Financial Report:**

Mr. Parker passed out copies of the report. This is the very beginning of the fiscal year. Expenses so far are our fiscal agent and interpreters. Dr. Seelman suggested we consider justifying an increase in the budget. Ms. Healy said we should capture all the things we do. We should track staff time to justify an increase.

**Brochure Development:**

Ms. Healy handed out the first draft of the brochure. She said she wanted to list our accomplishment on the inside. She asked everyone to email her any suggestions.

**Vox Pop:**

No one had any comments.

**Staff Reports:**

This was postponed until the November meeting. Lashanna Martin was recognized for the work she was doing.

**Parent Subcommittee Report Card Legislation:**

The committee will go to the meetings being held by Don Clark around the county. We will ask him or Mark Chernow to come to the November meeting.

Dr. Seelman moved that the meeting be adjourned. Ms. Healy seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:12 p.m.

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:**

DATE: November 20, 2006  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219