

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
OCTOBER 18, 2010  
MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Janet Evans, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, James C. Noschese, Katherine D. Seelman, John Tague

**Members Absent:** Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Liz Healey, Sarah Goldstein, Jeff Parker

**Others Present:** Adolphine Birescik, Stephanie Boczar, Mary Curet, Holly Dick, Dianne Gallagher, Carolyn Guzik, Phoebe He, Larry D. Hockenberry, Chuck Keenan, Lea Lach, Danielle Lengle, Georganne Lingenfelter, Richard Meritzer, Chas Morrind, Matt Pavlosky, Asia Pruden, Tamara Siegert, Joseph Wassermann

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O'Hanlon at 1:00 PM.

**INTRODUCTIONS:**

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Review and Approval of June's Minutes**

Mr. Meritzer mentioned that from June on, every Task Force meeting will be recorded and kept forever. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Review and approval of financial report**

Mr. Tague reported the beginning budget is \$8,506.00. We have to fiscal support meetings for each month. Currently, there is \$1,188 left on the account. There was not much spending until this meeting. \$2923.25 is for interpreters. The bills for September haven't been deducted yet. The budget is based on 8 meetings a year. As mentioned in last meeting, we have talked with Reggie Young, Judy Barricella and others from the County and requested raising the budget to support 9-10 meetings and a planning meeting, so we are still waiting to hear back from the county's Department of Human Services.

Mr. Noschese asked about the interpreting item in the budget –have we used that much of money, or do we have that much of money left? Mr. Tague responded that we have that much of money left. The cost varied. The average is \$411 per meeting.

Dr. Seelman asked that Mr. Meritzer and Mr. Tague have created a standard form to report budgets. She suggested setting a regular budget report each year that includes every detailed item. Mr. Tague agreed. The motion passed unanimously.

**DISCUSSION – Retreat**

Mr. O'Hanlon mentioned that there is no response from the county regarding the retreat yet, so the planned conversation on the retreat might be premature at this stage. Dr. Seelman agreed, as there is no budget to support the accessibility item for the retreat. Ms. Evans suggested tabling this issue. Dr. Seelman made an observation that we don't identify Task Force member for accessibility costs. Mr. O'Hanlon concluded that the retreat issue will be tabled until we hear back from the county.

**DISCUSSION – Transportation Issues- Richard McGann**

Mr. McGann first clarified that he did not want to talk about transportation alone issue. This section contains other issues as well. Last month, the discussion on the safety of the sidewalk was great. We had a meeting with Patty Burk talking about a click and go system for Market Square. We hoped Mr. Meritzer could be there to talk. Rich Peter (who focuses on mobility in the City of Pittsburgh) and Dr. George both wanted more information on Market Square. It would be good to give people working on mobility the information on Patty's work and Market Square continuously.

Another issue some blind people complain about is cuts to bus service. Some of the drivers need further training as they have not appropriately provided assistance to the blind people who are trying to use the bus. We should try to set meetings to talk about accessibility with Port Authority. What is more, sometime the driver doesn't follow the schedule and the interpreter leaves before the bus comes. Therefore, staying on schedule should be an issue to be treated seriously. Mr. Noschese suggested providing deaf and blind people with paper that they can give to the driver stating the destination. Also, we can recommend training the drivers for sign language and sensitivity so that they have more awareness of deaf and blind people.

Mr. McGann then asked whether there are ADA coordinators in other Pennsylvania cities. Dr. Seelman responded that she didn't have an awareness of that. Mr. O'Hanlon mentioned that Philadelphia did and he was not sure about Harrisburg. Mr. McGann asked for the contact information of the ADA coordinator in Philadelphia and will get back to everybody if he gets any feedback and information. Mr. McGann also said that if we can ask the Philadelphia ADA coordinator to participate in our task force. It will be great to learn from and support each other on helping people with disabilities.

Regarding the transportation issue, Mr. Wassermann thought 95% of the bus drivers are helpful. If there are any problems and issues with accessibility, it is our responsibility to contact the Port Authority. Mr. O'Hanlon felt it was not appropriate for us to raise this issue to the Port Authority. Instead, he suggested that Mr. McGann talk to the Committee for Accessible Transportation to raise the issue. All issues regarding services and procedures would be appropriate to raise. The Committee for Accessible Transportation holds regular meetings, so it will not be hard to get the contact information. Ms. Dick from the Committee for Accessible Transportation responded that Mr. McGann can contact her to come to the meetings and she will schedule interpreters for him. The training for the drivers is in the process. Mr. Noschese pointed out that there are 200 deaf / blind people in Pittsburgh and it could be a lot of costs on the interpreter even if only 20 of them show up in a meeting. This could be a problem.

The fourth issue raised by Mr. McGann is the accessibility of the library for blind people. Mr. Wassermann suggested discussing this issue along with the retreat or in another meeting. The library is working on the possibility of putting accessible equipment into a certain number of libraries in the near future. The aide for Ms. Evans mentioned that Downtown does have one library with a computer for blind.

### **REPORT - Interactive Voice Responses – Katherine Seelman**

Dr. Seelman said that there would be more and more electronic communication issues coming into Task Force meetings. We can also solve some of Mr. McGann's issues. Regarding transportation, Dr. Seelman will give a colleague working in the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC) on Accessible Public Transportation at Carnegie Mellon University the contact information of Mr. McGann to bring the perspectives from us to its designing.

About the health provider's prescription and leaving voice messages on Mr. McGann's telephone, which might cause problems for deaf and blind people, Dr. Seelman first contacted colleagues in the Federal Communications Commission to see what the law allows. A program named Interactively Voice Response, which is an automated response prompt to remind you about appointments, is being developed. Secondly, Dr. Seelman contacted UPMC, the medical provider. UPMC will look at Mr. McGann's case as well as institute appropriate procedures to meet new electronic communication challenges. Furthermore, Dr. Seelman found out herself about some health information management problems regarding medical and health records they are designing. Some of the records are hard to get on. We will be beginning to work on that. Finally, Dr. Seelman said that the disability community of Pittsburgh should pass on information about this. She contacted her colleague who has a Web site for the deaf, deaf-blind, and hard-of-hearing, and she will put some information on her Web site. The biggest problem Dr. Seelman sees is that people don't know how to deal with it. They made the recommendation that people first go to their provider and say "I can't hear voice message, can you give me an alternative?" Eventually, if you don't get any assistance, you can make a complaint to the FCC.

Ms. Curet added that they are checking through the health management system on E-record to make sure that the staff is trained in a consistent manner. They are investigating a security email account. Also add staff education. Dr. Seelman mentioned the problem is how to deal with complexity. Mr. O'Hanlon found it hard to get providers to call his cell phone rather than home phone. Would it be possible to relate the phone calls of the deaf and blind to the relay center? Dr. Seelman responded that they can call both of the phone numbers.

Mr. McGann added that the doctor sometimes forgets to call the interpreter. Mr. Noschese mentioned that the hospital doesn't want to release the information to a third party, even when the third party is an interpreter. Mr. O'Hanlon asked whether there is some education problem. Ms. Evans said that once we started to speak up, people would start to listen.

### **STAFF REPORTS**

#### **Calendar – Richard Meritzer**

Mr. Meritzer talked about his calendar so everybody can see what he is up to. He will attend the construction meeting for Market Square and Special Events Committee meetings that will make sure special events are accessible. He is also focusing on the 2011 Veterans' Wheelchair Games, as well as lectures at Duquesne University Nursing School.

In the past week, Mr. Meritzer talked to the high school students who are coming for the City's Disability Mentoring Day to give them a preview of what it means to be here, what we expect of them, and what they can expect from us. He will talk to students from two more schools this week. The students are very interested in coming; this is a very productive and wonderful program. Also, at the dis+Abilities Expo Mr. Meritzer talked to a number of agencies about what they are doing and gave out a number of brochures. We are almost out of Task Force brochures.

In the next month, Mr. Meritzer will keep working on the Wheelchair Games. He has registered the ADA Title II discussion in Silver Springs. He will bring back any information from that.

### **One Step – Lea Lach**

Ms. Lach discussed her progress on the One Step project. The project is intended to help business owners remove a single step from the entrance to a business so that the entrance can be accessible. Ms. Lach has typed possible amendments to the City Code that, if passed, would waive some fees owners currently face when trying to get steps removed. She also said that she was waiting for feedback on this matter from the Bureau of Building Inspection. Mr. Meritzer pointed out that three different departments charge three different sets of fees for step removal, one reason the project has been a challenge.

There were a few questions. Mr. O’Hanlon wanted to know how much the fees in question cost, and Ms. Lach mentioned dollar amounts for the Zoning fees and some BBI fees. Ms. Evans asked about the meaning of the “BBI” initials, and Mr. McGann asked whether the BBI is a City department. Ms. Lach replied that “BBI” stands for “Bureau of Building Inspection,” and she and Mr. Meritzer both noted that it is in fact a City bureau.

### **Meetings – Phoebe He**

Ms. He is working on organizing two conferences. The first one is the ADA Strategic Planning Meeting, which will examine the accessibility of the internal city. It will be held on November 5<sup>th</sup>, in the First Floor Conference Room at the Civic Building, 200 Ross Street. The other is the Committee meeting for marketing the visitability-by-tax-credit promotion. Ms. He is currently waiting for the reply from Committee members to set up the date. This meeting will be held in late November.

### **Market Square – Richard Meritzer**

Mr. Meritzer was sorry not to be able to attend the previous meeting on the click and go technology. He and Patty will keep working on it. A number of changes have been suggested regarding market structure. Mr. Meritzer thanked Mr. McGann for the information regarding Market Square. Another intern is in the process of finding funds to support the making of improvements.

Ms. Evans asked about the email sent by Mr. Meritzer in the morning. He responded that it was sent by an officer of the Golden Triangle Association for the Blind reviewing a current law. This is information for everyone.

The aide for Ms. Evans raised the issue that the bus stop at Fifth Avenue and Market Square has been removed. Mr. Meritzer responded that he would check on this. Ms. Evans talked about issues that persons with disabilities have been blocked off. Mr. Meritzer responded that he would try to figure out who should be responsible for this issue and invite him to talk at the next meeting.

### **Vox Pop**

Mr. Hockenberry mentioned that a person with a wheelchair doesn’t have some safety facilities like a hook to hold the chair on the bus. Mr. O’Hanlon responded that the facility is there. People can ask the bus driver for it.

Ms. Guzik, who works with the Boy Scouts of America, also focuses on how to better serve the special needs population of the Greater Pittsburgh Council, described what the group is doing now. She came to the meeting to learn more information since it is a part of training future leaders to have more awareness of disabilities.

Mr. Noschese provided information on a talk on PSAD regarding national movement. It seems that many people with disabilities cannot get a job in the private sector, though

many of them are working for public organizations and government. Thus, they are trying to push the law at the federal level, as well as at the state and local levels, to promote jobs for the disabled in the private sector. They are trying to do this by adding clauses to governments' contracts with businesses, saying that the businesses must hire disabled individuals to keep the contracts.

Mr. McGann suggested inviting people who are responsible for the city and the state to come to the meeting to learn from us. Also, many of the deaf asked about the new arena – where are the VPs? Where are the TTYs?

Mr. Hockenberry suggested using the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh for the first video phone so people who cannot afford it can still use it.

Mr. Pavlosky said that they are trying to enhance public participation. They will start the process in January. They want to make all their meetings accessible. Mr. Pavlosky added that he has learned a lot here and that input from the Task Force is very important.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM.

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:**

DATE: Monday, November 15, 2010  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219