

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
OCTOBER 17, 2011  
MINUTES**

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

**Members Present:** Aurelia Carter-Scott, Janet Evans, Milton Henderson, Richard McGann, James C. Noschese, Paul O'Hanlon Chairperson, Katherine D. Seelman, John Tague, Joe Wasserman

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

**Others Present:** Judy Barricella, Lester Bennett, Tracy Cummins, Holly Dick, Evan Gross, Augustus Hallowongel, Milton Henterson, Larry Hockenberry, Monica Jones, Jessica Kalkhof, Chuck Keenan, Emily Krobot, Georgianne Langenfeller, Michael McKenzie, Richard Meritzer, Charles Morrison, Teresa Nellans, Mark Perriello, Kathy Stefani, Mary Van Sutura, Ryan Uhrig, Rui Zuo

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

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Review and approval of September minutes**

Ms. Evans makes a motion to approve seconded by Mr. Wasserman, other task force members approve.

**Review and approval of financial report**

Mr. Tague stated that the current report is the official report excluding the September expenses. Mr. Tague informs that the task force will most likely have to eliminate two meetings and possibly a third depending on how much is spent on the ten meetings. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that the most likely meetings to be canceled would be December and February. Dr. Seelman added that no speakers be scheduled for either month until they decide which meetings would be canceled. Ms. Evan makes a motion to approve the financial report seconded by Mr. Nochese, other task force members approve.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **One Step Video**

Mr. Meritzer introduced the video about the One Step program that had also been presented to city council which went over very well with them. Mr. Meritzer also stated that they are working on a third video about White Cane Day. Mr. Meritzer added that he wanted the task force to see the video before it was put on the web. (Video shown; can be retrieved at: [http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp/html/ada\\_coordinator.html](http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/cp/html/ada_coordinator.html)) Mr. Nochese inquired about 311 not being mentioned on the video. Mr. Meritzer replied that the emphasis was not to have people report business's with a step but rather having business owners being cooperative and complying willingly and showing the benefits of having their one step removed. Mr. Nochese wanted to clarify that he meant, how business owners could get a hold of someone to get more information about the One Step project. Mr. Meritzer stated that he has a couple of projects working to address that issue; including meeting with the business associations of every business district and present to them the One Step project. Mr. Tague inquired about where this project stands now. Mr. Meritzer informed that there were two fees in the City Code, one from city planning and one from public works, the public works fee has been waived and the fee from city planning being waved is being voted on next week and then it will be on to the Mayor's office. Mr. Meritzer added that when the project has been approved by the Mayor's office he will begin the rollout process which he estimates would be around January. Dr. Seelman asked if the video would be on the website. Mr. Meritzer answers that after the project has been approved by the Mayor that he plans on putting the video on the website. Dr. Seelman then stated that with this project being implemented in the city the next step should be taking it to the county. Mr. Meritzer agreed and they would need to talk with the county Economic Development Department to see if they have an entity like URA in the city. Mr. O'Hanlon added that it may come to the individual municipalities to waive their fees and not the county itself. Mr. Tague inquired if there is a process in place for businesses to apply to join this project. Mr. Meritzer stated that businesses could apply for this project now and already have the public works fees waived; which is the larger of the two fees. Mr. O'Hanlon added that Mr. Meritzer should inform the task force if he needed anything regarding this project.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Airport Accessibility**

Mr. O'Hanlon asked Ms. Jones to come to the table to begin the discussion on the Pittsburgh Airport's compliance with the ADA. Mr. Meritzer stated that this project was discussed along with the Convention Center accessibility project but has become much more complicated due to all the entities involved. Mr. Meritzer was contacted by the FAA about Pittsburgh International Airport being audited and they wanted to talk to the task force members about the airport and various issues; the minutes are available on the back table. Mr. Meritzer added that during the meeting they learned of Ms. Jones position as ADA coordinator of the Pittsburgh Airport. Mr. Meritzer and his staff reached out to the disabled community about concerns of accessibility at the Pittsburgh airport and the matrix of which is on the back table.

Ms. Jones recommended going through the matrix and address the issues raised. Ms. Jones first started with a concern regarding ACCESS pick up location not being found and concern about airport staff not being knowledgeable about storing a battery powered wheelchair. Mr. Meritzer added that Ms. Dick from ACCESS was here and was more knowledgeable about the situation. Ms. Dick stated that those being picked up and dropped off at the airport are not permitted to be escorted by the driver as they normally are; she continued that people with disabilities must call the county police to have an escort through security in the airport. Ms. Dick added that there is a very complicated process when picking someone up from the airport where the individual must check in at a desk, then the driver must confirm they are there, and then take the individual to a bench where they must wait for the driver to bring the car from the parking lot. Ms. Jones stated that unfortunately those are not their rules but rather rules from TSA; Mr. O'Hanlon inquired what the specific rule was to which Ms. Jones replied that one cannot go airside without a ticket. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that the drivers would not be going airside, but only from the curb to the door. Ms. Jones responded that they could not park there, they would have to park the vehicle, she added there is nothing to prevent them from going inside the terminal but they would have to drop the person off, then park the car, and then walk the person inside the terminal. Ms. Dick stated that the primary issue is travelers that are traveling by themselves. Mr. O'Hanlon added that if he was traveling by himself and using ACCESS, once they get to the curb, Ms. Jones interjected that they would have no one to come to meet them at the curb. Mr. O'Hanlon asked why the driver couldn't take the passenger in to the door of the airport to meet someone from the airport, to which Ms. Jones replied that they are not permitted to leave the vehicle unattended but could go park their vehicle and return and that is a homeland security TSA ruling.

Mr. O'Hanlon inquired about airport personnel at the curb taking bags and so forth, to which Ms. Jones responded that they are only there to check those bags. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that there is an apparent need for someone to meet people with disabilities at the curb to assist them, to which Ms. Jones replied that that is not an area that is in place and that it can be documented and present it to the airlines because that is an airline issue. Ms. Jones added that the baggage, as well as passengers taking the flights is the airlines' issues. Mr. O'Hanlon inquired that wouldn't this issue also be an airport issue. Ms. Jones replied that the airport does not have anyone who works at the curb, and that is something that would most likely not take place for a number of years citing the current financial situation of the airport.

Mr. O'Hanlon added that there are legal responsibilities regardless of their legal situation, to which Ms. Jones replied that the FAA audit resulted in the Pittsburgh Airport being found in compliance in the major areas, with areas needing improvement being their stores which they have since addressed; and that there were no areas of access that they were not found in compliance with. Mr. Nochese added that a meeting should be set up at the airport to show them the problems that people have at the airport and solve those specific issues. Ms. Jones replied that that is why she is here, to solve these issues and that if there are any issues she would take them back to the airlines and the airport.

Ms. Jones continued onto the matrix and brought up pet relief areas, stating that there are a number of pet relief areas at the airport. Ms. Jones then addressed that the movable arm rests issue stating that most airlines have movable arm rests and does not know of any airlines who do not have movable arm rests, to which Mr. O'Hanlon clarified the issue is regarding airline employees at the gate do not know which seats on the airplanes have movable arms. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that it is an ongoing issue that people at the gate do not know what seats have movable arm rests. This is important so that passengers do not have to climb over the arm rests that do not move. Ms. Jones stated that she would bring that issue back to the airlines. Mr. McGann stated the importance of communicating with the FAA on issues regarding accessibility and also how important training for airport employees is so that no one is ignored or given inadequate service while using the airport.

Mr. O'Hanlon informed the meeting that they would be taking a break from the discussion for a speaker that had arrived.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **American Association of People with Disabilities CEO, Mark Perriello**

Ms. Bender introduced the CEO of the American Association of People with Disabilities who is visiting Pittsburgh. Mr. Perriello is visiting Pittsburgh for Disability Mentoring Day, which hundreds of people from Pittsburgh participate in. Mr. Perriello has been at AAPD for four months after having worked in the White House. The AAPD has been a prominent organization in disability policy in Washington DC and they are now trying to build a grassroots movement to go along side with that. Mr. Perriello stated that issues like Medicaid that is very important to the disability community needs to be protected from other groups in DC who are opposed to Medicaid. Mr. Perriello said that they are trying to get people to become engaged with the causes and have a strong powerful voice in DC. Mr. Perriello added that if people are interested they should join at AAPD's website. Mr. Perriello then wanted to open up the discussion for any questions or concerns.

Ms. Carter-Scott asked how they plan to engage people of color which is a very important issue within the disability community. As a parent of a child with a disability she also wants to know how AAPD would engage people like her son to keep him part of the many as opposed to the few when it comes to inclusion and policy change; how do you ensure you have a diverse group? Mr. Perriello responded that his time at the White House was working as President Obama's diversity director; his role was to work with all communities to place people within the administration. Mr. Perriello added that issues with diversity is a cause near and dear to his heart and he believes that diversity lends itself to the best ideas when there are all kinds of people adding to the discussion. Mr. Perriello plans on continuing to work with those he worked with at the White House to bring disability issues to a broader audience.

Mr. Tague asked about contacting legislators and wanted to know what Mr. Perriello's strategy is to increasing voting from the disability community. Mr. Perriello stated that promoting voting from the disability community is a huge part of what happens at AAPD

specifically with their Disability Vote Project and moving into 2012 that will be a huge project for them with developing strategies and communicating with people where people running in their area stand on issues, where to vote, when to vote and focusing on that. Mr. Perriello added that the AAPD is a non-partisan group and that accessibility at voting places is important as well as getting people out to vote.

Dr. Seelman wanted to thank Mr. Perriello for adding “What Medicaid Means to Me” on their website and information about the new insurance law. Mr. Perriello is glad people are taking advantage of information that AAPD has been putting out and added that Medicaid was potentially on the chopping block but was going mainly unaddressed. They did a number of things in July including bringing people in to meet with high level officials to give a human face to the problems that would arise if Medicaid was cut.

Ms. Nellans wanted to know if AAPD was reaching out to veterans with disabilities. Mr. Perriello responded by saying absolutely yes, they have a feature on their website for veterans with disabilities and that they need to bridge gaps between the different disability communities because we are all stronger if we work together.

Mr. Hockenberry understands that there is a conflict in Washington about cochlear implants; he wanted to know what Mr. Perriello’s stance on implants in children is as well as how to preserve the deaf culture. Mr. Perriello responded by saying that solutions need to be found that work for as many people as possible and that cochlear implants can be a blessing and a curse. Right now he is in the listening mode but that this is most certainly an issue that will be addressed by AAPD. Mr. Nochese added that some people that received cochlear implants do not learn sign language. He wanted children with the implants to have the opportunity to learn the language and then they can use both the implant and the language together and not say no to sign language. Mr. O’Hanlon added that he never learned sign, and is curious why sign language isn’t taught to everyone. Many people throughout their lives lose some or all of their hearing. Mr. Perriello agreed that a great solution would be for everyone to be taught the language, how that comes about will take a lot of hard work and lobbying and will not work overnight but is ultimately the best solution. Ms. Bender added that choice is vital when it comes to cochlear implants, and that she is opposed to when people are forced to do the implant and that the deaf culture needs to be preserved in this country. Ms. Bender then stated that Mr. Perriello has another meeting and that she is sorry for having to take him out of here but wanted to commend people in the meeting for trying to make Pittsburgh as accessible as possible. Mr. Perriello added that AAPD is your organization and it is only as good as all of our community working together.

## **DISCUSSION (CONTINUED)**

### **Airport Accessibility**

Mr. O’Hanlon transitioned back to the Airport discussion. Ms. Jones stated that the next question was regarding the ACCESS pickup location, she stated all commercial levels at the baggage claim level park in the same area and that there is an ACCESS booth at the

baggage claim level. Ms. Jones continued that there is a phone that you can contact ACCESS at a booth that has a phone that you would be able to do that.

Mr. O'Hanlon emphasized that the matrix does not represent the priorities of the Task Force. He stated that the project started with concerns from the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind community about accessibility. Mr. O'Hanlon continued that there is no secondary way for people that can't hear to get information that is broadcasted, like a gate change, and wants to know what the airport is going to do about that. Ms. Jones stated that is an issue that they recognize and that they are in the process of changing the information on the trams, and making announcements on the trams accessible by developing other ways of communication. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that most likely the tram has the least concern of accessible communication. Ms. Jones responded that hearing impaired are not the only ones complaining about getting information about gate changes, she continued that she herself has not heard gate change information and has missed flights as a result. Ms. Jones added that they do use the monitors for emergency information but they need to come up with a plan to do better as far as projecting the information, and they are aware of this need.

Dr. Seelman informed Ms. Jones that we are a technical community as well as a disability community that could help the airport with accessibility such as loop systems, and wants to consider this an ongoing dialogue between the task force and the airport. Ms. Jones said that they had people with disabilities helping when designing the airport and that helped them during their FAA audit, and that experience has helped them. Dr. Seelman wanted to state that sometimes wheelchair access is emphasized while communication issues may not be in the forefront, but that communication laws in recent years that have really helped people with disabilities. Ms. Jones stated that the airport is working on materials for people with disabilities and they just need the money to do it. Dr. Seelman questioned whether the money was from the FAA or the county. Ms. Jones informed that they only get runway money from the FAA and the rest of their income is through lease agreements, business operating within, airlines operating within, and arrangements with other airports, and that they do not receive any money from the county to run the airport.

Mr. Nochese added that there are more issues at the airport and they should go through those issues and that maybe this meeting isn't where we should be discussing them; he also added a story about a friend that had a flight rerouted mid-flight and he was not informed and did not know where he was when he got off. There was no one to help him in an airport where he didn't know where he was. Things like this can get overlooked and needs to be addressed in case of an emergency situation. Ms. Jones responded by saying that is something she will take back and wanted to know if airline staff had known the person was deaf. Mr. Nochese stated that airline staff helped him until he was off the plane then he was on his own. Ms. Jones stated that attendants should know who is on their flights and know of any issues with accessibility of passengers. Mr. O'Hanlon wanted to voice a concern that what is needed is a universally accepted communication because if he was a deaf frequent flyer he would have to continually be checking in with staff even when he may not need added assistance unless it was an emergency situation. Ms. Jones stated some airlines have brail information, Mr. Wasserman responded that

that information is only about the plane. Mr. McGann added that some staff are anxious to deal with someone with a disability and that some staff have discriminated against people with disabilities. Mr. Nochese added that a lot of people do not know how to read brail. Dr. Seelman added that when she flies she tells staff members that she is very hard of hearing and would need change of seat if it would be an issue.

She also wanted to know about training of staff because there seems to be lots of issues regarding staff's interactions with people that have disabilities. Ms. Jones stated that there are training meetings with different groups within the airport and that she is taking all this information in and that there needs to be processes developed to get this information out to staff about what the needs are and what they need to do. Mr. Henderson added that a lot of these issues deal with sensitivity, education, and having people speak up for themselves and that he has been frustrated at the airport himself because of staff training issues as well as maybe problems that he has caused for Himself by sitting back and not speaking up about issues. Mr. Henderson stated he used to get frustrated checking in at the gate with staff trying to put him in a straight back because staff thought that he could walk, he stated he should identify himself to staff as someone that can't walk and allow them to make accommodations such as allowing him to sit in the first seat. Mr. O'Hanlon added that while Ms. Jones is here we shouldn't be discussing what we as the disability community could do differently but rather what the airport could do differently to make the airport more accessible. Mr. Henderson just wanted to emphasize that people from the disability community need to speak up and that he just wanted to state that point without being cut off.

Ms. Jones responded by stating that they held the Wheelchair Games here in Pittsburgh and that the airport took pride in accommodating the people flying in for that event and that their equipment was not broken. Those traveling through Pittsburgh airport was given kudos and accolades for their performance during the Wheelchair Games. Ms. Jones continued that people have told her they may move to Pittsburgh because of their treatment at the airport during that time and that the airport is working on so that everyone can have accessibility. Mr. McKenzie added that more monitors and ribbon boards at gates could be a way to generate money through advertising while solving an accessibility issue. Ms. Jones stated that there already are advertisement contracts through the airport ; additional advertisement would violate that contract.

Ms. Carter-Scott wanted to know what is being done for people with cognitive or mental disabilities and how can people with concerns get in contact with you. Ms. Jones stated that they have met all criteria as far as accessibility from the FAA, as far as being better anyone can be better and they are always training staff with customer service and these issues. Ms. Jones added that her ADA coordinator information is on <http://www.flypittsburgh.com> and you can find information about airport travel as well as a complaint form that is also found at any information desk at the airport. Ms. Carter-Scott wanted to say that not everyone has a computer, so how can someone know that your position exists or how can they get their information without using a computer. Ms. Jones replied that she does have a phone but prefers emails, and that she may not always be able to answer her phone, and she wanted to know why anyone would need to call her.

Ms. Carter-Scott responded by saying that someone without a computer and cannot receive the information they would need to call the ADA coordinator to get the information that they need; which would be Ms. Jones. Ms. Jones stated that people can call the airport information desk, (412)472-3500), and that they would be able to provide you with the complaint or compliment form as well as answer any questions that you may have and they could give you information about the different airlines. Mr. Hockenberry wanted to know if there was an ADA coordination office at the airport, specifically an office dealing with ADA issues. Ms. Jones replied that if there is an airline problem you should go to the airline, Mr. Hockenberry clarified that he meant an ADA office for the airport itself, to which Ms. Jones replied that yes she has an office. Mr. Hockenberry wanted to know if there is an office that you can go to when you are dropped off by ACCESS. Ms. Jones said you would need to make an appointment to meet with her. Mr. Hockenberry wanted to know if there was a type of travelers' aide desk, to which Ms. Jones replied yes there is a travelers' aide desk.

Mr. O'Hanlon stated that it is close to three and the meeting needs to come to an end, he wanted to state that it may take a long time to make the airport the accessibility center that they want it to be and they understand that. Mr. O'Hanlon continued saying they will be persistent with this issue and want to help and work with the airport and changing systems takes time but it is something that needs to be worked on. Ms. Jones stated that she wants to hear about the complaints with the airport but complaints with the airlines themselves need to go to the appropriate sources. Mr. Meritzer added that when issues are with airlines and not the airport that Ms. Jones puts them in contact with the people that they need to be connected with to deal with these issues. Ms. Jones stated the she would do her best to do that because most likely the people that would address the airline's issues would not be at the Pittsburgh airport.

Dr. Seelman made the motion that the meeting be adjourned, Mr. McGann seconded that motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM

**THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING**

**DATE:** November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011

**TIME:** 1:00 P.M.

**LOCATION:** Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street