

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES**

September 15, 2003

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, Al Condeluci, Milton Henderson, Jeff Parker, Penny Perlman, Kate Seelman
- Members Absent:** Bill Chrisner, Linda Dickerson, Liz Healey, Rich McGann
- Others Present:** Judy Barricella, Marc Cherna, James Durden, Chuck Keenan, Jerry Laychak, Jan Mather, Raymond Mercalde, Richard Meritzer, Lisa Moses, Will Thompkins

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Tague at 1:09 PM.

Approval of Agenda:

The agenda was reviewed. Strategic Plan update was removed because Janine was not able to attend this meeting. Mr. O’Hanlon moved to APPROVE THE AGENDA. Dr. Seelman seconded the motion. All members voted in favor of the motion.

Introductions:

All members and guests introduced themselves.

Allegheny County Human Service Director Marc Cherna’s Presentation

Mr. Cherna stated that their role was to integrate human services. He outlined the community services they provide and the Department structure. Their budget is \$720,000,000 including Juvenile Services. They have contracts with 460 non-profit agencies. They receive 3% of the County Budget that is used to match other funding sources. 250,000 people receive these services every year, which is 20% of the county’s population.

The guiding principle of the Department is “Treat people the way you want to be treated”. They are building on the strength of the community by pushing people to start their own agencies. They are also contracting with agencies that are available other than the traditional 9 – 5 time frame, particularly faith-based organizations.

They have received a \$25,000,000 reduction in state funding. The Human Services Development fund was cut 98%. They have funding through November 15th. However, the County is committed to cover the expenses of the Task Force to keep it operating. The City staffs the Task Force with Community Development Block Grant Funds.

County Chief Executive Jim Roddey supports the creation of Office of Physical Disabilities. This coordination is necessary because funding for some disability programs does not go through the County. The County has the funding for a position to create the office. But the funding is only through November 15th.

Questions for Director Cherna:

Mr. Tague asked about the \$25,000 budget the Task Force had submitted. Director Cherna assured the Task Force that due to County Council has fully funded HSDf, \$10,000 is available to the Task Force and the County would be reimbursed for expenditures.

Comment [KT1]: I thought Marc said that because County Council had fully funded HSDf that the taskforce had \$10,000 available

Dr. Seelman asked if there were specific constituencies affected by the funding cuts. Director Cherna stated that Employment and Training were reduced. And there were small cuts in Mental Health.

Comment [KT2]:

Ms. Perlman asked about staff turnovers due to the fact that there were no COLIs. Director Cherna said they were working to minimize the number of agencies closing their doors. They were shifting some programs to other departments. There is no funding for services to the County Jail.

Dr. Seelman asked if there were going to be forums or meetings on the role of the Office of Disabilities. Director Cherna said they would be meeting with existing groups. The question to ask is how this office can strengthen linkages.

Ms. Carter stated that mental disabilities create a real challenge. She wanted to know what this new office and the staff would do on this problem. Director Cherna said he wants to hear from the community on this issue. The office could serve as a resource center for services. It could help build bridges between agencies. The staff of this office could identify and pursue grant opportunities. It could identify gaps for capacity building. And when there are gaps, can this office be of any help? Ms. Carter said she agreed with these concepts.

Mr. Parker stated that all requests for payment should go to him.

Dr. Seelman stated that grants and aid must foster collaboration not competition. They should look for ways to identify issues where the concerns of the disability and the aging communities overlap. She cited visitability as an example. Director Cherna agreed that there must be better coordination. She went on to say how great it was to have him at the meeting. He responded that the Task Force should advise this new office.

Mr. Henderson attended the Agenda 2000 meeting. He said that people at the meeting stated they did not have the staff to apply for grants. He also said that this office should not duplicate UCP services.

Comment [KT3]: UPMC? Is this what he or was it UCP

Mr. O'Hanlon stated the Pennsylvania is an MH/MR state. There is no home in state government for the physical disability issues. Every group pays the price for this fragmentation. Discrimination exists within disability groups. He requested that the county eliminate any formal divisions.

Dr. Seelman observed that this is an opportunity to launch a more progressive view. We can move to a more community-based philosophy. Director Cherna responded that as a united front more can get through the bureaucracy. The worst situation is client groups fighting over scraps.

Mr. Laychak said Chief Executive Roddey said there would be funding from the Federal Government. Director Cherna we received foundation money for a year.

Mr. O'Hanlon inquired about the time frame for this new office. Director Cherna said he wanted it sooner rather than later. He would be looking at needed skills before hiring staff. The first step is to have an office and an 800 number.

Dr. Condeluci said the Task Force's primary goal is informational regarding issues important to the City and the County. The office could be a clearinghouse of information and planning, which would work well with the Task Force.

Mr. Tague stated Chief Executive Roddey said the Task Force would advise this new office. We would like to decide how to help design the office.

Comment [KT4]: The primary goal of the Taskforce--I don't think Al said this since are primary goal is to effect policy which effects the lives of people with disabilities

Approval of the August 19, 2003 Minutes:

It was stated that not everyone got the minutes. Ms. Carter moved to APPROVE THE AUGUST 2003 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. The motion was approved.

Financial Report

Mr. Parker reported there was still a need to get approval for expenditures. Dr. Condeluci said routine costs are covered at least until mid-November. He is submitting any invoices. Any routine costs should be submitted to him. But, he can not submit cost for big projects with higher costs.

Mr. Tague said that the Task Force would need to talk with Director Cherna about new expenditures, particularly the \$15,000 in the bank for the Video production. Mr. Parker stated he had talked with Tony Buba regarding this project. Dr. Condeluci told him to put a hold on any more discussions. This project would use both the reserves in the bank and a portion of the Task Force's budget. Dr. Seelman asked that this item be discussed in December. Mr. O'Hanlon stated that the cost of this project might be more the \$15,000. Mr. Parker said that Mr. Buba was very interested in the project. Mr. O'Hanlon pointed out that there were other funds available to be used for this project, particularly PAATAN funds.

Dr. Seelman informed the members that there would be an Institute in Politics regarding kids on October 24th a.m. in Alumni Hall. Attendance would be by invitation only. She said she could ask if the Task Force members could be invited. Ms. Perlman stated Youth in Transition lags behind in funding and services. Mr. Tague said we should be included if possible.

Report from the Disability Agenda:

Ms. Barricella handed out a report. The Task Force is discussed in the last section of the report. They were looking at suggestions. A big issue was for the City of Pittsburgh to make accessibility a requirement as part of the permitting process. Mr. Keenan stated he had done a review of the process but none of his policy recommendations had been implemented. Dr. Seelman said that the Task Force needs to bring the proper person in to discuss this issue. This information should be made known.

Mr. Laychak stated that the Task Force had 14 businesses sign a hiring pledge. Ms. Barricella indicated this project has gone slower than they had hoped. Five or six businesses have signed pledges. Giant Eagle has just been added to the list. Mr. Laychak asked if anyone was hired by these businesses. Ms. Barricella said they have done no follow up yet.

Visitability Update:

Mr. O'Hanlon reported on the Committee of 15. They had met in April and July. After that they met more consistently. There will be four more meetings. The next meeting is the third week in September. The committee is evenly represented with supporters and non-supporters of legislation. There is also an incentive system proposed. The Committee is looking at both options. Last meeting the committee was moving toward a consensus but it was still vague and unformed. Murray Russ asked to present a draft of the full incentive program at the next meeting. But the momentum is toward the law. Both options will be reported to City Council. The next City Council will be very friendly to the law. Dr. Condeluci said the Task Force representative should continue to support an ordinance. He can't agree with incentives alone. The value of the incentive decreases as the cost of the house goes up. Dr. Seelman said people in the community need to know what is going on. They need to hear a consistent message. The message hasn't changed. Mr. Tague agreed. The position of the community remains the same.

Disability Issues:

Ms. Brenyo said she never received any letters. Mr. Tague said the letters were done and will send Ms. Brenyo a copy.

Mr. Henderson pointed out that the City of Pittsburgh is facing serious financial problems. How does the Task Force tell people how to cope with the changes? Ms. Moses said that the City administration are not yet prepared to have someone come to the Task Force from the City Administration to discuss these issues. She will try to get someone to come to the meeting next month. Dr. Seelman said that if they can't come in October, try to get someone for November.

Dr. Seelman said next year the Task Force should talk about public communication. People with disabilities are losing jobs. The Task Force should have people come to the meetings regarding this issue to educate the Task Force members. Mr. Tague requested that people recommend who should be invited. Ms. Brenyo suggested the new director of OVR.

Mr. Tague suggested that staff should update the website.

Mr. Henderson suggested that the Task Force invite Guy Costa, Director of Public Works to discuss giving the members insight as to how the Department is going to function. Mr. Tague said the appropriate people will be invited.

Ms. Carter said that the Task Force should stay on top of the creation of the County Office of Disabilities. She was glad to see more consumers attending the meeting (noting the attendance of Mr. Mercalde and Mr. Laychak). She wondered how they could get even more people to come. Mr. Meritzer suggested that they put the meeting notices on the Pittsburgh Cable Station. Dr. Seelman suggested that they invite leaders of organizations to attend the meetings. They could have decision-makers come to the meetings as well. Ms. Moses pointed out that resources are limited. The overall picture has not changed. It will just take longer to salt the streets. There is a plan in place.

Mr. Tague questioned what the Task Force needs to do next regarding the proposed County Office of Disability. He suggested they meet with Director Cherna, the sooner, the better. Ms. Mather suggested a sub committee be set up to work on this issue. Mr. O'Hanlon recommended a brain storming session. Dr. Seelman stated that some brainstorming had already been done here with Director Cherna. She suggested that the Task Force review what was said in the minutes. Mr. Laychak suggested that the Task Force create a job committee for the next meeting. Dr. Seelman and Ms. Brenyo stated that the issues discussed should be taken from the minutes and sent to the Task Force members. Ms. Mather suggested that they come up with ideas on staffing. Ms. Brenyo agreed and said the Task Force should have a seminar for the staff.

ADA Coordinator Report:

No report was requested.

Announcements:

There were no announcements.

Public Comments

Mr. Mercalde related a positive experience he had. The Chartiers Council of Government Mental Health Drop In Center has field trips to PNC Park so the clients can see the games. He went on one of these trips and said the facility had inclusive seating for people with disabilities. A bus driver who drives people with disabilities ran this section of the facility. He said we should bring the seats to a Task Force meeting to demonstrate how they work. Ms. Brenyo said that the architects had met with every group in the disability community.

Mr. Keenan said that many of the smaller municipalities do not have any ADA staff. The proposed County office could oversee County disbursements.

Ms. Brenyo stated that the crosswalk between the State Office Building and the Hilton Hotel is in bad shape and needs repaired.

Dr. Seelman said this was a good meeting. It was well conducted and had a good agenda.

Mr. Laychak said he has Erie and Buffalo scanned in and / or sent out.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 PM.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING:

DATE: October 20, 2003
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: First Floor Conference Room
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15219

FUTURE MEETING DATES:

November 17, 2003

December 15, 2003