

City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County
Task Force on Disability
Monday September 15th, 2014
Meeting Minutes

Members in Attendance: Paul O’Hanlon, Dr. Kate Seelman, John Tague, Jeff Parker, Aurelia Carter-Scott, Rich McGann, Milton Henderson, Sarah Goldstein, Karen Warman, Joe Wasserman, J. James C. Noschese, Judy Baricella

Task Force Members Absent: Janet Evans, Liz Healy

Also in Attendance:

Shirley Abriolay, Ali Abdullah, Halle Stockton, Mary Esther Van Shura, Sylvia Dennis, Alexis Jerzo, Meghan Hammond, Joy Dore, Robert Sallen, Donald Kovicac, Patrick Magrane, Dillon McManus, Mai Nguyen, Matt Walker, Richard Meritzer

Review and Approval of Treasurer’s Report

Discussion of Task Force’s participation in National Council on Disabilities Meeting and 25th Anniversary of the ADA. Task Force’s primary role is to provide accessibility to the events, an addition to the budget. The Task Force receives \$8,000 through the Human Services Development Block Grant. Mr. Henderson inquired into the Task Force’s potential expenditures toward the 25th anniversary celebration. Mr. Tague confirmed that the Task Force’s participation in the event, as well as the Council Meeting, will be paid for out of the budget: \$1,700 and \$1,000, respectively. Upon further discussion, the Task Force voted to approve the budget.

National Recovery Month Proclamations

Ms. Van Shura: I’m delighted today to bring a proclamation on behalf of the County Executive, who sends his warmest regards to you in support.

Ms. Baricella presented County Executive Rich Fitzgerald’s Proclamation

(Proclamation attached)

Ms. Goldstein presented Mayor William Peduto’s Proclamation

(Proclamation attached)

Mr. Noschese: How can we get this out there? Can we post it somewhere? How can we show the public and proclaim this to everyone?

Ms. Goldstein: At Community Care Behavioral Health, we have it posted on our website.

Dr. Seelman: I would recommend that the proclamation be on the Task Force website.

Mr. Meritzer: The city proclamation is on the City webpage, but we can also link to that page on our website. And I will send the link out to my list.

Mr. Tague: What Marty Esther did was a press release sent out by the County Executive. If Mayor Peduto did the same thing, that would be very helpful.

Ms. Dore: Have you thought about linking to SAMHSA's direct website?

Ms. Goldstein: It's samhsa.gov?

Ms. Dore: Yes.

Resources for Recovery

Ms. Nguyen: September is Mental Illness and Substance Abuse Recovery Month. There are two types of resources: the first is strategies to help people in recovery, and the second is a list of organizations, websites, and support groups that provide services and supports for people with mental illness and substance abuse disorders.

(Presentation Attached)

Mr. McGann: Wonderful! I know Dr. Mathos works with a lot of deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deaf-blind in the community, so it's a wonderful story to hear. Some people in the community have a negative identity, so it's very important that the community in general stop having a negative thought process, and be more supportive. People need to know that the problem isn't just with the hearing, but also people who are deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing, and more isolated. Maybe you could share your story with Dr. Mathos so we can all be connected and have more encouragement to help improve.

Mr. Noschese: Four slides back, those resources are very much needed and very helpful. There seems to be no money to provide for interpreters, specifically, so if someone needs them, there are money issues. That's the problem that we're currently having in the deaf community. I just wanted to make you aware of that.

Dr. Seelman: Will you be posting your presentation online so we can access it?

Ms. Nguyen: Yes, I will send it to Richard so he can post and distribute the slides and the document.

Update on the Meeting with the Mayor

Dr. Seelman: Paul and I met with Mayor Peduto two weeks ago as a preliminary meeting. I'll just tell you outcomes so we can move on to the next agenda item. Our first objective was to see if we could have the Mayor consider the nominee Gabe McMoreland for the Task Force. The Mayor indicated that he would do that. Through Richard's continued advocacy with the Mayor, we hope to see a letter of invitation. Also, we briefed him on the National Council on Disability and ADA celebrations in 2015 and invited his active involvement, and he agreed. Thirdly, we discussed interfacing the Task Force with the

city planning process, and he agreed. We also discussed inviting the Mayor to one of these meetings, and in the future I expect we may see him. Finally, Paul discussed Snow Angels.

Mr. O'Hanlon: We raised the issue of the Snow Angel Program, and that it morphed into a senior-only program and was spun off from the city. It leaves people with disabilities out there. He agreed that he would look at that program and look at how the city could address that. There were no real answers or promises to that, but he was committed looking at it.

Mr. Meritzer: Our office has received a number of emails back and forth with his staff and with the Mayor's outreach staff, which is a separate office, and with the organizations that are currently doing the senior program. They are actively working together to figure out a way to make it happen this winter.

Mr. O'Hanlon: The Mayor also said that he would be appointing someone from the Task Force to a committee.

Mr. Meritzer: That is something that they want to rule out later. There will be a discussion about a committee, but they would rather have it better fleshed out before they brought it to the Task Force. He did say that he wants to regularly meet with the Task Force in his office, and that is in the works to be discussed for scheduling.

Ms. Carter-Scott: I'm glad that the meeting with the Mayor has happened. With Snow Angels, I never understood why it was moved outside of the city and placed somewhere else. We need to continue this issue based on where it is going to be placed, because it is a needed program by the residents in the city who have disabilities. We should not wait until the first snow arrives to have an answer. We need to continue the conversation to know where it's going to be, how is it going to work? I would also like to know where the other council members stand in regards to Snow Angels. I know Councilwoman Kale-Smith rallied volunteers before.

Mr. O'Hanlon: City Council has regular opportunities to speak. I would encourage anyone, and I'd be willing to tag-team with you. You get two minutes to speak on any topic, and it might be good for us to go there and speak that out. You're right, there are a lot of Council people who are very connected with their neighborhoods and communities, and it would be a real resource to get this going. If anyone is interested in doing that, let me know.

Career Symposium: Disability Employment Summit

Ms. Van Shura: I'm delighted to be addressing you today on the upcoming Disability Employment Summit. Last year, we talked about a summit that was held with all the business leaders of the Allegheny Conference. Last October at the Duquesne Club, all those leaders came together and made a very strong commitment to hiring individuals with disabilities. As you know, when the ADA was passed, 67% of individuals with disabilities did not have jobs. Now, unfortunately, about almost the same percentage still do not have jobs. If you really want to be an advocate, we've got to get people jobs, so the corporate community has come together. We expanded last year's program. It's a three day event

this year. We have a traditional reception at Heinz Center, led by Joyce Bender. Wednesday October 15th is Disability Mentoring Day. But the exciting aspect of this year is that the American Association for Persons with Disabilities has designated Pittsburgh as the national post. Because of that, the corporate community realized they can't just do the traditional. On the first page of the Summit sheet, it describes the three days of events. The most important for your purpose is called the "Participant's Link." The main sheet talks about the Career Summit and Showcase. In the morning, the corporate community is coming together to learn strategies of how to recruit individuals with disabilities, what modifications are important, etc. For us, the Employment Session will be Tuesday, October 14th at Heinz Field at the West Club Level from 1pm – 5pm. We're looking for all of you to come and join us. We're looking for all of you to bring other advocates and individuals with disabilities looking for jobs. This is the different piece of this. The corporate community has said they want to do something for individuals with disabilities and veterans with disabilities, so they will have panels in the afternoon to discuss what kind of jobs are out there. On the back of the sheet, you'll see there will be some sessions in the afternoon, and people can choose what kind of jobs they're looking for. If you want, you can even submit a resume for consideration. Folks will be coming together, so I ask your commitment for Tuesday, October 14th. If you go into the link, and Judy will resend it, go in and sign up. Bring people you know. It's free. We have also been doing collaboration with the National Organization on Disability. There's a lot of collaboration with this, and to our knowledge it's the first time ever. The last day is our traditional Disability Mentoring Day. Any corporation that is a sponsor is saying that they will take kids with disabilities for Disability Mentoring Day. A few of the corporations include: PNC, Peoples Gas, Highmark, Allegheny Technologies, Bayer, BNY Mellon, CMU, Citizen's Bank, and many more. I can't stress enough to bring as many as you can.

Mr. McGann: It will be so helpful for people to see what kinds of jobs are available. Those with disabilities will be able to understand what businesses are doing to help them. Some don't hire people with disabilities, so it will be great to see more people getting jobs. I know they are frustrated right now, and some are moving to a different state, so we have to respect their needs and support them as well.

Ms. Van Shura: And the link asks about any needed accommodations for the summit.

Ms. Carter-Scott: In terms of transportation, is there anything that will link people to Port Authority to figure out which buses will take them there?

Ms. Van Shura: There is the subway stop there, and in planning this, we met with Access, and they are aware of that day and are on standby.

Dr. Seelman: There is an employment forum on September 23rd, and Halle Stockton is here to introduce it.

Ms. Stockton: I'm with Public Source, an in-depth news organization in Pittsburgh. We are holding an event next Tuesday, September 23rd at the University Club on Pitt's campus. It's for the employment of people with disabilities. We'll be discussing pay, integration into the workforce, training, and also some recent developments and legislative changes. Dr. Seelman will be on our panel. There will be Q and A, and I have cards with the URL to register. It's 7pm, September 23rd.

Mr. O'Hanlon: For those who maybe don't know, Halle wrote a really good article about sheltered workshops and employment for people with intellectual disabilities. You could probably find it on the web. It's definitely worth the time.

Disability Agenda 2000 Retrospective

Mr. O'Hanlon: At the meeting to discuss the 25th Anniversary Celebration, Kristy Troutman brought up that this will be the 15th year for the Disability Agenda 2000. The Disability Agenda 2000 was a year-long community process that we engaged in 1999 in preparation for 2000. It was a very broad, robust agenda-setting process. It's worth looking at, 15 years later, what did we get done? What did we improve? What are we still dealing with? I considered that that may be something the Task Force could do in the next year. Every meeting we have, we have the things we have to deal with and new business, but we could also have some time that we could dedicate toward an ongoing process. Maybe we could allocate an hour per meeting or something like that where we could look back at one of the sectors of the Disability Agenda 2000. For the Agenda, we divided the "world" into different sectors. For instance, there was the Housing Development and Design Sector, the Primary and Secondary Education Sector, the Neighborhoods and Communities Sector, etc. Some of this we could do by email, but if we could look at each sector and have a subcommittee for each, and each subcommittee would then plan your one-hour meeting in terms of speakers and presentations. In the next 8 or 9 meetings, we could go through a process of reviewing each of the sectors to evaluate progress. It'll also be an interesting exercise to see how we've changed since 15 years ago, in terms of what we see as needed, that kind of thing. The next step would be to organize the subcommittees, which I would prefer to do by email.

Dr. Seelman: Is the original report on our website?

Mr. O'Hanlon: No. One thing that we discovered was that 15 years is apparently just long enough for everyone to go through about two new computers, so a document you have from the first often can't be read on a new computer. Mostly what we have are paper documents, but we can get them scanned and converted, and soon we will be able to do that.

Mr. Parker: I think this is a great idea because, on top of everything else, it could be our compass for the next year. You said this might be a way of engaging council members into these projects, too. We need some higher profile with the city council, so if we can engage some of them with these sectors, I think it might be really beneficial for all of us.

Mr. O'Hanlon: It would be really good to scope out who we would want to invite from the local political bodies, not just city council, but also county council.

Ms. Baricella: To expand on the purpose of the Disability Agenda 2000, the subtitle of that is "A Blueprint for Inclusion." One of the things that we did when pulling together these various sectors was tell the leaders of these sectors that people with disabilities need to be included as a normal part of doing business. We're not looking for separate programs or anything special; we're looking for you as a leader in your community to automatically consider disabilities and accessibility. That's the key—have

we changed the minds of those leaders in the various sectors, not have we created more programs for disabilities.

Mr. McGann: I'd like to see some of this information in email so I can read about it. I'd like to encourage you to think about ways to gather ideas and to email that so we can all be included. We can include more of the young population in this, too.

Mr. O'Hanlon: That's a good point. I think because we have a mixture of people on the Task Force who were around for that process and those who weren't around for that process, the people for whom this is new, I would look to you to find the right role you want to play here. I can appreciate that it's a different perspective being new to it and having a retrospective versus having been through it.

Dr. Seelman: Among the new and vibrant young leadership groups for disabilities in Pittsburgh, many of whom are known very well on the local end, and at every level. Having their input at this point is very important for tomorrow.

Mr. O'Hanlon: At the next meeting, we'll have more of a concrete process to propose.

Proposal by Robert Saul

Mr. Saul: I am starting a business. This past May, I was talking with one of my close friends whose father had a stroke. He needed to travel to his son's wedding across the country. As they were traveling, they had a very difficult time finding places to stay and places to eat. It struck me that in this modern age; we still have an information gap for individuals with disabilities where they can't easily find resources. I'm starting an organization called Accessivist. It will be at accessivist.com. I initially want to point out that individuals with disabilities are a large market in America, and that's very much ignored by businesses and a lot of individuals. Individuals with disabilities also have access to smartphones. There is a large population that has very modern technology and access to those goods. Also, the Department of Justice is taking action against cities and businesses for not accommodating individuals with disabilities. There are resources that are currently trying to put information about accessible locations online, but they're very incomplete. Just this past March, legislation passed that states contracting businesses with the federal government are required to have 7% workforce utilization for individuals with disabilities. My long-term goal is to create a website that's a one-stop shop for accessibility and accessible locations. I'm going to start out with just wheelchair accessibility, but in the future we will move on to accessibility of all kinds. We're going to start out slowly because we find that it's difficult to populate a website when people try to jump to the end with posting information. In order to populate the website, we're going to start by developing an audit tool for city governments and ADA coordinators to use to audit their facilities. They'll be able to take photos of areas of accessibility so they can show how accessible their buildings are, so they can rate and understand themselves and where they stand in terms of accessibility. We're working with Richard with the city, as well as with the city of Phoenix. Next year, Phoenix we'll deploy 35 people to audit over 600 buildings around Phoenix. We'll give them a web application to do the audits. That's where we are now. My hope in the long run is to provide a resource for accessible locations.

Mr. Abdullah: As it relates to accessibility, do you have any ideas on how you are going to make your information accessible for those who have disabilities? For instance, for those who may be deaf or blind?

Mr. Saul: There are a lot of resources where once information is text-based; it can be translated into braille, audio. Our hope is to get the initial information up, so that when it's text-based, we can then apply it to the different needs and convert that information.

Ms. Dore: What do you expect the timetable to be for you to roll this out? And are you working with any schools in this area, or in Phoenix?

Mr. Saul: I'm working with Carnegie Mellon, with other students from Carnegie Mellon, with students from the University of Pittsburgh, and with a student from Northern Arizona University. As far as the timetable, we hope to roll out an ADA audit tool for coordinators to use for around April of next year. As far as the website and populating the information, it's going to be a much longer term goal. We don't want to fail like others have failed along that path. We want to make sure we're providing a robust source of information.

Ms. Carter-Scott: Will you also be connecting with the county?

Mr. Saul: Absolutely.

Mr. McGann: Thank you! This is wonderful. However, the technology will improve in the future, as the technology becomes old. The services might need to be debugged or have issues, or start breaking down. Who will fix everything as the technology becomes outdated? Will you have set up a tech support program? Will we be able to connect it to our phones and sent as texts, so we can read it via braille and respond that way?

Mr. Saul: We haven't solved all the problems yet, and I know there will be problems with communication and technology—there always is. What we'll start out doing is taking the low-hanging fruit, which is getting the information for the accessible locations and communicating that to the public. That's where we'll start, and further into the future, we'll work on expanding to all different needs. It will take time, but I'm looking for the best solutions possible in the future.

Dr. Seelman: Are you in communication with the Disability Business Technical Assistance?

Mr. Saul: No I'm not.

Dr. Seelman: We'll see each other this week. Also, I think Rich was referring to maintenance for the URL. It's always a problem for any database.

Mr. Saul: One of the things that we'll be able to do is create databases for organizations using things like the Amazon Cloud Server. They have a central source for all of their accessible locations, so when they update a location, rather than doing a whole new report, they can go into that single entry and update that. Is that what you're asking?

Dr. Seelman: There needs to be some underpinning resources to maintain and update databases.

Mr. Saul: Yes, and I'm still seeking resources.

Ms. Warman: Will you be looking into the apps that are already on smartphones that provide some of the information you need?

Mr. Saul: Yes. As of now, a lot of websites and smartphone applications produce "star" ratings, which isn't very useful if you need to know about the ramp or the grade or another specific mode of accessibility. That information isn't well-provided, so we're looking for a deeper information base so you can check on specific information.

Dr. Seelman: I appreciate that CMU is doing this, and hopefully Pitt will be following along soon.

Mr. Saul: To put in a plug, "Pathview" just spun out of Pitt. They do sidewalk mapping.

Dr. Seelman: The two universities really are innovative, and I'm glad they're working towards this.

Mr. McGann: It would be good for the pictures to have captioning so the blind can understand what the pictures are all about.

Mr. Saul: That's a wonderful idea. I hadn't considered that yet, and I'll definitely take that back and apply that.

Mr. Meritzer: On the city website, we're embedding text behind the pictures. This is technology that's very time consuming, but very effective. You may want to see if you can get some people who are detail-oriented who can give an adequate description of the picture.

Vox Pop

Ms. Dore: Tomorrow at the David Lawrence Convention Center from 8am until 12:30pm there is the Where to Turn Resource Fair. They'll have a variety of resources for disabilities and other needs in the community in terms of human services. It's free; I highly recommend it. They'll be highlighting a lot of what was discussed today.

Ms. Hammond: In support of Recovery Month, I would like to remind everyone that at the Fair Housing Partnership, we can assist clients with previously untreated mental disabilities or previous drug or alcohol addicts in recovery with reasonable accommodation into housing when they are barred based criminal or credit history.

Mr. Henderson: As a follow-up from July, we have set a date with the CareerLinks center. We will need interpreters. The meeting is set up for the committee that chose to be part of it. It's the 24th of September at the CareerLinks building from 10 to 11. Also, if you would like to send Richard a comment on what you would like to discuss within the next two days, we'll send that to them as an agenda. Lastly, the 23rd is National Voter Registration Day, and we're doing voter registration and community

awareness at the Center for Independent Living in Wilkinsburg from 12-3. Any questions regarding CareerLinks?

Ms. Dore: How do we get a copy of that email and sign up to go?

Mr. Henderson: I will send you the email no later than Thursday. The whole committee will get an email no later than Thursday.

Mr. Meritzer: After this meeting, I'm leaving town, as I've been invited to make two presentations at the Mid-Atlantic ADA Conference. One is on the great work we've done with the One-Step Program, the other to talk about the work we're doing to organize the Title II coordinators across the state.

A motion to adjourn the Task Force Meeting was passed by a unanimous vote.

The next meeting will occur October 20th, 2014.