

CITY OF PITTSBURGH
ADA Strategic Planning Team
February 15, 2012
MINUTES

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

Members Present: Anthony Boule from Parking Authority, Roy Cox from Emergency Medical Services, Ron Deutsch from Department of Parks and Recreation, Darnell Griffin-Benton from Urban Redevelopment Authority, Dawn Jakomas from Equal Opportunity Review Commission, Ryszard Janik from Department of Public Works, Eric Miazga from CIS, Richard Meritzer ADA Coordinator from City Planning, Keith Partyka ADA Coordinator Assistant from City Planning, Randy Whitehair from Public Safety, Connie Zatek from Human Relations Commission

Members Absent: Barbara Curry from Water Authority, Regina McDonald from Policy Department, Patricia Melendez from Bureau of Police, Sandra Stewart from Housing Authority, Jason Zollet from Law Department

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Meritzer at 10:00 AM.

ZOOMTEXT EVALUATION:

Mr. Meritzer discussed that he had took part in a evaluation of Zoomtext webinar and after he had seen what Zoomtext offered, he saw that our computers offer the virtually all the same features and we have decided not to pursuit Zoomtext.

Accessible Alternatives to Sidewalk Barricades:

Mr. Meritzer stated that Kathleen Mikolay of his office has set up a meeting with somebody who is working on accessible alternatives to sidewalk barricades. Mr. Meritzer said that he would have a report on the accessible alternatives at the next meeting. No one from Public Works was at the meeting, but Mr. Meritzer expressed that he wants to forward the message to Public Works and hear their comments.

COMP PLAN:

Mr. Meritzer went into a brief discussion of the Comp Plan. The OpenSpace plan was wrapping up. Mr Meritzer gave thanks to everyone that was involved, especially Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and CIS. Mr. Meritzer said that we are working on the transportation part of the plan now, MovePGH. A number of City departments and Parking Authority are working on MovePGH and Mr. Meritzer appreciated every one's support from everyone at the table and their

departments in promoting accessibility. Mr. Meritzer mentioned that there were many comments on accessibility on the OpenSpace review. Mr. Meritzer was glad that every one was promoting accessibility and added that he thinks it will make it a better city and a better Comp Plan. Mr. Meritzer urged everyone to check on the Comp Plan and become involved because it is going to affect the entire city. There were no questions about the Comp Plan.

Contract for Video Taping:

Mr. Meritzer had first brought this up two meetings ago. We are in the process of going to be doing 5 to 7 minute spots for the city cable channel and Vimeo so it can be seen worldwide. Mr. Meritzer said that we had already done two spots and they both have been received very well.

The format of the taping are a coffee table conversation between a city staff member and a member of the disability community. So far it has only been Mr. Meritzer but he does not want it to be about him, he wants it to be about city projects and somebody from the disability community working on the project. The scripts are well-written, and appear to be spontaneous but are not. Mr. Meritzer's assistants have written the scripts and Mr. Meritzer joked that he wished he would have thought to have said somethings by himself that was on the script.

Mr. Meritzer added that next week he and his assistants are going out to advertise for consultants and then begin working on the contracting process and hope to have the contract in place by May. The idea

would be to have one taping a month. Mr. Meritzer said that last time he had received a number of good suggestions about taping. The Commission on Human Relations have a project about housing that they look to get publicized. The Bureau of Police wanted a program to speak about their work with the Deaf community. Mr. Meritzer asked every one if they had any projects that worked with the disabled community and want a television spot to publicize it, to let him know and who would be a good staff member to represent the city and then he will find someone from to represent the disabled community. Mr. Meritzer mentioned that every one was doing great work and people do not recognize it. Mr. Meritzer said that during building evaluations, the city's buildings were much more accessible than given credit for. Mr. Meritzer has hoped to get in 12 taping under the contract.

Ms. Zatek asked Mr. Meritzer if they needed to let him know what points to talk about or will they need from one from their department in writing the script. Mr. Meritzer said that one of his assistants is assigned to work with the city staff person and the person from the disabled community to get information. The assistant will then draft a script, and send to it to the participants for their review.

Mr. Meritzer mentioned that he is working on White Cane Day project and it is a chance for the city to publicize the issues of people that are blind. One of Mr. Meritzer's assistants is working

on drafting a script for White Cane Day and Mr. Meritzer hopes to make that the first television spot. Ms. Zatek asked when is White Can Day. Mr. Partyka replied that it was October 15.

OTHER COMMENTS:

Guidelines for Service Dogs Versus Comfort Dogs:

Mr. Cox was asked to draw up guidelines for service dogs versus comfort dogs. A few residents want to take their comfort dogs to the hospital when their sick and the hospitals are having difficulties dealing with comfort dogs, and it is a safety concern. Mr. Cox said that identifying a service dog from a comfort dog can be tricky and Mr. Cox does not want to challenge residents if they do say it is a service dog when it looks like a comfort dog. Mr. Cox needs guidelines as a policy, so that they are within the law, but do not give undeserved benefits to comfort dogs.

Ms. Zatek asked what a comfort dog was. Mr. Cox replied that a comfort dog is a dog that calms an individual down and makes them feel better when the dog is there. Mr. Meritzer mentioned that they had changed the definition of a service dog, and the new definition is the dog has to perform a specific function their trained for.

Mr. Cox expressed that a problem was when a resident calls 911 he has no way of asking what type of dog they are calling about. Mr. Meritzer said that you are legally allowed to ask what type of function does the dog serve.

Mr. Miazga asked if service dogs needed any kind of papers. Mr. Meritzer replied that no, there is no papers on service animals versus comfort animals. Mr. Meritzer added that you have to take a resident's word on their animal because there are no papers. Mr. Cox said that was a another problem because service animals have no papers or special tags.

Mr. Cox asked for assistance for Mr. Meritzer on the guidelines with some language. Mr. Meritzer said that he be glad to help.

Translation Book for Police, Fire, and EMS:

Mr. Cox said we had discussed a long time ago. This would be for a resident who is having an emergency and does not speak English. Mr Cox asked Mr. Meritzer if he could look into getting funding for translation sheets, or translation books for Police, Fire and EMS. Mr. Meritzer said that he would look into that.

Mr. Meritzer said that hospitals used picture sheets and that is what Mr. Cox was talking about. Mr. Meritzer said that he would be able to get that. Mr. Meritzer said that UPMC uses tablets that show pictures of illnesses so people can point to what is ailing them. Mr. Meritzer said that

he can contact someone from UPMC and ask where they get their tablets or responder picture booklets.

Wheelchair Vans for Police, and EMS:

Mr. Cox brought up the issue for wheelchair vans for Police, and EMS. Mr. Meritzer said that they are working on it and the problem was finding funding because it is an expensive piece of equipment.

City Pools:

Mr. Partyka discussed that we are looking to make city pools full accessible. Mr. Partyka has been going around to different city pools and reviewing their current accessibility and giving recommendations to Mr. Meritzer on which pools to work on to make fully accessible.

Mr. Meritzer said that we are comparing the current accessibility of the pools with demographics from ACCESS on how many people are registered with ACCESS in the neighborhood of a pool or a surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Meritzer stated that the pools are going to have to have two modes of ingress and egress and we are looking at what we can do with the pools. The only accessible pool now is the Oliver Bath House.

Mr. Meritzer is working with Aquatics on a 10 year plan to make as many pools as we can accessible and overlay that with the Spray Park program.

Mr. Cox said emergency personal is also aided by accessibility and that it helps people from the disabled community and emergency responders.

New ADA Specifications

Mr. Janik expressed an idea, since new ADA are going into effect on March this year. It would be a helpful to put the new specifications on the city website. Mr. Meritzer said that it was a good idea and we would work on that to either put a link for it on the website or put the information directly on there.

Environmental Center at Frick Park

Mr. Meritzer mentioned he was working with Mr. Ishman on the city pools and the new Environmental Center project. The center has accessibility issues because of the natural Amphitheater with natural stone and it is very difficult to make accessible. Mr. Meritzer said the

ADA Laws say you do not have to make accommodations if it would change the nature of the program. Mr. Meritzer's standpoint is that eliminating the Amphitheater would change the nature of the program and he does not want to do that. Mr. Meritzer and Mr. Partyka are working on options for the Amphitheater.

SUMMARY:

Mr. Meritzer thanked everyone for coming.

Everyone is going to receive two sets of minutes from this meeting, the original version and the redacted version which will put up on the city website.

Mr. Cox said that Pittsburgh is becoming more diverse and international.

Mr. Meritzer said that we do have funding for interpreters if anyone needs them for a meeting.

The next meeting should be in May.

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Meritzer at 10:35 AM.