

City of Pittsburgh / Allegheny County

Task Force on Disabilities

August 21, 2017

Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members in Attendance

Paul O'Hanlon, James C. Noschese, John Tague, Joe Wasserman, Richard McGann, Sarah Goldstein, Steve Fowler, Milton Henderson, Janet Evans, Cori Frazier

Task Force Members Absent

Karen Warman, Gabe McMoreland

Also In Attendance

Richard Meritzer, Jeff Parker, Kim Mackey, Harold Love, Georgeanne Ligenfelter, Ray Wiethorn, Alisa Grishman, Joy Dore, Maria Driediger, April Delacruz, Jessica Burkman, Mary Esther Van Shura, Laura Drogowski, Jonathon Robison, Dustin Gibson, Caleb Schweter, Kaitlyn Buss, Ryan Niespodzianski

Welcome and Introduction

The program started at 1:00 pm and began with the introduction of the Task Force members and individuals in the audience.

Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report

The annual budget was discussed prior to the Annual Meeting at the Executive Committee Meeting. Mr. Tague described the three main expenses covered by the Task Force budget: CART, interpretative services, and projects decided on by the Task Force throughout the year. The total is \$9,000, authorized by the Department of Human Services. He motioned to approve the 2017-2018 budget. Ms. Evans seconded the motion, and the motion passed,

Review and Approval of Meeting Minutes

The minutes from January and July 2017 were submitted for approval. The motion passed. All minutes from 2017 have been completed and approved, and the Task Force is up-to-date as of this meeting.

Election of Officers

Mr. Tague reminded everyone that the position is a two-year term. The following officers have been nominated by the Nominating Committee: Paul O'Hanlon and James C. Noschese as Co-Chairs, John Tague as Treasurer, and Joe Wasserman as the Member-At-Large.

Ms. Evans expressed her concern at the lack of diversity in these nominations, noting that all those nominated are male. Ms. Goldstein stated that there are few females in the Task Force and that the diversity of disabilities is what is most important. She made a motion to second the

nominations as they stand. Mr. O'Hanlon asked for any other nominations from the floor: none were presented. The Nominating Committee's recommendations passed with two abstentions.

Current Projects

Mr. Meritzer presented reports the Task Force's current committees and projects. Anyone looking to get involved in any of these current projects should email Mr. Meritzer.

Police Communal Relations Committee

This committee meets irregularly and examines how the police interact with members of the disability community. The roughly 15 people on this committee make up a great cross-representation, and they are looking for 2-5 more people to serve on this committee. Their most important upcoming project: A traffic stop information card system to address the dangers that traffic stops pose to those who are hearing-impaired.

Airport Accessibility Committee

Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Noschese presented the updates from this committee. There have been two or three meetings and discussions with airport representatives. Mr. O'Hanlon was recently impressed when the airport hired a consulting company to make recommendations for improvements. Mr. Noschese will look for those changes to be implemented when he visits the airport next.

Universal Design for New Developments

The committee is looking to set up a conference with decision makers, architectural professionals in the field, and people with disabilities to talk about new developments can further implement universal design across all disabilities. This meeting has yet to be set up, and Mr. Meritzer expressed the need for lots of help, roughly 5-7 volunteers.

Jail Accessibility

Mr. Meritzer stated that he was uninvolved on this committee and that this project will need lots of help, especially someone to act as the main point person. The issues within jails include access to video phones, staff, interpreters, and entrance mobility issues among others.

Business Accessibility

This project involves creating a directory of business entrance accessibility, and anywhere from 10-15 volunteers would be useful to go around the City and corroborate the information collected so far.

One Step Program

Mr. Meritzer encouraged support for Ramp Crawls in Pittsburgh neighborhoods to promote accessibility and visitability via Oakland For All's Ramp Crawl initiatives. 10-15 volunteers would also be beneficial to get those projects moving.

Sidewalk Accessibility

Mr. Meritzer stated that an ordinance in the City code regulating sandwich boards was finished in January. Now it is necessary to identify where those obstructing sandwich boards are located and document them with photographs. 5-6 people are also needed to alert where ramps are missing in smaller neighborhoods. The issue of broken or missing sidewalks also falls under Sidewalk Accessibility, and the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure is requesting money

in this year's budget (which has yet to be approved) to replace the missing sidewalks. Mr. Meritzer asked for a missing/broken sidewalk list from the disability community with requests, along with 5-7 volunteers to check where the sidewalks require contacting the owner.

Hospital Compliance Guidelines

The drafting of the Hospital Compliance Guidelines for the intellectually and developmentally disabled has been finished and is under final review. Mr. Meritzer's office is currently working on a set of guidelines addressing psychiatric disabilities. He requested the help of 3-4 people with access into the mental health services community to help set up meetings for this. The web page for the deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing Hospital Compliance Guidelines will be rolled out in the near future.

Visitability Tax Credit

This is a City and County tax credit which encourages residential units making renovations with one, two, or three units to make their houses visitable and receive a tax credit. Mr. Meritzer expressed the need for people outside the City to contact their local municipalities and spread information about the tax credit.

Structure/Role of the Task Force

Mr. Parker gave his input on the structure of the Task Force as a past Task Force Member and Chair. He proposed looking into an organizational model based on the structure of another group that he and Mr. O'Hanlon are involved in: the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council, colloquially referred to as the DD Council.

In the DD Council, councilmembers are appointed by the governor. At DD Council meetings, the committee members are indistinguishable from councilmembers save for matters of voting. The bulk of the work is done ahead of time by DD Council committee members. These committee members are recruited by councilmembers and are expected to come, present, and react generally to all facets of DD Council meetings. After an initial orientation, DD Committee members are able to work on any project they want while representing the overall DD Council as a whole. Because the committee members have been so involved with the Council, they are prepped and in queue to fill empty councilmember spots.

Mr. Meritzer asked whether there are age limits on committee members. Mr. Parker responded that on the DD Council, committee members were recruited who would not necessarily meet councilmember eligibility requirements. Mr. O'Hanlon clarified that Mr. Parker's mention of committee members being "in queue" to become councilmembers is not a given guarantee. Mr. Parker agreed: the main idea is that committee members are heavily involved and would be more capable to potentially act as a councilmember.

Mr. O'Hanlon explained how this proposal would look with the current Task Force Meeting setup. He noted that currently, the Task Force sits at the table in front of an audience, and participation is fairly even from both Task Force members and participants who are not on the Task Force. The main organizational change would be that committee members would have a seat at the table as well.

Mr. Noschese asked about budgeting for additional committee members needing support. Mr. Parker replied there is usually enough money in the budget to accommodate some extra people.

After the break, Mr. O’Hanlon opened the floor for questions. Mr. Tague asked whether alumni Task Force members could continue to serve on these proposed committees. Mr. Parker noted that on the DD Council, alumni members are welcome to serve as committee members. He agreed that committee composition is a crucial point to consider. Mr. Meritzer asked what would happen to the current committees. Mr. Parker suggested that all committees continue to exist as they are, but that a new status of membership be created called Committee Member. Those Committee Members would make up the different committees. He acknowledged that the title poses some problems, but emphasized that the DD Council’s success with this format could benefit the Task Force.

Mr. Fowler emphasized the idea of not turning anyone away, particularly interested high school students or any others dedicated to being involved.

Mr. Tague addressed funding and staffing, noting that additional committees or sub-committees would affect funding. Mr. Meritzer noted that if committees are meeting as part of the Task Force, funding and staffing won’t pose an issue. Mr. Fowler noted a new variance in the Mayor’s agenda in funding exploratory projects that allows soliciting and utilizing grant money, and suggested looking into that as a means to fund Task Force initiatives. Mr. Tague agreed that this could be a worthwhile consideration.

Mr. O’Hanlon proposed engaging in more formal relationships with entities – possibly even creating a seat on committees for representatives from UPMC’s disability office, as an example. Ms. Goldstein agreed that representatives at committee meetings would encourage involvement and expand the City-County Task Force’s representation. Mr. Noschese added that introducing more evening meetings could also encourage involvement, as many are unable to attend the afternoon Task Force meetings. Mr. O’Hanlon agreed with this sentiment. Mr. Henderson proposed creating an Action Committee to address the committee-related logistics and ideas brought up during this meeting.

New Projects

The following initiatives were proposed by Task Force members and audience members as upcoming focal points for the Task Force. A poll was taken by all attending the Annual Meeting to decide the top three initiatives that interested and engaged those present. The numbers indicate how many votes each topic received.

- 13** Sidewalk Accessibility, Infrastructure, Repair
- 6** Elections: Nursing Homes & Personal Care Facility involvement
- 6** Public Awareness & Exposure
- 4** Jobs
- 4** Education Policy, A/S/L Instruction
- 2** Supplementing Paratransit
- 0** Autonomous Auto Industry

The three most popular are: Sidewalk Accessibility, Public Awareness, and Elections. The Task Force will pursue those interests in the upcoming year.

Vox Pop

Ms. Grishman thanked everyone who attended the ADA Anniversary Rally event in July, and informed everyone of the upcoming AccessMob Accessibility Meet-up lecture.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00pm. The next meeting will be scheduled next month on Monday, September 18th at 1:00 pm in the first floor Conference Room of 200 Ross Street.