CITY OF PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
AFFH TASK FORCE QUARTERLY MEETING

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

Piatt Place, 301 Fifth Avenue
Room 3023
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Tuesday, December 6, 2016 - 3:11 p.m.

PRESENT:
Carlos Torres - Chairman
Rachel Salem
Cherylie Fuller
Molly Nichols
Robert Taylor, Esq.
Christine Castro
La'Tasha Mayes
Nicole Jackson, Esq.
David Dean
Leslie Aizenman
Melinda Johnson
Peter Harvey
Janelle Kemmerer
John Tague, Jr.
Sean DeYoung
Kevin Quisenberry, Esq.
Lyle Wood
Chuck Keenan, Esq.
Paul O'Hanlon: (via telephone)
Tricia Henning, Esq.
Ray Gastil

REPORTED BY: Catherine C. Leverty
Notary Public
THE CHAIRMAN: Welcome to the quarterly meeting of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Task Force. Right now we don't have quorum, but we're not scheduled to take any votes on any official matters so we'll conduct the meeting as scheduled.

Today we have a number of subcommittees that are going to be doing a report on their activities for the last quarter, and then we are going to talk about the goals and recommendations, as well as some reminders for the group.

Let's start by doing introductions, so let's go around the table, introduce yourself, and the organization that you represent.

I am Carlos Torres with the City of Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations.

MS. SALEM: Rachel Salem, secretary to the director at the Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations.

MS. FULLER: Cherylie Fuller,
executive director of the Homewood Concerned
Citizens Council.

MS. NICHOLS: I'm Molly Nichols,
Pittsburghers for Public Transit.

MR. TAYLOR: My name is Robert
Taylor, from the Fair Housing Law Center of
Southwestern Legal Services.

MS. CASTRO: Hi, I'm Christine
Castro, I'm here for Reproductive Justice, New
Voices.

MS. MAYES: Hi, I'm La'Tasha Mayes,
executive director New Voices Reproductive
Justice.

MS. JACKSON: Hi, I'm Nicole Jackson,
senior litigation counsel for the Housing
Authority, City of Pittsburgh.

MR. DEAN: David Dean, with the
Realtors Association of Metropolitan Pittsburgh.

MS. AIZENMAN: Leslie Aizenman,
director of the Refugee Program and Jewish
Family & Children's Service.

MS. JOHNSON: Hi, I'm Melinda
Johnson, from the Pennsylvania Housing Finance
Agency.

MR. HARVEY: Hi, I'm Peter Harvey,
I'm with Allegheny County Department of Human Resources.

MS. KEMMERER: Hi, Janelle Kemmerer, covering for and here on behalf of Gale Schwartz with the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania.

MR. TAGUE: John Tague, JT Disability Consulting Services.

MR. DeYOUNG: Sean DeYoung, CEO of Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force.

MR. QUISENBERRY: Kevin Quisenberry, attorney at Community Justice Project.

MR. WOOD: My name is Lyle Wood, I'm the acting regional director for the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

MS. HENNING: Tricia Henning, counsel for the housing authority.

MR. GASTIL: Hi, Ray Gastil, city planning, City of Pittsburgh.

MR. O'HANLON: And this is Paul O'Hanlon, City-County Task Force on Disabilities.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, thank you, everyone, for being here today and participating, despite the weather. We really appreciate you making the effort to join us.
Is anyone else on the phone? We apologize for the low tech, but we are going to make the best efforts that we can.

So, moving right along with the committee reports, on behalf of the steering committee I can report that at our last meeting there was an idea of, or a motion presented for this larger group discussion on holding public hearings related to affirmatively furthering fair housing.

That request will be made to the city Commission on Human Relations at their next monthly meeting after the vote takes place in this body and then discussion will ensue as to where this meeting should take place and the purpose behind those meetings, so that's an idea that was floated at that steering committee meeting for a larger discussion at this meeting if this group feels that it's appropriate for that type of activity to take place as would involve this body.

The other thing that we talked about was the scope of our, the commission's, abilities when it comes to receiving, investigating and adjudicating cases related to
fair housing and discrimination, as well as more
information, more forthcoming information,
related to CDBG and the timeline as associated
with the next analysis of impediments which is
due, I believe, in 2019, and what that body can
do to prepare for that process and how we can
use the resources available around the table to
make sure that the next analysis is as
comprehensive as it can be, of course working
with the city planning department and other
departments and authorities within the city to
make that an inclusive process and report.

Any questions about the steering
committee activities? I know that's kind of
brief, but we have other subcommittees that will
be making reports.

MS. NICHOLS: What's the CDBG thing?
THE CHAIRMAN: You mean what's it
stand for --

MS. NICHOLS: Just, you had discussed
need for CDBG information.

THE CHAIRMAN: We want a clear
timeline of when the city will begin their
process for the next analysis of impediment, so
we wanted more information on what happens at
what time so this group can then have that
information and make the appropriate decisions
to do whatever needs to be done.

MS. NICHOLS: What does that have to
do with CDBG, sorry?

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. Good
question.

So some of the CDBG dollars are
allocated after the analysis of impediment, so
some information that goes into that report
helps determine the amount of money that the
city will receive as part of CDBG allocations,
so that's what that's about.

MS. NICHOLS: Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any other questions?
Okay, so do we have a member of the race and
ethnicity subcommittee that would like to make a
report?

MR. QUISENBERY: I'm on the
committee, there's really not much to report. I
think we're looking to have a committee meeting
following this meeting to have an initial
orienting sort of meeting.

I think there is now a chair for the
committee, who is Carl Redwood. I think a lot
of people will know him, and I think that his
appointment as chair was pretty recent, so
there's really not much to report from that
committee at this time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

How about for the disability?

MR. TAGUE: I guess I'll -- Paul

O'Hanlon is on the phone -- Megan Hammond is
chair of the committee, she's in West Virginia,
I guess, today, Paul is on the phone, and then
Melinda Johnson is also on the committee, and so
I'm going to give a report. I'm not in the best
of shape to give a report but I'll do my best
with it.

As I said, Megan is chair of the
committee, and there were several questions that
were posed in the meeting before we actually
started the meeting, the question on
jurisdiction, and I'll read, pretty much, what
Ray reported in our e-mail.

To answer the question about
jurisdiction Director Torres advised us
jurisdiction of a task force is Pittsburgh,
McKeesport and Penn Hills areas.

Regarding purview, the task force
may look at access to opportunities such as education, transportation and employment in its purview -- in its review of the affirmatively furthering fair housing.

With regard to the percentage of disability-based housing complaints, of the -- there were 14 housing complaints during the 2015-2016 case year, 11 of them, 79 percent, had a disability basis for filing the complaint. I can provide more detail if you would like, so if there's more detail on that I can, I guess, provide that, Carlos.

We met on the 14th of November at the commission offices. Just to kind of go over a few things, one of the things we discussed, Melinda led the discussion on the 811 project, and I think this is the project you had talked about at the link meeting; is that right?

MS. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. TAGUE: So if you want to add anything to it it would be helpful, I think, but there's 200 of these units statewide. Now, Carla Falkenstein, who Melinda is here in place of, has more information on that but, as I said, Chuck Keenan has some additional information on
that.

The other question touched upon was the Community Development Block Grant money, and what we were trying to figure out is is there a certain percentage of that set aside for people with disabilities. We don't know, so we need to get a clarification on that.

I'm not sure, Ray, if that's something you can answer or not. The --

MR. GASTIL: I can answer right now, submit your question in detail and I'll be happy to follow up.

THE CHAIRMAN: And that's something that we can collect and submit to the planning department so that we can bring an answer to the entire group.

MR. TAGE: Oh, that's fine, I just wanted to make sure that -- you know, since Ray is here I figured I'd put him on the spot.

THE CHAIRMAN: He may not have that answer right at hand, I'm afraid.

MR. GASTIL: Ask me one more time and then we'll prove that I don't know the answer.

MR. TAGE: Look, I'm lucky I can get through this now, I can barely see what I'm
reading. I should have made this like an 18
point, and it's not that my eyes are -- I have
allergies that's affecting my eyes.

There's another thing that was
discussed is the affordable housing trust fund.
Paul had mentioned that the units proposed by
the affirmatively furthering -- the housing task
force, all of the -- all will be accessible
units. They must be visible, even on the second
floor, in other words, someone, if you know the
standards of visibility it's, basically, you
know, wider doorways and either a type A or
type B accessible bathrooms. So that's positive
news, and, like I said, it includes all those
floors.

We also were trying to identify
policies. The combinations for persons
receiving income from government source as they
do not incur late or penalties when the check
comes in in time to pay the rent, in other
words, they get their Social Security or SSI
check.

There were other policy questions
regarding procedures for when accessible units
become available and how people are chosen to
occupy those units. There is no system for tracking needs of accessible units once they are occupied by a nondisabled person. When a nondisabled -- nonaccessible unit opens up, tenants who don't need the amenities of accessible units can be bumped on their -- from the unit to accommodate a person with a disability.

So there's no way, our thoughts are there's no way to really track that, so if somebody is in an accessible unit that really doesn't qualify to be in there, so we'd like to, you know, discuss as part of those policies.

The followup and, really, the reporting out on this, I'll go through these quickly. With regard to funding, determination how the CDBG funding, as I said, entities are spending the money both in regard to accessible units and any kind of CDBG set-asides for disability, going back to the initial thing I had mentioned from the e-mail. Get a list of the URA -- from the URA where the CDBG funds are going.

So there's a lot of questions about CDBG for all of these, and get with the city
planning department on funding mechanisms for
developing housing.

That's probably a Ray question, we'll
have to wait for Ray on that. Did you hear
that, Ray?

MR. GASTIL: Yes, the funding
mechanisms?

MR. TAGUE: Yeah, for developing
housing.

MR. GASTIL: Right.

Many of these are questions, just to
explain to people that may not be totally
familiar with it, the CDBG funds, which are the
largest amount of federal funds that come in,
about 12.7 million, we estimate, for 2017,
that's about what it was last year, those come
in and are for expanding the right-of-way, some
of them go to the home program, which is
administered by the URA, and so we know where
that money goes. In some cases we need to
actually do further work with URA to get it,
some of it goes out to organizations -- I can
tell some of you are very familiar with this,
some of you may not -- some of it goes to
particular training programs, et cetera, but I'm
happy to answer any questions you have about how CDBG programs are used for, particularly for housing.

MS. NICHOLS: Can I ask real quick, is there already, like on internal documents, showing here's the 12.7 million that comes in and here's, like an itemized budget that just shows where the money goes?

MR. GASTIL: There's a budget that has some, but not all, the items in that format, because some would be what we, basically, move a block grant up to the URA, so forth, so -- but I'll find out.

We certainly have budgets, and we'll show you the 2016 budget, which will have more detail than the 2017, which has also not yet passed, and also some aspects would not be determined until we're in the process, so I'll get, try and get you a good 2016 overview, I'm happy to do that.

MR. TAGUE: Thank you, Ray.

Now, reporting out, one of these items is the identify a lack of advertising outreach as an impediment to fair housing with regard to accessible units, promote inclusive
zoning to ensure that there are accessible units everywhere instead of points.

Request that the city create a reasonable accommodation process rather than a zoning variance process for disability-related requests. Also, add a disability clause to the ordinances. Determine if there are -- is a way to put a stay on landlords/tenant issues with magistrates during the PCHR complaint process.

I do apologize, I wasn't as articulate on this as I wanted to be but, as I said, I had trouble reading this.

Well, thank you, that concludes our report. We haven't scheduled another meeting yet but we will shortly, but we wanted to make sure we reported on some of the items that we had worked on.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any of the members of the disability committee have anything to add?

Paul? Can you hear us? I'm not sure he's still with us.

MR. O'HANLON: No, I don't.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The alternative protected classes, do you guys have a report?
MR. KEENAN: Yeah, I have a handout.

So we all have enough work, I think, with the existing protected classes we have but I think there are still some impacts on people who aren't in what we would call a protected class with the city right now where there's litigation about the protected class, but we still wanted to take a look to see if there is discrimination going on against three different subpopulations: The first is people with a criminal history.

The second is source of income, which, you know, is in litigation, and the third is people who experience homelessness.

So our group took a look at those three populations to see if it would be worth recommending to the larger group that it pursue some sort of designation of those as a protected class, so we did some work on background for people with criminal records, so, you know, there's a statement that came out from HUD and the Department of Justice about how you should look at criminal records and housing and there's some questions about, you know, whether what a lot of landlords are doing is a violation of the
Fair Housing Act, enforcement of that, so we wanted to do a little bit further review on that, basically, so we wanted to look at a sample of some of the selection criteria that some of the landlords are using, the largest one being the Pittsburgh Housing Authority.

So we wanted to discuss with this group, you know, the possibility of asking the housing authority to look at criminal records only for what HUD requires and not to go beyond the HUD requirement, so in the legislation that created public housing authorities they are not allowed to accept, according to law, anybody who's required to register on Megan's Law for life, or anybody that's been convicted of making methamphetamines on the premises of HUD-assisted housing, they have great leeway in denying any other criminal history beyond that, so according to the HUD statute you can't admit those folks but it's still screened beyond the HUD requirements, so we wanted to see if this group would be interested in --

MS. NICHOLS: "They" being the housing authority?

MR. KEENAN: Yes, but this group
wants to look at requiring the housing authority
to just look at the HUD requirements and not go
beyond the HUD requirements, and then also to
see if there's an appetite for something that
was done with the employment applications in the
city, kind of a band in a box, so you don't ask
about criminal history on your housing
application to see if the city is interested in
pursuing legislation along those lines.

That's kind of the first piece on
criminal record. Next is source of income, we
know that's in litigation right now, so we
didn't know if there was an appetite for this
larger group, the task force, to hold a public
hearing to discuss that ongoing litigation and
the need to look at Section 8 of the protected
class at source of income as a protected class,
so that was kind of our recommendation there, to
see if that's something that the group wants to
do, and then, finally, do some research on
housing status and whether that should be a
protected class, so there's a little bit of
research in the back of this document from some
other cities around their ordinances.

Right now it's perfectly legal to
deny somebody housing because they don't have a
fixed address or because they're in a homeless
program or they're in a homeless shelter, so
again, we want to see if there's an appetite
here as the task force, the full task force, to
explore making that illegal in the City of
Pittsburgh.

So that's, kind of, our report.

There's who some more background information
here. I think our first, you know, meeting was
basically just to figure out if this was
something that we wanted to do, that we thought
that it might be worth pursuing, again, knowing
that there's a lot of other protected classes in
the city that are facing discrimination now and
we want to add to that, but we haven't really
gotten our full house together in order on that,
or whether we think this is something creating a
new impact for people and making it difficult
for folks to find housing and if it was
addressed it might be easier.

So that's our report. If anyone
wants to add anything or has any questions?

THE CHAIRMAN: And thank you, Chuck,
just, and I'm not sure whether this group was
made aware, but the Pittsburgh commission submitted documents to the court intervening in the source of income lawsuit that is pending, basically saying that we, as the law enforcement agency for the city, had an interest in the legislation being upheld, because so many individuals who are in the Section 8 program are members of the protected classes that are part of the city code at this point that, in fact, the source of income, using source of income as one of the determinants on whether someone gets housing or not is still -- it is a form of discrimination, and the law enforcement entity for the city, as the entity for the city we have an interest in making sure that the ordinance as written is upheld by the court, and we're still waiting for an answer from the court on our intervention.

MR. KEENAN: I think at this point our group was, like, let's pull back, this is in litigation, let's just taken this for now and see how it shakes out unless there's just, if you want to take a look at doing some sort of an event that would highlight the issues, that's really about as much as we can do at this point
in time.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Chuck.

MS. NICHOLS: Just to get clarity about the protected class, the commission is charged with the federally-defined protected classes and you're saying technically, source of income is in a protected class?

MR. KEENAN: But also there are local protected classes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Our protected classes go beyond the federal protections.

MS. NICHOLS: Okay, but the source of income right now, does that count in either the local or the federal?

THE CHAIRMAN: Correct.

MS. NICHOLS: It does not --

MR. KEENAN: It's in litigation, there was a law passing it into litigation.

THE CHAIRMAN: It's in litigation, so the law passed and it was challenged in court, now we're waiting for the courts to make a decision on it.

MR. KEENAN: A restraining order, or whatever, against enforcement?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.
MR. KEENAN: Okay, so it can't be enforced but the law is on the book.

MR. WOOD: I would say this, that if there is a question with regards to discrimination that you proceed with it, anyway. It may be, on its face, source of income, it could be another protected class, could be race, gender, could be because of disability, and sometimes it could be certain impact, certain effect, mixed, so I would forward that on to either Carlos or the feds or to us at the state, at least the inquiry, and once we get the information and get an opportunity to actually talk to the complainant, we may have cause of action with regards to another class altogether, and again, that could just be a neutral reason on its face but have the effect of, actually, illegal discrimination, so whenever you have a question on that I'd send you to the appropriate agency to take a look at it and kind of let us figure it out from there, and that has nothing to do with the litigation that's pending because it may have something to do with another protected class altogether.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely, and that
was one of the motivating factors for looking at these other groups that are not part of, like, you know, like the homeless and the -- because sometimes it may look like it's because they're homeless but it's, you know, other things behind the scenes that, on its face you think oh, well, because you're homeless you're not protected, well, but if you're homeless and you have a disability you are protected; right? So that's what we wanted to look at. Thank you, Chuck.

The sexual orientation and gender/gender identity subcommittee.

MS. MAYES: Good afternoon, everyone. I had the pleasure to chair the subcommittee with Tricia Daugherty, Ms. Beverly Williams, also with Sean on this meeting for the first time, and David. We, in our one meeting that we did have the opportunity to have in person, we really kind of reviewed from our respective areas of work what we were seeing around this intersection of fair housing, gender and sexual orientation, and so we do have a handout for you, as well.

It's kind of articulating what we discussed, and at the end there are some
proposed areas of focus which are not, specifically, policy recommendations but incremental steps towards, you know, administrative changes and larger policy changes that we can work towards, and we wanted to focus on things we could achieve in a realistic amount of time.

So many of our conversations revolved around information access and intersectionality, and intersectionality means that it's not just one issue, it's not one piece of your identity, there are things that are compounding when people are trying to access affordable housing, and on the heels of the local CEDAW ordinance being passed today, and CEDAW is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, I think it's appropriate that we're meeting today and talking about how access to fair and affordable housing impacts women, specifically, but also LBGTQIA+ people, so from -- I just want to review some key points from the conversation that our subcommittee had which are around child care, which, I made an error in omitting it but we will send a revised version of this memo, child
care being one of the reasons why women or
parents aren't able to maintain housing because
they can't maintain employment because they
don't have child care.

Another significant conversation we
had was about exploring how nondiscrimination
policy in our region is connected to fair
housing and housing discrimination, and I don't
know that we fully understand how those things
connect and intersect.

Connected to that is how landlords
can discriminate against LBGTQIA+ people, and if
they are nonprotected municipalities, such as
the City of Pittsburgh or Allegheny County, they
can still be in this region and still face
discrimination, and so, you know, a larger
policy connected, but larger than this
committee, is around the statewide
nondiscrimination policy, so that folks are
protected no matter where they live.

Impediments for survivors of domestic
violence and domestic partner violence is
connected to access to affordable and fair
housing, as well as to mental health, and it's
already been mentioned, but incarcerated people,
how they are impacted, physically and formerly incarcerated women or women who are returning, what options are available to them when they do return back to society, and also not just those who were actually incarcerated, but those who were just involved with the criminal justice system, they may be on probation, they may be living in a halfway house, what are their -- do they understand their housing rights and what fair and affordable housing is available to them?

Another concern for us, especially in the work for women's voices, is what are the options for women, and particularly teen, young women, who are pregnant or parenting? What access or options do they have around fair housing, and do they understand what their rights are and what policies apply to them.

And, lastly, another key part of our conversation was around environmental justice and fair housing and how an inside climate or how development gets done is related to environmental impacts that can impact a person's health.

So below, I think in the final
section, are some initial areas of focus that we want to put forth, and we talked about how people navigate the system and how we have to make it as easy as possible for people to do that, regardless of their background or their walk of life, and so one thing that came up was around literacy and understanding paperwork and documentation, so making sure that they are written in -- you know, written in language that is understandable. Because we are a changing region it's important that any housing documents or paperwork or applications are available in multiple languages, that is something that our region struggles with consistently, and we know that that would be a great help for people who do not speak English as their first language.

And also related to documentation and navigation is expanding definitions of gender, gender requirements for, like, understanding what's gender required for and in what instances and for what programs. I think that's a huge thing that could make a difference, particularly for transgender people who may have documentation that doesn't match their gender expression currently.
We thought about, again, about information. All people don't have access to Internet in their homes, they have it through their phones, so what kind of access can we create as a task force that really combines all of the different resources, agencies and information that is out there to make it available to those who can only, maybe, access the Internet through their phones.

We really talked about, extensively, about homeless youth, particularly those who are heading out of the foster care system and those who are LBGTQIA+ youth who may have been kicked out of their homes or wherever they may be living, and there seems to be a huge gap in providing housing for them or connecting them to housing that accepts them as they are and does not engage in discrimination.

We talked about the long-term thing, what organizations are already providing resources, how do we just identify what they do provide, particularly for women and for LBGTQIA+ residents and so that we can connect people in their communities to trusted resources for them to get information about fair and affordable
housing.

And, lastly, in developing partnerships to increase literacy and reading comprehension to help residents improve their understanding of how -- understanding of the different systems they have to navigate in order to secure and maintain fair and affordable housing.

So those are our initial recommendations, there's so much research we'd like to continue to do and things that are connected to other subcommittees, because I think it will be significant for looking at this in an intersectional and multidimensional way so when we're addressing a problem, we're addressing the entire problem by having a comprehensive vision for what actually needs to be solved.

So that is our report. Any questions or thoughts?

THE CHAIRMAN: All right. I do have a question, and this is for the larger group, I'm a new transplant to the city, as many of you may know, but is there currently a resource guide of Social Service providers that lists
what services they offer that is readily
available to anyone who wants to access it, is
anyone aware?

MS. MAYES: I'm not sure.

MR. DeYOUNG: Yeah, 211, United Way.

MS. NICHOLS: Is there something
specific to housing, like within 211 do they
break it down by --

MR. KEENAN: At CHS we have a
database of all the assisted housing in the
county, they have that database, so if somebody
says oh, I want -- I'm looking for a
three-bedroom subsidized apartment in East
Liberty they can tell them where those are, or I
don't care where I live, I need a four-bedroom
apartment, can you give me a list of
four-bedroom apartments, so they have that list
that they've put together.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that available
online or do you actually have to speak to a
person to get that information?

MR. KEENAN: That, I don't know.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay.

MR. WOOD: A lot of times when we
deal with folks and they have issues beyond what
we do we have a referral list of agencies that
can simply address their issues that we might
refer them to housing counseling services or
Housing Authority for City of Pittsburgh or PHFA
or to the county housing authority, so we
generally know where we can send, refer them to,
and even those agencies have sublists of
services, you know, and again, United Way is
another one, Action Housing, there's all kinds
of agencies, so there's more, a list of agencies
that provides services that can give referral
sources, and that is a master list.

MS. MAYES: Well, and I think that's
what we're talking about is where is all this
information living and how can I look up
something according to what I need,
specifically, not just send me to an agency, but
I'm an LBGTQU and I'm trying to figure out where
I can fit in, so that's what we're trying to
solve, or I'm in a domestic violence situation,
I have two children under the age of 18, what
are my options, and I think that is a different
approach than what I'm hearing, which is kind of
like, oh, talk to the Urban League or talk to
Action Housing, but there's going to be a
limitation on what may be available to them.

There may be other organizations that
are not housing organizations that could provide
resources, such as New Voices, where, you know,
that's not our lane, that's not, maybe, what you
think that we do, but if you list us as LGBTQ
housing will come up, as well, so I think the
data is important to people having access to
information.

MR. KEENAN: We do have coordinated
entry in Allegheny County that can do referrals
to any agency in the homeless system and beyond
that, so if you're not homeless and you're still
looking for housing they have good resources on
those, that database is within the county, is
run through the Allegheny link, so that's how
you can access any homeless service or emergency
needs, work with the shelters or with the
domestic violence shelters, you know, youth
shelters.

THE CHAIRMAN: And do you know
whether they have individuals who assist with
folks who are not, maybe, English-proficient?

MR. KEENAN: Yes.

THE CHAIRMAN: Good.
Thank you, La'Tasha, for that report. And, last but not least, we have outreach and education, Ms. Fuller.

MS. FULLER: Thank you.

We met on November the 22nd and we had three key points that we discussed, one of them was the need to provide education to tenant groups, we talked about the usefulness of having a forum to facilitate dialogue between housing providers and housing consumers.

David Dean had spoken about the year of fair housing celebration and its 50th anniversary of fair housing in 2018 that's coming up, so we sort of talked around what could we do together to prepare ourselves for the 2018 summit as far as communities and outreach that -- during that summit, what can we do on that level.

Some of the things that we discussed was bringing together a forum for consumers around fair housing, and reaching out to them and talking with them concerning what their rights are concerning fair housing, and then we talked about reaching out also to the providers about fair housing, because whether you're
talking to some consumers concerning fair
housing, a lot of them do know, a lot of them
have a wealth of that information and some of
them have no information, and when you put them
both together is where you get opinions and
what -- if we put them all together as far as
the consumers and do a dialogue with them alone
and then do a dialogue with the providers, and
we discussed about putting the providers and the
consumers together to have a dialogue, and I
think we had discussed this, that would
sometimes, or would often seem to create a
clash, as opposed to having them meet together
or separately, so I think we came up with the
idea, particularly for the 50th anniversary
summit, of doing outreach and education with
them separately, and then bringing them together
as one group for that outreach summit.

We also talked about revisiting the
registration legislation so that the real estate
professionals would have a comprehensive list of
housing providers in the City of Pittsburgh, so
how we reach the providers. You know, we have
the housing authorities, but all other HUD
providers, private providers, how do we bring
them all together around affirmative fair
housing and the fair housing?

    We talked about the -- the third
thing we talked about was crafting a
recommendation to the municipalities that have
to complete an assessment of their fair housing
analysis for their choice -- for the choice
study, that we would include having at least one
public meeting in each neighborhood that's
eligible for CDBG funding and that the task
force could assist in outreach for these
meetings and the neighborhood-specific data that
they would need to go into their assessments for
their fair housing.

    So we're going to meet again and work
around how that could be done what that can look
like as far as for outreaching and fair housing
for tenants and for landlords.

    Ours is very brief but it was a
really good meeting, so any questions or input?
Did I leave out anybody, anybody that's on the
committee? Myself, David Dean, Jay, Helen,
Sarah, Rachel and Carlos were in attendance.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Dean, was there
anything else from that meeting that you would
like to add?

MR. DEAN: The only thing that I just
wanted to bring to the attention of the
committee was I think the last time that I was
here, in this body in particular, there were
questions that were raised as to why was the
Realtors Association of Metropolitan Pittsburgh
on this committee, and I wanted to -- I stated
to the committee at that time my credentials and
my background.

What I want to elaborate on is
something that Ms. Fuller talked about, but we
discussed what would be a baseline mechanism to
all people who are seeking rentals in the City
of Pittsburgh, what would be the way for us to
get the basic tenets of fair housing out to
them, and one of the things we talked about was
in my particular business we always give any
client a consumer notice that they either have
the option of signing or not signing, but we
give it to them, and it, basically, states what
the obligations and the law is for the consumer,
and we thought that if we could revisit the
Rental Registration Act, which, I know some of
you in this room know that my association took a
very hard line at, and that is not shared by
everybody in my association, that we might be
able to include that in the legislation going
forward that any landlord would have to provide
to any applicant a form that, basically, they
would keep, so you don't have to worry about if
you don't have Internet access because this
would be for everybody, and this would give you
a baseline of information about what are your
rights and where you can go if you have a
problem, and I just think that, going forward,
that this idea could at least address and give
us something that no other municipality has
presently and, hopefully, that that will give us
a baseline of knowledge that, again, as I said,
I don't think anybody else has.

So that was about the only addition
to that report I wanted to add.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, and that
was a very crucial point that was made during
the subcommittee meeting and, from the
commission's perspective, we think it's a great
idea of getting some basic information into the
hands of potential tenants as to what are their
rights and what are their remedies if they
believe that they have experienced any sort of
discrimination based on whatever protected class
they may be part of, whether it's race, gender,
ethnicity, and so on, so thank you, Mr. Dean,
because that was a crucial part of that meeting.

Any comments, questions or concerns
about the report from the subcommittees? Great.
Thank you everyone, for those reports, we really
do appreciate you taking the time to meet
separately and create some information for this
larger body to consider.

The next piece on the agenda is the
goals and recommendations, and the first piece
that we wanted to discuss are identifying what
the goals are for this body. I know that
initially we were brought together to assist the
city with the next analysis of impediment and
making sure that there was a robust effort to do
outreach to different protected classes to make
sure that their needs, their concerns, their
issues, were brought forth as the city plans on
their next analysis of impediment, but we wanted
to explore to see are there other goals that are
still associated with fair housing that this
body should consider, so we wanted to bring that
idea to the larger group to see what opinions
there may be that are, or ideas that may fall
outside of the subcommittees or the things that
we have talked about up to this point, so this
is just a point of dialogue with the members of
the group.

MS. AIZENMAN: Since working with
immigrants, I just didn't hear reference to it
here, I don't know if it's part of your
committee, but the rights of people who aren't
citizens, are landlords allowed to deny them
access due to status?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, and it goes back
to, I think, to the basic question that La'Tasha
brought up, right, so if a landlord is asking
for immigration status, why do they need that
information? Are they required by law to do so,
and if so, what law, and is that information
being used, because even if you are a U.S.
citizen or a resident or have a green card,
whatever it may be, so what? Why does my
landlord need that information from me?

MR. TAGUE: Carlos, does that go to
the point of if it's subsidized, if you're --

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, it's different
for federal programs, but we're talking about, you know, a private landlord. So I have two apartments that I want to rent; why do I need to know your immigration status in order to rent to you?

MR. WOOD: It really doesn't matter, I mean, the landlord is obligated to follow what the law says, either the -- in our case PHRA, as Carlos stated, the act of the City of Pittsburgh, federal housing, it really doesn't matter, and the bottom line is we've had cases where we've had individuals who, in one case an individual was from Central America, English was very limited, had a representative assist him in seeking housing, one of the first things that the landlord asked was, I want to say, I forget how he asked it, but it was very articulate, but they, basically, asked were they in this country legally, and that if they weren't then they had to be deported, which is garbage, and, essentially, it was a way that that individual sought to deny the complainant, in this case, the opportunity to be able to secure housing.

We were able to take that case -- that was a case that ended up settling but it
was, the inquiry, itself, was troubling, the
fact that it didn't matter whether this person
was a native American or citizen or not, what
mattered was it was a different set of terms and
conditions to be able for that individual to,
possibly, secure that unit and it was based on
their natural origin.

So I would say that if there's ever a
question whether or not that person was being
afforded legally discriminatory terms and
conditions that you contact Carlos, contact us,
and again, we'll take a look at it and kind of
go from there, but they had the same obligations
to adhere to the law as anyone else does, and
just because they're a private landlord doesn't
mean that they get special privileges to
discriminate against people or to deny that
person their right to a -- to safe and decent
housing, one way or the other.

And I notice, too, in the atmosphere,
post-election atmosphere that we have, we've
seen a lot of, I don't want to call it, classify
them as hate crimes, but let's just say very
unfortunate circumstances that have taken place;
children being harassed at school, people being
assaulted in public accommodations, swastikas, graffiti being placed on different properties, and it's increasing, it's not decreasing at all.

    We've pretty much tried to keep a really good eye on that and to be able to add our technical assistance to anybody who needs it, we're required to do that. The government can send us anywhere, if there's civil tension or unrest, or any of these instances, we can say, okay, we want you to go here.

    In the school, since our act also covers education, there's been a lot of instances in the schools, and in some cases it was with immigrant children in schools, and we've had contact with organizations, we've been able to make contacts with the principal or superintendent at that district because we can cover those types of incidents that take place, and have been able to give some of those people who are victims of this some kind of relief in terms of remedy.

    So, yeah, just because they may be an immigrant population, they may not be a citizen, they may not be a natural-born American citizen, they still have rights, and they still have the
right to be free from this kind of discrimination, so we have Carlos, me, we can kind of go right from there to see what we can do to alleviate these.

THE CHAIRMAN: We've recently had a complaint from a woman from, again, Central America, three children, two of those children had disabilities, and a month after renting the unit the landlord said sorry, you have to leave, your children make too much noise, and we took that complaint and that complaint settled, and it had nothing to do with other things, but when we take complaints we don't ask for people's immigration status.

One thing to keep in mind, if a landlord is saying, well, I cannot rent to you because you don't have a Social Security number, for example, again, why do you need Social Security numbers? Now, if they say well, we need to run a background check, or a credit check, there might be ways around that, particularly if the person can prove that they are able to pay the rent because they have the means to do so, whether it's because they're connected to a social service agency or because
somebody else is just going to pay the rent and
they, the person wants to live there.

So there are ways, and again, it can
be a little sneaky, like the Social Security
thing, because it's about country of origin,
right, so if you're here as a foreign student,
we have many universities in our city, you will
not have a Social Security number; would you?
But you still need a place to live. So it can
happen, and we'll be happy to take a look at
those issues.

MR. WOOD: We have President-elect
Trump who has tapped, unfortunately, one of the
most unqualified individuals I could ever think
of to be the HUD secretary and who has said that
one of his first priorities, if he is confirmed,
is, number one, to do away with affirmatively
furthering fair housing, number one.

Number two, to cut back on

enforcement, those are his two priorities, so --

MS. NICHOLS: Enforcement of what?

MR. WOOD: Enforcement of the fair

housing laws, and he will be the, maybe we're

being punished, the secretary of HUD, okay.

So the bottom line is, and we do this
with advisory panels and commissions, we do
about 27 that we have jurisdiction over, and
especially with this group, you're kind of like
our eyes and ears, you know, Carlos and the
people -- you're our eyes and ears, you know or
hear of different things that happen that could
be true violations of the act, you know, and the
fair housing laws. We depend on different
agencies here, in particular, to be able to say
hey, Carlos, hey, Lyle, there's something going
on here, someone is being discriminated against,
they're timely, they're members of a protected
class, we'd like to be able to refer those
people to you, because that is the only way that
you are able to stop some of this garbage, or at
least put it in these people's minds that if you
discriminate it could be very costly; okay?

A lot of these guys, their bottom
line is their financial ability to be able to
operate in whatever way they see fit, a lot of
times they don't believe that the law applies to
them, it's my property, I can do what I want to
with it, and, to a degree, that's fine as long
as you don't illegally discriminate against
someone because they're members of a protected
class, and if you know do there are consequences
to that if, in fact, we're able to prove it.

So, you know, we depend on the groups
here to be able to refer those individuals to us
so we can adjudicate those cases, and some
people we work with are very, very good at it,
to be able to represent, to be able to advocate
for those individuals, and to be very effective,
and it's probably the best lesson a person could
learn is when they get a cause finding, they've
got a decision to make, we've got to either
settle this case with the findings enforceable
in court, or whether I roll the dice and try to
go to public hearing and really get zapped if,
in fact, there is probable cause to believe that
that took place, that's what they have to
decide. You know, that's not the cost of doing
business, it's the cost of not obeying what the
law says, and every individual has certain
rights, and so we're here to enforce that, and
that's, basically, what we do.

So if you guys hear anything, know
anything, send them to us, refer those people to
us, call us, you know, we'll have our people go
out there and deal with it, and that is one of
the few ways, even if we have the brain surgeon
get in, okay, and attempt to roll back the
progress that's been made over the past 50
years, you know, we have a state act that's not
dependent upon him, Carlos has a city, an act
for the City of Pittsburgh that's not dependent
upon him, or the feds, so we can take care of it
and adjudicate it.

MR. QUISENBERRY: One thing I'd like
to add to what Lyle said, the other enforcement
mechanism under the fair housing act is for
victims of discrimination to assert their own
rights in court. It's difficult to do that as a
plaintiff if you're not represented by counsel,
but it's sort of, that's one of the key
ingredients.

I think one thing this task force
could do would be to identify and mobilize
attorneys in our area to be available to
represent clients who need attorneys to file
cases when that's appropriate, particularly if
administrative enforcement, if the capacity for
administrative enforcement dwindles to some
degree or other because of, you know,
Congressional funding or politics.
MS. NICHOLS: You do it in court with an attorney?

MR. QUISENBERRY: Sure you do, you can, absolutely.

MS. NICHOLS: I like the idea of getting attorneys as a part of the resource guide that people know if they can't -- if they go to Neighborhood Legal Services and their case isn't covered for some reason, you know, or like --

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, and we're currently working, kind of compiling a list, and it has been proven a little challenging because, you know, having an attorney costs money, and attorneys do have a, you know --

MR. QUISENBERRY: And the good thing about the Fair Housing Act, it provides for fee shifting, so if the case is attractive to the private bar the private bar can get paid upon prevailing, they don't have to get paid by the client, the statute, itself, has a provision that entitles the victim of discrimination to seek and obtain attorney's fees if they prevail in the case, and so the attorney can take it on a contingency basis and wait to prevail in order
to get paid, it doesn't have to be that the attorney is receiving a retainer and ongoing payments from the client.

Again, there's a cost-benefit there that the attorney is going to look at, it's the thing that motivates the private bar is, like everyone knows, money makes the world go 'round, that's not all but, you know, it's an ingredient, so there are some cases that are smaller that I would always recommend go to administrative enforcement where an attorney may not be incentivized financially to invest the time to bring that case to court, but then there are other cases where, dependent on the injury or the scope of the problem, or if you can find an attorney who's just willing to do it, that court enforcement is a viable and very persuasive mechanism, both specifically for that client, but also for, sort of, broader public education.

MR. WOOD: We have two good attorneys here that I'm aware of, the one who just spoke and Mr. Taylor, from Southwest, here will take -- and our counsel are very, very aggressive in regards to discrimination, so
there's options here, and lack of legal counsel, or someone who thinks that they have to absolutely have counsel should not be an impediment to someone to exercise their right, and that's the thing, so again, this is a great route in terms of a resource for individuals who may have been discriminated against.

I think that is the real core strength of this group, it is so diverse and has got so many different parts moving here to run the engine, you know, for fair housing, and we have to really use the resources we have, because I can guarantee you, what I'm seeing, we're going to need them, it's going to get real exotic real fast.

MR. KEENAN: You know, I apologize if this is too much of a political comment, but at least when Mr. Trump was running he ran on "I'm the law and order candidate," and I thought this was a lot of what's on the books that should be enforced, so is this something that can kind of be used to say, well, you said you were going to be for the law that's on the books; if the law is on the books why don't we hold them accountable for enforcing the laws that are on
the books?

MR. TAGUE: Chuck, who's the attorney
general going to be?

MR. KEENAN: I don't know.

So I don't know if it's going to come
up in a confirmation hearing or something like
that, but this is something that he promised as
a candidate. I would hope that the advocates go
out and hold him to the promises that he's going
to be a law and order president.

MR. TAYLOR: I think the big concern
isn't, necessarily, is the law going away, but
it's enforcement, and so what, you've got a law
on the books, but there's groups, like ours, out
there that are able to enforce it.

MR. WOOD: And no one said that -- go
do this. You know, we deal with people every
day who will sit there and tell us what the law
is. Well, the law isn't there to tell us, I can
do what I want to do, it's my property, I don't
have to listen to you. That's every day.

I've had people sit across from me in
fact-findings and tell me, yeah, so what, and
that makes my job easy, you know. I can
guarantee you, by the time they get to the
public hearing, into a court, someone is going
to amend that, and I would misunderstood what
they initially said to me, that was in writing
and a verbal statement.

So you have people who don't care
what the law is, you have people who will do
what they want to do who have their own beliefs
and their own biases, and we all have our
beliefs and biases, okay, that's human nature,
but when you actually, this is like a question
that was asked me when I first applied for this
job, what's the difference between prejudice
discrimination, and you sit there and go ah, ah,
aha, you know, prejudice is a belief,
discrimination is an action that, manifested, is
something that can be illegal, and when they
discriminate or say I'm not going to rent to you
because, and you tick off the list and they're
all protected classes, that's illegal under the
law, and it's not that it's not law there, it's
not that someone advocates for that, it's that
individual made a conscious decision, most
times, not always but most times, that they are
not going to do what the law requires that you
do.
So that's why we're here, we enforce
that, and again, there's consequences if an
individual is found to have purposefully
violated the law and discriminated and caused
another party harm, so it's going to happen,
under the best of circumstances it happens, so
this is going to be the worst of circumstances
and it's going to happen, so the only thing we
can do is use the resources we have to make sure
that all, everybody, residents, citizens of this
Commonwealth, you know, are protected against
individuals who would illegally and unlawfully
discriminate against them.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. So any other
comments about the goals for the task force? So
I know we have the issue of immigrants and
immigration status; anything else?

MS. NICHOLS: I think this is
maybe -- requires a bigger conversation that we
can't have right now, but it sounds like, you
said the bigger goal has to do with assisting
the city with the analysis of impediment to fair
housing, which is more of a, kind of,
research-based work, because an analysis is,
like, a written document that gets produced and
used, but it also sounds like what Lyle is
saying, like, help us enforce the law, like, I'm
just thinking about, like, what role this task
force plays in, like, helping that enforcement
happen if it's about connecting individuals that
different folks in here know already to know
what their rights are, or whatever, then that's,
like, a piece, but then if we're thinking about
these bigger public hearings then it's like
making them bigger public issues that could be
centered around a kind of mobilization, like the
band in the box kind of example.

So I think it's still kind of open,
to me, where the -- I don't know if you guys
agree with me, like is it research, literally
helping to enforce the law by connecting
residents that we know to, you know, know what
their rights are connect with you all to get
protected or get connected with lawyers, or
bigger, like, public issues that are
opportunities for mobilization to help make it
better for everyone without having to just do it
on a case-by-case scenario?

THE CHAIRMAN: I, personally, don't
think that we have to do one and neglect the
other, it might be an opportunity to do multiple things at the same time, in my personal opinion, but that's for the group to think about and decide, I cannot impose my thinking on the group, I wish I could.

MS. AIZENMAN: From what I see dealing with landlords around, people who don't speak the language, they mostly say something that's not exactly nice -- I don't know about "nice," but are they drug dealers, are they terrorists, are they legal? I mean, but then they'll reassure them they're not and then they might rent to us. So we're doing business with these people and they end up, usually, liking them, it usually goes well, so I just wonder who's educating them, maybe there's something from your organization? I mean, the things that come out of their mouth, is that happening with every group, because I haven't been doing this for other protected classes, but it's -- unbelievable things, even employers, too, but then they'll end up -- I'm feeling where is this education, especially as immigrants are growing in number, so that's what, maybe -- I'm just curious?
THE CHAIRMAN: We, the commission, have been doing some work around some education, but sometimes we don't know where we are needed until we are told, you know, there's an issue going on in this particular neighborhood or with this particular employer, and then we can step in and do some damage control, if you will. Sometimes the damage has already happened before we're able to intervene, but I guess the point earlier about the members of this group knowing what their resources are and trying to connect people to those resources, I think it's going to be really crucial.

One thing that, and this goes to our agency, specifically, but one of the things that we can do is we can initiate investigations once we know that harm has happened, but we need to know that the harm has happened, if we don't know then there's nothing we can do.

And one of the other pieces that we are trying to do or be better at is making sure that we have materials in a variety of different languages to have some of that basic information about what your rights are as a potential tenant, as a potential employee, to make sure
that people at least have some very basic
knowledge that it's in a language that they can
understand so they can at least make some
decisions, or when they call us they can say I
think this happened because, you know, whatever
the circumstance may be.

So it's really important, and I think
it's crucial, to answer your question, Molly,
that I think we can accomplish more people and
things at the same time, but it's just what the
larger group feels is necessary for this body to
do.

MS. NICHOLS: Yeah. I guess it's
about determining priorities, but that's a
longer conversation.

THE CHAIRMAN: Yeah, absolutely,
absolutely.

MR. QUISENBERRY: On the point of
trying to identify and engage attorneys in
private to represent victims of discrimination,
I think there's a natural relationship to be had
with the bar association, I think there must be
a committee on the bar association that is sort
of tuned into the issues. I think we could
identify, you know, who that is and do some
direct outreach, probably, to see if there's
already some pool of attorneys who are engaged
in somewhat of the plaintiff's side on these
cases.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely, and we're
working on that, as well, trying to identify
what resources are available, whether it's
through the law schools and law clinics that can
do some minimal, you know, advising or
counseling, but if it's something larger that
then that can be referred to someone or some
thing that has the capacity to look at larger
issues if that's what's needed, so we're
exploring multiple options right now.

MR. WOOD: Even Tracey Lewis, down at
Duquesne University, Tracey does -- refers a
fair number of cases to us, and we've done
things for her and her law interns, employment
or housing or accommodation or education, will
refer cases that the attorney, that we get and
we'll go ahead and serve and investigate those
cases, too, so there's a bunch of resources
around, and again, this group, it's so
resource-rich and resource-laden in terms of
just the institutional memory and knowledge is
fabulous, and it is a great source of
information for all of us, individually, and for
the city as a group.

I think that one thing we're not
looking at is it's a great, you know, great
repository we have here with different minds and
individuals. I think as we evolve and develop
and figure out some more pathways, this is a
fabulous resource, this is a fabulous, you know,
information bank that we can use for the
purposes of affirmatively furthering fair
housing, and I think the more we work together
the more we will realize that.

THE CHAIRMAN: So on the issue of the
public hearings, is that something that this
group feels is needed, yes, no, maybe, perhaps
we need to think about, as it relates to fair
housing?

MR. TAGUE: Well, there's one
question that always comes up is the use of CDBG
money, and I wonder if having something along
those lines, a public hearing on how those
monies are spent?

THE CHAIRMAN: Well, we're going to
send the information to the planning department,
we're going to ask the questions and wait to
receive that information and see, you know,
because Ray said that they do have --

MR. TAGUE: Right, but I think what
it is, and I think it goes to education and
outreach, there's a lot of people who don't know
anything about it and what information they know
isn't correct, even, and I think Ms. Fuller
talked about that at the public event you had
out in Homewood, and I think -- so it's
important for people to understand that, because
a lot of people don't understand what the money
is to be spent for, and I think informing the
public, and, sure, we should wait until Ray
responds to our request, but I think that is
something we can take a look at.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely,

absolutely. So I think there's an opportunity
to, number one, get information about the
dollars, but also do some basic education with
the members of the community as to what is
this -- what does this mean, how is it meant to
be used, and, by the way, here's how the city
has allocated those resources for the current
fiscal year or the last fiscal year or whatever
it may be, so I think that's a good idea.

MR. TAGUE: One of the things we talked about was how the council districts have -- you get so much money, I'm not even sure what the amount is, but they get a certain amount of funds to spend on that, and then there's a question of how that's being spent by the council districts, and I think, Ray, doesn't that go through planning?

MR. GASTIL: You're talking about it's a particular fund, it's done by an unspecified local option budget, and there's one portion of it which council members allocate, there's one portion which the mayor allocates, and there's one portion that's allocated through the ACPO advisory panel, and they are not a growing pot of money, as you know, from -- the overall funds and the CDBG funding, but the council, for example, usually had about 70,000 for each district, 75, and actually, in the budget this year it's lower because of the overall reduction in funding, so -- and then as -- the other ones went down, as well, but there's three different ways.

Those are usually smaller grants,
they're not the -- there are other ways the CDBG allocates.

MR. TAGUE: But the council members, do they decide how that money is spent in their district, the 70,000?

MR. GASTIL: It might be less in 2017, but yes, --

MR. TAGUE: 2018 it might be less, too.

MR. GASTIL: -- yes, they do.

MR. TAGUE: So in some respect what's the oversight on that?

MR. GASTIL: The oversight is that you -- we -- the oversight is that the money is actually used for what -- HUD has very strict reporting requirements as to how it's used, what it's spent on, but as the invoices come in and they're reviewed and then the end-of-year review, that's the oversight.

THE CHAIRMAN: And we can certainly -- I think it might be useful to get the process done in the district, you know, a council member, if they decide to do this within a certain amount of time the invoices have to come in and report it and so on and so forth, so
again, people get a better idea of how the
money's funneled, distributed, decisions are
made, how things are reported, so that
transparency level is there for --

MR. TAGUE: There's also a concern
about what HUD actually does, is there really --
do they really do oversight or is it lip
service? That's a question, also, as part of
this.

THE CHAIRMAN: We can certainly ask
the HUD partners, take a look at that and
provide that information back to the larger
group.

MR. GASTIL: I can assure you that
HUD keeps a very close eye on how the money's
spent.

THE CHAIRMAN: Kevin, you had a
comment?

MR. QUISENBERRY: The issue of CDBG,
it's a huge issue but, luckily, it is relatively
regulated, the statute and HUD regulations
require certain things, you know, to happen. A
key aspect of it is, you know, sunshine,
transparency, but the words they use are
"citizen participation."
THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. QUISENBERRY: I think it's important for this full task force to fully understand what those requirements are, the statute and regulations, because that is the opportunity for the public to become aware of what CDBG can be spent on, what the city is proposing to spend it on, what the city has spent it on, and that's the avenue and the opportunity for folks, advocates, residents, people who may benefit or be harmed in some way by the way that those monies flow, to step up and, you know, make their voices heard and try to influence that spending.

So it's not a mystery, it's not a mystery how the process is, it's a five-year planning process, the AISB tied into the five-year plan, but also every year there are two different stages, there's an annual action plan which forecasts what the spending will be for the year and at the end of the year there's an evaluation and performance review.

Both of those annual steps are available, and supposed to be, you know, avenues for the public to become aware of this program.
and what it can do and what it is and has been
done, and to voice differences of opinion or to
raise new ideas, and also, though, with regard
to fair housing, it's very important for this
task force to understand that, because whatever
the analysis of impediments calls for, whatever
it identifies as the impediments and describes
as the steps that are going to be taken it's as
the money's spent, you know, that those things
need to be kept in mind, you know, and if
there's not a real connection between those
impediments and those goals and the spending and
the actions that occur, then, you know, the --
and the statement of the impediments and goals
can become somewhat useless.

So that's something that we, as this
task force, certainly can become aware of, it's
not a mystery at all. We can designate someone,
径径, to sketch this stuff out and then, you
know, this task force can figure out what are
the most appropriate times and places for it to
insert itself in fair housing thinking and how
that relates to spending, and those things.

THE CHAIRMAN: Absolutely. Thank you
for articulating that so well for us.
MS. NICHOLS: On the public hearing issue, I think the suggestion from that committee about a public hearing about Section 8 vouchers, I think that's worth considering.

I don't know what -- how to consider that in relation to the lawsuit, you know, like what relationship that would have, but, you know, over 50 percent of vouchers get returned because people can't use them. Why is that? Because they're being told that they can't get them accepted.

We hear about it a lot, but if there was, like, a public forum for people to become -- be able to come out and share that and connect with resources and then -- I'm just not sure on, like, a bigger scale in terms of the public, what role it would play in the lawsuit or not, if it would be a lot of work and then it's also caught up in the lawsuit, like in terms of timing, maybe, but I think it seems like a worthwhile --

THE CHAIRMAN: Another piece to consider is that the issue with the vouchers and the reason for -- excuse me, legislation, are kind of clear and tied together, you know, the
legislation was enacted to help reduce the
number of vouchers that do get returned because
landlords won't return them, so for this group
to consider, what would be the benefit of having
that specific public hearing, and I'm not saying
that we shouldn't, I'm just saying this
committee should think about how will we use
that information moving forward.

MS. NICHOLS: Right. And I don't
understand how it works in a court of law but it
would -- like if we're just caught up in the
legal thing and we're like a waiting game, or is
there some difference that's made if there's
some kind of public hearing like that that would
highlight how significant of a problem this is.

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll have to let the
lawyers tell us that because I really don't
know, I'm not a lawyer.

MS. NICHOLS: Do other people think
it's --

MR. HARVEY: I've thought about the
hearing idea for awhile and, obviously, it's a
very explosive issue in communities, both for
and against, so part of it is you open it up to
people, they're going to voice their strong
opposition to the program, but, I mean, if you
had a -- it may be worth doing but really broad,
maybe not just on the availability of vouchers
and the return ratio but you get landlords, the
Section 8 program doesn't work because X, Y and
Z, the bureaucracy, I can't get my payments on
time, blah, blah, blah, or I can't make -- my
unit doesn't pass inspection, the inspections
are too slow, you don't get any response from
the housing authority when you call, so you can
hear that. You can hear from consumers and all
the horror stories that they have from having a
voucher and problems that they have, so it's
just such, obviously, a key program in terms of
affordable housing, but people, we've never
really had, sort of, a public airing of what can
we do to make it better, and, obviously, there
are -- we're limited. Maybe there's nothing we
can do, it's a federal program, there are limits
to what we can do, but there are things that the
housing authorities can do to make it a more
effective program. I think it would be a
significant undertaking to have a full-blown
hearing on the Section 8 program.

THE CHAIRMAN: It may also require
more than one hearing, you may not be able to
go, you know, everything will be done in one
shot.

So again, it's something for this
committee to consider, for the task force to
consider and see what opinions are regarding
that idea, but before we leave, really quickly,
and that conversation is not over, just in the
interest of time, we wanted to talk about the
schedule for 2017, the schedule for the
quarterly meetings so we have dates.

Right now they have been taking place
on the first Tuesday of every quarter, so we
wanted to ask if that is still a date and time
that is convenient for folks moving forward. So
if you need to know the dates, or just like
we've been doing it the first Tuesday of the
quarter and continue with that same schedule or
not?

Not everyone speak at once because
the court reporter is --

MS. AIZENMAN: What are you referring
to?

THE CHAIRMAN: So for this meeting
happens the first Tuesday of every quarter, so
we're trying to figure out for 2017, --

MS. AIZENMAN: From July --

THE CHAIRMAN: -- so it would be, the
first one will be in March, and then June,
September, and then December, again, for next
year.

MS. NICHOLS: March, June, September,
December.

MR. KEENAN: The first Tuesday of the
last month of the quarter.

THE CHAIRMAN: The first Tuesday of
the last month of the quarter. Is that
something that's still convenient for folks or
is that something that needs to change?

MR. DEAN: Well, if we ever have to
have something that needs to be voted on how do
we inspire the people that are on that table
there to be here (indicating), because when you
sent out the notice someone, I don't know who it
was, I'm sorry, I don't know if anybody replied,
but I think it would be helpful, if you're going
to be here, to reply just so we know, because if
we have to vote on something and we don't have
quorum, then that just gets dragged on and then
we won't be doing this until 2018, which, I
mean, you know --

THE CHAIRMAN: We can certainly do a
calendar invite, and then if people decline that
will be an indication that they're not coming,
and that might be the easiest way to --

MS. NICHOLS: It's good to know if
you have a quorum before.

THE CHAIRMAN: Oh, absolutely, I
agree.

MR. TAGUE: So we have nothing to
vote on today?

THE CHAIRMAN: No, what we're asking
right now is if that is still convenient or not?

MS. NICHOLS: Well, it might not be
good for the people who aren't here, but I don't
know.

THE CHAIRMAN: Again, we're not
making a decision, we'll reach out to those
folks and send an e-mail out and say hey, is
this still something that is convenient, yes or
no.

MR. DEAN: I think having it in
advance is good, because if you just wait until
that month and then say okay, what's convenient,
you could send out a meeting, say that you click
on, and you're going to have everybody off the map.

MR. KEENAN: So the group here says it's good but then if the group you're reaching out to says no, then what's going to happen?

THE CHAIRMAN: We'll do it electronically, to be fair to everyone.

So the next steering committee meeting is on Thursday of this week, so if you'd like to join us it's going to be at the commission offices downtown on the 9th floor. Other than that, any questions, comments, concerns before we adjourn?

Thank you everyone, have a good rest of your day.

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(The proceedings were concluded at 4:37 p.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the transcript of the proceedings and evidence contained herein are a true and accurate transcription of my stenographic notes taken by me at the time and place of the within cause; that the transcription was reduced to printing under my direction; and that this is a true and correct transcript of the same.

Catherine C. Leverly

January 10, 2017
Catherine C. Leverly, Notary Public
In and for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
My commission expires August 31, 2020