

City of Pittsburgh/ Allegheny County

Task Force on Disabilities

Monday, March 21, 2016

Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members in Attendance

Aurelia Carter-Scott, Janet Evans, Paul O' Hanlon, Richard McGann, James C. Noschese, Jeff Parker, Katherine Seelman, John Tague, Karen Warman, Joe Wassermann

Task Force Members Absent

Sara Goldstein, Milton Henderson, Gabe McMoreland

Also in Attendance

Ali Abdullah, Shirley Abriolla, Judy Barricella, Jessica Burkman, Sheron Clark, Tyler Curtin, Joy Dore, Andrew Favini, Tsa Yan Fong, Dustin Gibson, Alisha Grishman, Michael Hansom, Kim Mackey, Richard Meritzer, Brett Morgan, Jina O'Neill, Dawn Smidga, Jordan Stanga, Mary Esther Van Shura, Ray Wiethorn, Rachel Kallem Whitman

Welcome and Introduction

The meeting began at 1:00 P.M. with the introduction of Task Force members followed by individuals in attendance.

Ms. Van Shura gives the Task Force an update and officially introduces the new Allegheny County ADA Coordinator, Dawn Smidga. Ms. Smidga discusses the opportunity she's been given and her work at Life's Work, PA Connect and Communities and other non-profits located around the Pittsburgh area.

Ms. Van Shura then officially introduces Ray Wiethorn from the Career Transition Liaison Program. The program started at 21 and Able, realizing that people with disabilities face an unfair level of unemployment. The program provides the corporate culture to those with disabilities to give them experience. Giant Eagle, Allegheny County, and the University of Pittsburgh have signed on already. Mr. Wiethorn will work in the DHS at the County, though still with ACHIEVA.

Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report and Minutes

Review and approval of February 2016 and April 2015 minutes. Richard Meritzer clarifies that last year's issue with getting minutes out has been addressed and the Task Force is now all caught up. Mr. McGann motions to approve the minutes, Ms. Evans seconds. Motion passes.

There is no Treasurer's report for today.

Inclusive Leadership in Action

Mr. Tague explains how the program started at Temple University's Institute on Disabilities through the DD Council. It focuses on finding people with disabilities to serve on community boards, primarily governmental boards such as the Consumer Health Coalition, CLASS, TRICKLE, etc. The disability community needs to be involved early on in what the City/County does to give the community a voice. The project has been running for about two and a half years and looks at what passions you have to match you with a board you can serve on. Partners include Leadership Harrisburg, Self-Advocates out of Philadelphia, and the CORO Foundation. Mr. Tague clarifies that he will be sending materials to Mr. Meritzer to forward on soon and that if people are interested, they can contact him, or Guy Caruso, by email or telephone. They are still in the process of locating boards that people can serve on. Part of the process involves educating the boards on the value and importance of including people from the disability community.

Ms. Carter-Scott asks whether there is a component in order to prevent people from becoming tokenized and help boards see that this isn't just having one person that represents a particular group regardless of race, gender, disability. Mr. Tague assures her that from a diversity standpoint, individuals are looked at regardless of gender, race, or disability. It will be made sure that someone isn't included just to be included; they need to attend committee meetings and participate, not simply sit on the board in order to appear more inclusive.

Mr. McGann states that every third Tuesday, there is meeting for those who are Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind of people who work in the Housing Authority and health services. Kim Mathos is involved as well.

Mr. Noschese also mentions that whoever is put on these boards needs to address multiple, if not all, disabilities, not just the one that they are familiar with. Communication should not be weakened, they should strongly communicate the needs of the disability community.

Western Pennsylvania Disability History and Action Consortium

Mr. Tague explains that the project began a year or so ago and that the Pennsylvania History Coalition wanted to honor people with disabilities. There is a rich history of the disability movement in Western PA and this program was created, now in the form of a steering committee, to organize the project to move forward, imparting the history of the disability community to the city. Though it is a daunting project, the analysis will begin with institutions and grass roots movements. The project will also hopefully address issues such as employment, transportation, and others that have been discussed by the Task Force. One of the main goals is to include the youth in the disability community to spread the wealth of knowledge and create a profound effect on cross disability education. Mr. Tague also mentions that Tina Calabria and Judy Barricella are working on this project as well.

Dr. Seelman agrees that the emergence of a youth movement is critical to the advancement of the disability community. She suggests that perhaps some youth and parents in attendance would be willing to organize events. Mr. O'Hanlon echoes Mr. Tague's point that the history of the

disability community is very tenuous if there is no effort to preserve it. Mr. Tague informs the Task Force that he will bring more information when it is available. If there is not a solidified effort to learn about the history, the same mistakes will be repeated from the past. There are one or two meetings left for the steering committee to begin developing an action plan and brainstorming ways to raise funds.

Ms. Barricella explains that this project is occurring to educate the younger population about the history of people with disabilities and that once it is created, it will be valuable to students so the same mistake are not repeated. Dr. Seelman addresses the education aspect of the subject and touches on disability classes and how people can create a curriculum around the topic to create a living history. Mr. McGann says that it would also be helpful if there were proposed solutions on how to make Pittsburgh and its surrounding communities more accessible.

Follow-up on Meeting with the Mayor and County Executive

Mr. O'Hanlon begins the discussion by explaining the basic plan involving four subcommittees and the chairs/co-chairs:

- Common projects and transportation (City) – John Tague
- Accessibility (City) – James C. Noschese and Joe Wasserman
- Police Training (County) – Aurelia Carter-Scott and Gabe McMoreland
- Systems Planning Project (County) – Jeff Parker, Katherine Seelman, Paul O'Hanlon

Mr. O'Hanlon also stated that just because a Task Force member is listed as one doesn't mean they can't participate in multiple. You should join whichever one meets your interests. In addition it is addressed whether or not the committees should have an organizer such as Tina Calabra. It is the hope that each committee will get many volunteers from the community. Ms. Carter-Scott warns that if the committees become too big, it will be harder to achieve concrete results. She also states that meetings should be held in person whenever possible.

Concerning police training, the Task Force notes that old and current practices must be looked at to find places where we can fill in the gap, not replace the entire system. Mr. O'Hanlon takes the point a step further addressing the delivery of the training (i.e. video, speaker, handbook, etc.). The training is necessary because the police have extreme difficulty dealing with people in the disability community (for example, the lack of interpreters). The conversation gradually shifts over to airport security. Mr. Noschese explains that the airport does not have extensive protocols when deaf or hard-of-hearing people pass through. Mr. Wasserman expounds that they also have a weak policy on support animals at the airport. Ms. Warman then addresses the problems with hidden disabilities and the appropriate responses from the airport that are necessary.

Mr. O'Hanlon shares with everyone that these are issues that should be brought up with the airport ADA Coordinator and the Sheriff's Office when we meet with them. Mr. Meritzer informs everyone that the cost of interpreters and committee meetings is covered by the city for any Task Force meeting.

Lastly, Mr. O'Hanlon states that the fourth committee, including himself, Dr. Seelman, and Mr. Parker, is the one that the Task Force knows least about. It involves getting the disability

community's voice to be heard whenever major planning events are occurring (for example, BRT). If anyone knows anybody who would do well in this committee, let the Task Force know.

One Step Program

Mr. Parker introduces the One Step program where owners are encouraged to remove the one step barriers to their businesses and create a ramp. Groups have been advocating this program, particularly Oakland for All, and is essentially a combination of Public Works, Zoning and Planning, and License, Permits, and Inspection. Mr. Meritzer states that's under the old process, the owner would need to come in repeatedly whereas now they simply go through Richard and his interns. It's easier for the applicant because they save time and fees from coming downtown so they are more willing to go through the One Step checklist. So far fifteen projects have been completed throughout Liberty Ave., Beechview, Southside, Lawrenceville, among others. There is a packet of information as well as a packet of forms usually provided to the owner of the business.

In order for a business to begin the One Step process, the business must get a petition from the neighboring property owners as well as a site plan. Retrofitting is still a problem but any new building is required to have a ramp by Permits, Licensing, and Inspection. The Task Force then discusses the entrances of buildings in addition to the façades and when it is appropriate to be accessible. Mr. Meritzer states that having an architect look at the sites would be helpful but it would need to be gratis or paid for by the city. He then clarifies that the reason One Step often takes so long is that there was a learning curve with the new. It was originally created under the old administration that passed it in the first place. New people weren't sure why we were doing this or how it worked, there has been a learning curve.

Vox Pop

Ms. Grisham reminds the Task Force that Access Mob Pittsburgh will be having a meet and greet on Saturday, April 2nd at the new offices at 901 Pennsylvania Northside. Senator Costa will be attending the first half of the event and talking to constituents about accessibility related issues. Second, a few graduate students from Carnegie Mellon University are conducting a research study on computer accessibility so if you are interested, Ms. Grisham can get you their contact information.

Ms. Dore reminds everyone to vote in upcoming Pennsylvania primary!

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 P.M. The next meeting will take place on April 18, 2016 at 1:00 P.M. in the first floor Conference Room of 200 Ross Street.