

# CITY- COUNTY

## Task Force on Disabilities

September 21, 2020

### Task Force Members In Attendance

#### City

Paul O'Hanlon, Cochair  
Joe Wassermann, Member at Large  
Kai Roberts  
Mark Schmeler

#### County

James "Chris" Noschese, Cochair  
John Tague, Treasurer  
Cori Frazer  
Georgia Petropoulos

#### 13<sup>th</sup> Member

Paul "Rich" McGann

### Task Force Members Absent

#### City

Janet Evans  
Leah Northrop

#### County

Sarah Goldstein  
Karen Warman

### Staff Present

Hillary Roman, City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator  
Andrew Dash, Director of City Planning  
Alex Holmes, Dept of City Planning Communications Specialist

### Welcome & Introductions

Paul O' Hanlon called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force and staff members introduced themselves.

### Agenda

#### A. New membership introduction

- New City Task Force members, Kai Roberts and Mark Schmeler, introduced themselves.
- Kai is a native Pittsburgher and CMU graduate working as Assistant Director for Precollege Programs at CMU. He is also a professional speaker for Active Minds, promoting mental health awareness on college campuses. He is seeking a master's degree in student affairs and professional counseling.
- Mark is an Associate Professor at the University of Pittsburgh in the Dept. of Rehabilitation Science and Technology. Much of his work has centered on assistive technologies for people with disabilities. He has also done advocacy work to

increase access to appropriate rehabilitation resources to enhance people with disabilities' active participation in their communities. Mark shared that he is visually-impaired and noted that certain functions of the Zoom format, including the "chat" screen-share functions, are not accessible to him.

**B. Review and Approval of Minutes**

Rich made a motion to accept August's minutes. It was seconded by John and carried unanimously.

**C. Treasurer's Report**

- John Tague reported that the Task Force started with \$9000 for the year and the only expenditure accounted for so far was from interpreter costs from July's meeting. He has not received an invoice from August's meeting.
- John asked that Cori Frazer notify him when the bill from the listening session Councilperson Bennett is sent.
- Cori clarified that the CCTFD had agreed to pay for ASL and tactile interpretation.
- A conversation about how closed captioning works on Zoom ensued. Hillary Roman clarified the difference between human captioning, which the Task Force pays for just as they would other kinds of communication services via the Center for Hearing and Deaf Services (HDS), and online captioning services, which the City should be providing soon for all online meetings.
- The motion to accept the treasurer's report was made by Cori and carried unanimously.

**D. City of Pittsburgh Disability Service Facilitator announcement**

- Hillary announced the City's new Disability Service Facilitator (DSF) initiative. The program appoints a permanent staff member to address ADA concerns in every City Department. These facilitators will serve as liaisons between community members with disabilities and relevant City staff members. The program will help to increase efficient, holistic service to the disability community.
- Facilitators will be responsible for understanding how the ADA interfaces with their department, help provide accommodations, and work with the ADA Coordinator and the other DSFs to identify needs in each Department or Bureau.
- Director Dash discussed how the DSF program will also increase ADA compliance by helping the City identify ADA requirements earlier and more meaningfully. DSFs will help the City become more proactive in its inclusionary efforts by increasing ADA capacity internally.
- Chris Noschese asked that the CCTFD be given the opportunity to review any changes to policy. Hillary clarified that the DSFs are intended to make compliance efforts more robust, not to overhaul policies. The Task Force will be consulted in major or controversial changes to policy. DSFs are meant to improve upon systems that are already in use and improve services and communication between the public and the City.
- Paul indicated his approval of the program as a way to fill the gaps that sometimes occur in bureaucracies.
- Rich McGann made a comment about the importance of ADA compliance.

- John indicated his approval for and excitement about the program and thanked Hillary for creating a formal model for the City's ADA services.

#### E. Tina Calabro: Highland Park wrap up discussion

- Tina Calabro thanked Hillary and Director Dash for resolving her grievance with the City by reopening Highland Park to vehicle traffic. Their response restored the previous level access for people with disabilities.
- Hillary and Director Dash thanked Tina for her advocacy and patience with the process.
- Tina went on to say that although it isn't a disability-focused concern, she worries about the speeding around the park and asks that the speed limit be reevaluated.
- Tina offered the opportunity for the Task Force to get involved in the effort to evaluate other issues for residents of Highland Park.
- Hillary asked whether the group had reached out to DOMI about their concerns and Tina confirmed Director Ricks' knowledge of the situation.
- Hillary asked whether these concerns were related to disability issues and Tina confirmed that they were not, they are focused on general safety.
- Tina also offered that East End Neighborhood Planner, Christopher Corbett and Community Affairs staff member, Leah Friedman have also been kept informed of the group's concerns.
- Hillary offered that although she has no authority over non-disability-related issues with the City, she could provide resources and/or connections to the group.
- Paul expressed dismay at the City's inability to provide a resolution that would satisfy all residents in Highland Park. He suggested that having Reservoir Drive remain closed to all drivers who do not have accessible license plates or tags. Hillary responded that they City had considered that solution, but she had expressed that it would unnecessarily burden people with mobility challenges who do not have accessible driving credentials. The ADA applies to those who do not have those credentials, including those who are temporarily disabled or do not own a vehicle, for example.
  - Furthermore, once the grievance procedure was triggered, the City had a limited amount of time to provide a resolution. There can, of course, be more holistic solutions to providing safe and accessible measures, but such things require more time than was available.
- Tina agreed with Hillary that requiring accessible credentials would not have been the right resolution.
- Paul commented that he hopes the City can provide more holistic solutions in the future.
- Hillary and Director Dash confirmed for Paul that this park decision fell under the City's purview.

#### F. Tina Calabro: Western PA Disability History and Action Consortium

- Tina gave a broad overview of the Western PA Disability History and Action Consortium's mission to document, preserve, and share disability history. The group is about five years old and is associated with the Heinz History Center, Achieva, and the Temple University Institute on Disabilities, among others.

- Tina shared an email with filmmaker Tony Buba about the short film he worked on with the CCTFD called “Small Differences.”
- Tina has ensured that the CCTFD holds the master copy of the film. She has shared it with Hillary and Caylin Snyder as well.
- Tony has retained unused footage for the film related to the PA Youth Leadership Network and the Consumer Health Coalition under Sally Jo Snyder.
- Tony also filmed an ADA anniversary event in Market Square where Jim Furlow and others spoke.
- Tony told Tina it would cost between \$900 and \$1500 to have all the unused footage put on an external hard drive.
- Tina recommended that the Task Force donate the right to use and safe-keeping of the footage to the Western PA Disability History and Action Consortium for posterity.
- She also asked whether the CCTFD would take on the responsibility of cost of the external hard drive.
- Paul provided more of the history behind the making of the film and described unused footage that could go toward a second video.
- John said that he would need to talk to CLASS about how much funding the Task Force has left from the original sale of the video. He has questions about the status of the footage and how usable it is. Tina responded that Tony has agreed to organize, label, and likely caption the footage as a part of this process.
- John will talk to CLASS about funding but very much wants to proceed.
- Chris wondered whether the CCTFD should pay for it or should apply for a grant or sponsorship instead. Paul reminded the group that there was likely still money set aside for this project at CLASS and suggested looking into that fund.

#### G. DOMI Neighborway updates

- Paul gave a background on his concerns surrounding DOMI’s Neighborway initiative, specifically traffic circles. Some of his concerns include using yields instead of stop signs, planters or other obstructions to drivers’ sightline being placed in the center circle, and other issues that may adversely impact blind or visually-impaired pedestrians.
- The CCTFD sent a letter to DOMI asking that the City reevaluate these structures. DOMI has agreed to slow the process down and has reinstalled stop signs in these intersections.
- September 30<sup>th</sup>, DOMI is having a virtual community meeting to discuss Neighborways with the public.
- Hillary linked the invitation to the event in the chat box and asked that those interested in attending reach out to her. DOMI’s Cassandra Leopold has asked that the group invite other stakeholders that they think should attend.
- Cori said that since roundabouts are common in Western Europe, there must be a set of best practices around their usage.
- Paul responded that when he looked into that, he discovered that blind pedestrians have much difficulty navigating roundabouts.
- Rich brought up the White Cane Law and other laws used in England for blind pedestrians.
- Hillary asked Cori to clarify as to whether they were referring to roundabouts or traffic circles, because there are significant differences. Furthermore, Europe

doesn't fall under the ADA and thus has fewer protections for people with disabilities than the US.

- Paul responded that both mechanisms present challenges for people with disabilities. Chris agreed that roundabouts can also be problematic.
- Cassandra Masters summarized the contents of a letter from the Community for Accessible Transportation (CAT) to DOMI. The letter discussed that traffic circles lack a clear right of way for travelers and this impacts those who are visually-impaired. The letter also recommended implementation of highly visible crosswalks with nonslip piano keys. DOMI agreed to do so. The letter expressed concern with planters or obstructions in the center of traffic circles. DOMI responded that they will require a height limit for any plants and will possibly recruit DPW as well as community members to maintain them at that height.
- The letter also requested that DOMI do more community engagement before implementing new traffic mechanisms.
- Paul brought up the question of whether speed bumps were accessible. Cori responded that they can be difficult for adaptive bicyclists. Mark also responded that they can be a challenge for those with low vision if they are in the pedestrian right of way.

#### H. CCTFD review monthly meeting time

- Paul reintroduced the proposal for a new meeting time in order to accommodate new member Leah Northrop's schedule. He pointed out that since we are now meeting virtually, there are fewer barriers to travel time.
- Cori offered that they would have a conflict in the evenings.
- Paul responded that evening meetings present their own problems, but since there is no perfect time, he suggested 5:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.
- Hillary mentioned that Leah would only need meetings to be pushed back an hour from their current time, which would be 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. instead of 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
- Chris brought up potential conflicts for City staff and guest speakers, who will not be available evenings.
- Paul suggests meeting next month from 3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.
- Director Dash wants to keep the meeting at its normal time for next month in deference to members of the public who have already received notification of the CCTFD's regular meeting time and potentially the Sunshine Act.
- The Task Force agreed to keep the regular meeting time for October's meeting.

#### I. Issues of voting in nursing homes

- Paul added a final agenda item of discussion: ensuring disability voter rights for individuals in nursing homes.
- He has written a letter to the state requesting that they share census information data on residents of long-term care facilities. Census information should be cross-referenced with people who are registered to vote and mail-in ballot information should then be sent out. Those who are not registered should be automatically registered and sent mail-in ballot applications.
- Paul would like the Task Force to join him on the letter.
- John asked whether the Elections Division should be copied on the letter.

- Paul said that he wasn't sure how much power local entities have over the matter but agreed they could be copied as a courtesy.
- Chris expressed concern about voter fraud with regard to patients who have dementia and may not remember they have voted. Paul responded that PA does not ask any competency questions; there are in fact only three criteria to be a voter: citizen status, residential status, and age (18+). Paul is more worried about enfranchisement than voter fraud.
- A motion was made by Paul to have the CCTFD endorse the letter. It was seconded by Joe and Chris and carried unanimously.

#### J. Miscellaneous

- Rich asked that members of utility companies be asked to come to Task Force meetings because of unique conditions that those in the disability community face where they may be overbilled.
- Chris advised that there are devices one can use in your home to control the flow of water. People with disabilities may be able to get them free of charge.
- Paul recognized the problem and offered that the CCTFD should continue to think about how to tackle it.

#### Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Paul and seconded by Rich. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m.

*YouTube link with closed captioning:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6mXgfZ0hDfg&t=1726s>