

CITY- COUNTY

Task Force on Disabilities

November 16, 2020

Task Force Members In Attendance

City

Paul O'Hanlon, Cochair
Joe Wassermann, Member at Large
Mark Schmeler
Leah Northrop

County

James "Chris" Noschese, Cochair
John Tague, Treasurer
Georgia Petropoulos
Sarah Goldstein
Karen Warman

13th Member

Paul "Rich" McGann

Task Force Members Absent

City

Janet Evans
Kai Roberts

County

Cori Frazer

Staff Present

Hillary Roman, City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator
Danielle Nicol, Dept of City Planning Senior Secretary
Caylin Snyder, Allegheny County ADA Coordinator

Welcome & Introductions

Paul O' Hanlon called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force and staff members introduced themselves.

Agenda

A. Review and Approval of Minutes

- Joe Wassermann made a motion to accept October's minutes. It was seconded by John Tague and carried unanimously.

B. Treasurer's Report

- John Tague reported that he is still awaiting September's invoice, the balance as of September 30th is \$6217.50.

C. HACP announcement: Mellon Orchard Apartments and Lemington Senior Apartments

- Ali Abdullah, Disability Compliance Administrator for the Housing Authority, presented information about a senior apartment building in the Lincoln-Lemington

area. The building has been redeveloped and is currently accepting applications for the 54 units, 48 of which are wheelchair accessible. Individuals must be aged 62 or older. The units are one-bedroom apartments.

- The Mellon Orchard Apartments, a newer facility on Station Street, will also be available soon.
- The maximum income level is \$29,050 for single adults and \$33,200 for two people.
- Ali projects that the buildings will be ready occupancy early in 2021.

D. Downtown Advisory Group Mobility Plan: Issues, opportunities, guiding principles, and goals

- Chris Watts and Kathryn Schlesinger from the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP) presented the Downtown Pittsburgh Mobility Plan.
- The plan provides a vision and priority structure for focusing on resources, development, and equitable growth.
- PDP coordinates planning activities with other public agencies including the City, Port Authority, and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission. They also engage a team of consultants.
- The Mobility Plan prioritizes community engagement to meaningfully inform the plan and generate support for its proposals.
- Among the plan's findings is the perception that downtown pedestrian traffic can be hazardous, particularly for people with disabilities. Kathryn emphasized PDP's intention to encourage equitable and safe development.
- Kathryn emphasized that the Mobility Plan is not finalized and is still able to integrate new feedback.
- Rich McGann recommended well-lit streets and crosswalks for those with low-vision.
- Sarah Goldstein made a comment about mitigating panhandling downtown. Kathryn responded that while the plan being discussed today is focused on mobility, PDP does recognize the problem with panhandling downtown.
- Paul commented that street design often promotes encroachment on pedestrian right-of-way. He asked whether sidewalk dining should be reconsidered given that the primary purpose of sidewalks is pedestrian transportation. Chris acknowledged that the state provisions previously held that businesses must keep alcohol and food services as close to their business as possible, which presented a conflict with pedestrian right-of-way. Regulations (or their enforcement) have since changed under pandemic conditions to allow for more outdoor activity generally. Chris agrees that there is an opportunity right now to present corrections to sidewalk dining regulations.
- Georgia Petropoulos discussed the complexities in the past with removing parking to expand sidewalks, by any entity. The difficult circumstances of the pandemic forced swift changes to policy in order to alleviate economic loss to the City. Increased attention to outdoor dining led to a collective effort toward changing sidewalk design.
- Paul reiterated his concern that these changes came about in response to a pandemic and not accessibility needs for people with disabilities.

- Georgia clarified that in many cases entirely new public spaces were made adjoining the sidewalks. These spaces were designed and enforced for full accessibility to the public.
- Paul challenged this assertion by expressing a concern about how these changes may have produced new obstacles for blind pedestrians. Chris responded that the City helped the PDP to create and enforce accessibility metrics and this preserved the safety of the sidewalks for pedestrians. Any problems that emerged were mainly due to noncompliance of the business.
- Chris Noschese agreed with Paul, saying that disability needs should come before bike lanes or other infrastructural desires.
- Paul challenged Chris Watts on why the sidewalk area reserved for people with disabilities is the side with all of the obstacles. He confessed that he has not seen many of the dining situations but referenced a video taken during the Black Lives Matter protests.
- Chris shared that that specific business was not actually permitted for sidewalk dining. He noted that PDP and the City are monitoring for this type of noncompliance. The business Paul referenced was not following the approved PDP and City design.
- Rich recognized that the narrowness of many of Pittsburgh's sidewalks makes serving all needs at once very difficult.
- Katheryn concluded the discussion by sharing the intended timeline of the project and next steps. She would like to come back in the spring to receive more feedback from the CCTFD.
 - More information is at DowntownPittsburgh.com/MobilityPlan.
 - Kathryn Schlesinger, Project Manager: kschlesinger@downtownpittsburgh.com
 - Chris Watts, Vice President of Mobility: cwatts@downtownpittsburgh.com
- John asked whether there was any change to the definition of what is considered a pedestrian. Chris emphasized that PDP only considers people pedestrians and as of now has no plans to expand that definition to delivery robots.

E. Announcement: Rep. Miller proposed bill HB 2938

- Hillary Roman introduced the issue as it was framed by Louise Larkin, the legislative assistant for Rep. Miller. Rep. Miller circulated a co-sponsorship memo for a new bill that, if passed, would provide funding for SSP services through June of 2021. This bill has been reserved as HB 2938. Rep. Miller drafted this bill in addition to HB 2188, in order to highlight the critical and time-sensitive need for permanent funding for this program. They anticipate introducing this legislation in the very near future.
- Chris Noschese wondered why there isn't more bipartisan support for the bill and urged people to get their representatives to support it. Rich agreed with Chris and reiterated his support for the bill and encouraged others to do so.
- Paul asked if the Task Force, specifically Rich and Chris, would be interested in drafting a letter of support to the County state delegation.
- Sharon Bean, the Director of Development Extension for the Center for Independent Living and the supervisor of the SSP program in Pennsylvania,

commented that the program, set to close December 31st, is struggling to find the funding to keep running.

- The first bill, HB 2188—intended to fund a statewide SSP program, was referred in January to the Labor and Industry Committee and has not been addressed. Rep. Miller then introduced HB 2938, a budget bill for 1.5 million dollars to be dedicated to an SSP program from Dec. 31st to June 30th 2021. This bill will buy time to find more permanent funding for an SSP program. Sharon urged people to call and email the Appropriations Committee and ask them to consider supporting this bill.
- Joe asked for the information on the Chair of the Appropriations Committee or other important contacts. Sharon offered to forward the email from the deafblind group that was sent out to relevant stakeholders asking for support.
- Sharon corrected Rich's statement that Governor Wolf was responsible for the loss of funding. She told him that the grant money came from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation; the grant's terms were written in such a way that the hours and deliverables were cut. This change had nothing to do with Governors Wolf or Corbett.

F. Regulation of delivery vehicles *Additional item*

- Mavis Rainey discussed an emerging issue of concern highlighted by Pittsburgh Community Reinvestment Group (PCRG) having to do with regulations on automated delivery vehicles, or personal delivery devices (PDDs). Legislation was recently passed allowing for PDDs to be designated pedestrians. They are the size of a small refrigerator, weigh up to 500 lbs, and travel up to 12 mph.
- Concerned groups have reached out to Dir. Ricks of DOMI asking for a community meeting with PennDOT as the overseeing agency.
- PDDs have been proposed as a relief measure for people unable to access resources safely during the pandemic. The legislation also proposes that these devices will reduce traffic congestion and environmental harm caused by carbon emissions.
- Mavis contrasted the Oakland community's experience with Starship PPDs; the Starship group meaningfully engaged with the community and assured a human backstop for the devices that could intervene if necessary. Here, community members are unaware of how to contact authorities for these PPDs about their safety concerns.
- Georgia added that Dir. Ricks will be hosting a meeting with PennDOT on Thursday at 4 p.m. to address these concerns. She will forward the information as it comes in.
- John commented that this legislation, Act 106, went through without the Governor's signature, which is peculiar. He emphasized that there is still opportunity to provide feedback.

G. County office building accessibility

- Paul introduced concerns about accessibility at the County office building that may have impeded citizen's ability to vote early or register to vote.
- Caylin Snyder confirmed that the lift in the office building malfunctioned and admitted that the timing was unfortunate as it overlapped with voting needs. She

- relayed that it is currently fixed and running. If someone tried to access the office during the time the lift was broken, they could opt to have an election official drop their mail-in ballot into the dropbox for them or they could access the building from the rear where they would be led to the dropbox themselves.
- Caylin has requested improved signage and maintenance for the lift and will continue to monitor it.
 - Paul interjected that the underlying problem is that the lift is inadequately designed for a person with a disability to independently operate it. Caylin countered that it is currently a self-operating lift. Karen Warman confirmed this information was true.
 - Caylin offered that there is a phone number under the directions for the lift, she reiterated the need for improved signage, which she has recommended to the County.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by John and seconded by Rich. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 3:58 p.m.

YouTube link with closed captioning: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-ZDs0mBu2c&t=7010s>