

CITY- COUNTY

Task Force on Disabilities

October 19, 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
Sarah Goldstein

13th Member

Paul "Rich" McGann

Task Force Members Absent

City

Janet Evans
Leah Northrop

County

Karen Warman

Staff Present

Hillary Roman, City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator
Alex Holmes, Dept of City Planning Communications Specialist
Caylin Snyder, Allegheny County ADA Coordinator

Welcome & Introductions

Paul O' Hanlon called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force and staff members introduced themselves.

Agenda

A. Review and Approval of Minutes

- Georgia made a motion to accept September's minutes. It was seconded by Chris and carried unanimously.

B. Treasurer's Report

- John Tague reported that he is still awaiting September's invoice and that he has authorized \$1000 for the Richard Meritzer Award. Remaining funds stand at \$6500 for the year though John is able to request more funding if necessary.
- John clarified with regard to Chris Noschese's question that funding is available until June 30 2021.

C. Review monthly meeting time, continuing discussion

- Hillary Roman summarized the discussion from last month's meeting about moving the CCTFD meeting time to accommodate one of the new members. The group last proposed meeting from 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. instead of the current time, 1:00 p.m.- 3:00 p.m. Hillary provided that she and Director Dash investigated whether they would be able to change the time under Sunshine Act restrictions and CCTFD guidelines. The Law Dept. at the City concluded that the Task Force is permitted to change their meeting time under their own consensus.
- Chris asked whether changing the meeting time was necessary and wondered whether Leah couldn't simply join into the ongoing meeting a little late.
- Rich McGann observed that virtual meeting times are more flexible than in-person events and might not be a problem.
- Paul moved to change the meeting time to 2:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. Rich seconded the movement and it carried unanimously.

D. Voter outreach: Kane Hospitals and County Jail

- Paul introduced the topic of voters rights in nursing and care homes. He discussed the letter he sent to the state, which was responded to but not substantively. The letter was covered by PublicSource and was also referenced in the Washington Post.
- Paul is specifically interested in an update from the County on voter outreach in Kane Hospitals and the County Jail.
- Rich reported that when his ballot came, it was not in an accessible format for him.
- Caylin Snyder provided that she reached out to the Elections Division about the County Jail and Kane facilities. She was informed that representatives were sent to register voters and supply absentee applications for all eligible voters. The representatives were not permitted to enter hospitals and staff members told the County that they would assist residents with voting needs.
- Caylin reminded the group that today is the last day to register to vote and the last day for a mail-in application is October 27th at 5:00 p.m.
- Caylin responded to Rich and John's concern about accessible voting, supplying information about accessible ballots online. She offered to follow-up with the Elections Division to get more information for Rich.
- Caylin also updated the group that voters can also now utilize an authorization form that allows for a representative to return a person's ballot for them. This form is available at votespa.com.
- Chris raised a concern about having received a mail-in ballot that he did not request. This worried him because of a news story claiming that 360,000 ballots were discarded over fears of duplicates that had been mailed. He contacted the Elections Division and was assured that this would not be a problem, but he feels the County is overwhelmed.
- John corrected Chris's earlier statement, saying that the number of discarded ballots was actually 28,000. Monica Tuttle, a Service Coordinator for the County added that to her knowledge the number was 28,000 and provided a news article verifying this information. Paul provided that the larger figure is actually the statewide figure.

- Sarah Goldstein contributed that she submitted her mail-in ballot easily and without consequence

E. “Small Differences” recordkeeping and planning

- John asked for authorization from the group to pay for the film’s footage to be organized and preserved on a hard drive in order to be donated to the Western PA Disability History and Action Consortium for safe-keeping and future use.
- John added that there is a concern that the film would be donated to the University of Wisconsin, so it is important that the CCTFD ensure they preserve their own access to the film.
- Chris asked for clarification on where the money for this project comes from. Paul responded that this particular funding stream comes from the proceeds of the original film, which were intended to go toward a sequel. Chris said that he was never made aware of this money and would like he would like a regular report about this funding stream to have a complete understanding about Task Force funds.
- Paul and John replied that the money isn’t intended for general operational purposes, and therefore shouldn’t be considered for other kinds of CCTFD business.
- A motion was made by John to authorize funding for the project, it was seconded by Joe and carried unanimously.

F. Richard Meritzer Award winner announcement

- John announced the winner of the second annual Richard Meritzer Award of \$1000 to Oakland for All, Access and Beyond.
- Georgia Petropoulos accepted the award, thanking the CCTFD on behalf of Oakland for All. She asked for recommendation on relaying this information to the group. John said that he would help to coordinate an announcement.

G. Jennifer Szweda Jordan: All-Abilities Media Project

- Paul introduced Jennifer Szweda Jordan. Jennifer publishes Unabridged Press, a news outlet that focuses on issues that affect the disability community. She also directs a nonprofit organization called the All-Abilities Media Project. The Center for Innovation at Point Park University sponsors the project.
- Jennifer showed several video clips produced by the All-Abilities Media Project and discussed the various formats the organization has invested in. These include podcast, literature, and video production.
- Rich brought up the fact that podcasts are not accessible. Jennifer responded that there are transcripts available for some of them. She also said that they wouldn’t do a future podcast without a plan for including transcripts.
- Jennifer talked about some of the guests she’s had on her podcast and the topics discussed. She clarified that the All-Abilities Media Project is not an advocacy organization, rather it is a platform for discussion of issues that affect people with disabilities.

- The All-Abilities Media Project was recently granted \$20,000 from the FISA Foundation for capacity-building.
- They will soon be online at allabilitiesmedia.org.
- Sarah asked whether the podcasts feature people of all age groups. Jennifer replied that they mostly focus on people of working age.
- Paul praised the All-Abilities Media Project and asked both what the larger vision is for the project and how the CCTFD could support it. Jennifer responded that she hopes to have a call to action soon.

H. Disability Service Facilitators Q&A

- Joe Wasserman asked to add further questions about the Disability Service Facilitator (DSF) program, which had been discussed in September, to the agenda.
- Hillary summarized the program's intent, which is to increase quality and efficiency of services for people with disabilities in the City. Similar programs exist in many larger cities, and she is pleased that she was able to have it supported by Director Dash and adopted by Mayor Peduto for the City of Pittsburgh.
- She answered Joe's questions about the program, clarifying that there will be one permanent staff member from each City department appointed to the role.
- She said that she will be leading broad ADA trainings with the larger group and then individualized trainings more finely geared to each individual DSF's role within the City. All DSFs will gain an understanding of how their work impacts people with disabilities.
- Hillary is hoping to have trainings begin in early 2021.

I. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) accessibility concerns

- Paul introduced his concerns surrounding the BRT project. Chief among them is a worry about the loss of accessible midblock parking between Oakland and downtown.
- Paul shared a graphic that shows a scenario where a person in a wheelchair is trying to cross a complex intersection.
- Paul suggested that the City implement midblock reserved spaces for paratransit in these areas. He commented that having paratransit vehicles block the bus lane during pick-up and drop-off of passengers is a highly undesirable solution.
- Chris expressed a concern for small businesses being cut off by the BRT. He suggested that perhaps a tunnel would provide a fitting solution for these problems.
- Rich said that he is concerned about blocking ambulance access for the hospitals and it also interested a Chris's tunnel proposal.
- Paul refocused the conversation on disability access. He asked which entity is leading the initiative.
- Hillary suggested inviting stakeholders from DOMI, the Port Authority, and perhaps the Parking Authority.
- Georgia offered that the Port Authority is currently holding meetings among stakeholder groups. There are two opportunities to attend this meeting—Georgia

- and Hillary offered to reach out to the Port Authority and see if they can extend the invitation to members of the CCTFD.
- Hillary reiterated that the Parking Authority may also be a relevant stakeholder for conversations about parking removal.
 - Rich brought up the fact that there is regular turnover at DOMI that makes it difficult to have consistent commitment to accessibility.
 - Kyle Potter, the City Coordinator for the BRT at DOMI discussed some of the background of the project. He mentioned that the project was also led by infrastructural design firm, AECOM. AECOM submits their projects to intense scrutiny from the US Access Board. Kyle was unable to give information on parking removal as that was not one of his duties on the project. He encouraged the Task Force to try to attend the meetings Georgia mentioned to get more information.
 - Kyle assured the group that the Port Authority is aware of all accessibility concerns surrounding the project. He does, however, strongly encourage the disability community's engagement with the project.
 - Paul shared a concern about the loss of bus stops and increased distance between bus stops, which may create a burden for people with mobility challenges.
 - Kyle confirmed the bus stops may be further away from each other but not by more than a block or two. Paul pointed out that that is a significant distance for some. Kyle agreed on that point. He assured the group that there would not be a loss of parking.
 - Kyle clarified for Paul that there would be bump-outs designed into the bus lanes for parking. He reiterated that there will be representatives at the upcoming stakeholder meeting who can better speak to the design.
 - Chris expressed concern for the loss of corner pick-up and drop-off areas. He is worried about danger presented by a change in process for blind and deafblind individuals.
 - Georgia reiterated that she is going to reach out to individuals involved with the Port Authority stakeholder meeting to see if they are able to extend the invitation to members of the CCTFD. If this is not possible, perhaps representatives can come to a future Task Force meeting.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Rich and seconded by Paul. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

YouTube link with closed captioning: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HKB2thmZ4Uk>