

# CITY- COUNTY

## Task Force on Disabilities

July 19, 2021

### Task Force Members In Attendance

#### City

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

#### County

Sarah Goldstein  
Karen Warman

### Staff Present

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

### Welcome & Introductions

Paul O'Hanlon called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force members introduced themselves.

### Agenda

#### A. Minutes approval

- Joe Wassermann made a motion to approve the minutes from June's meeting.
- Rich McGann requested that the minutes be resent to him.
- The motion to approve the minutes was seconded by John Tague and carried unanimously.

#### B. Treasurer's report

- John is waiting for a report from CLASS (County), he will send out a report when he receives it.

### C. CCTFD elections

- Georgia Petropoulos announced the nominating committee's recommendations. They recommend Chris Noschese for Chair, Georgia for Cochair, John as Treasurer, and Leah Northrop as Member at Large.
- Discussion was held about the membership vacancy on the City side of the CCTFD. Hillary Roman clarified how appointments are made to the Task Force on both the City and County side. She added that the Task Force is encouraged to make appointment recommendations.
- John made the point that whomever the new mayor will be in January will have to appoint or reappoint members.
- By a show of hands, the slate of nominations passed unanimously. New officer positions are effective immediately. Chris commented toward the end of the meeting that he has not accepted the nomination yet.

### D. CCTFD disability employment survey, results & discussion

- Hillary gave an overview of the Barriers to Employment Survey sponsored by the CCTFD.
  - Hillary shared her screen showing the quantitative data for the survey; quantitative and qualitative answers were shared to members via email.
  - The survey received 119 responses, 57.3% of which were from people with disabilities, 42.7% were from someone completing the survey as a trusted caregiver for a person with a disability.
  - 45.3% of responses were from people living in the city of Pittsburgh, the rest were from county members in various municipalities.
  - Transportation barriers were largely due to lack of paratransit, lack of evening transportation, and lack of access to accessible routes. Respondents offered many other individualized responses to this question, including problems with bus drivers or family members.
  - Workplace accommodation barriers were mostly due to inaccessible policies, most of which respondents detailed in the qualitative portion of the survey. A common example of such a policy was the requirement that candidates be available for full time employment. Other major barriers included lack of telework, management style of employer, communication barriers, and discrimination.
  - Other barriers to employment included lack of access to job training (42%), lack of resume skills (25%), and lack of access to employment events like career fairs (31%), among other responses.
  - Cori Frazer pointed out that lack of access to MAWD (Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities) was also quite high (28%). They wondered if the CCTFD might want to discuss that issue with DHS. Caylin Snyder offered to share the survey results with County DHS.
- Mary Hartley (PEAL) underscored Cori's point. She offered that Josie Badger and "I Want to Work PA" helped to pass new MAWD legislation that will increase education and outreach about how workers with disabilities can access the program. The program also helps workers to earn more money while still retaining their medical benefits. All county assistance offices (CAOs) will be retrained accordingly. Mary will share information with the Task Force as it emerges.

- Mary confirmed for John and Rich that Governor Wolf signed this legislation into law. She recommends asking Josie to join the CCTFD for more information.
- Megan Grabski (United Way of SWPA) discussed new grant funding her agency has received to engage with employers and help them do a better job at increasing employment for people with developmental disabilities.
- She noticed that among the survey results that self-identification, unfriendly management style toward disability, and lack of telework are all issues that are starting to be addressed through the work her agency does with a large consortium of local employers.
- One of the consortium's cochairs, Greg Pollack, Chief Accessibility Officer for PNC, has a large impact on how local employers can do a better job of increasing disability employment.
- Megan added that some of the survey's results are old problems that are not easily solved, but are issues that the consortium is working toward resolving.
- John asked whether Megan's group had done any survey work with employers, asking about hiring and management practices for people with disabilities. Megan responded that the consortium has done survey work with employers and will continue to do so. One common topic that Megan has seen employers ask for more of is about becoming more disability friendly and job accommodations provisions.
- John inquired as to whether the Task Force might play a role in helping the consortium with those issues.
- Paul circled back to the survey's finding that evening/nighttime transportation is a barrier to employment for many.
- Paul suggests that the CCTFD create a set of policy recommendations based on the survey results, including an employment-based paratransit option.
- Hillary added that the original impetus for the survey was to help the Task Force decide how to spend the pot of funding available to them for increasing disability employment.
- Paul offered that his conversations with ACCESS indicate that a barrier to provision of nighttime transportation services is getting a significant number of riders justify the cost. It may make more sense to seek more evening transportation for all people and do coalition-building around that initiative.
- More information about MAWD legislation can be found at [www.iwanttoworkpa.org/policy/](http://www.iwanttoworkpa.org/policy/).

#### E. Accessible yoga and mindfulness practice

- Marissa Vogel and Maryellen from Open Up Pittsburgh (3711 Butler St.) gave an overview of their wellness collective. Their mission is to teach mindfulness tools and movement practices centered on people living with disabilities.
- Their programs include training for children and young adults, employment training, and providing accessible studio space. They provide ASL interpreters for virtual and in-person yoga classes.
- Open Up charges for services based on a sliding scale and offers scholarship opportunities for people with disabilities and minority populations.
- Maryellen then lead the group through a yoga and mindfulness session.
- Paul thanked Marissa and Maryellen for their work, adding that these sorts of practices can be especially helpful in a culture that is mainly focused on curing

disabilities instead of teaching people how to live with disabilities in a healthy way.

- Rich asked whether Open Up can provide tactile interpreters. Maryellen answered that they do not currently but would consider providing one if possible.
- Leah underscored Paul's point about the significant problem of healthcare's focus on cures and prescriptions rather than healthy lifestyles and mindfulness training.

#### F. Task Force business (added during meeting)

- Paul acknowledged the letter the Task Force sent to DOMI rejecting their scooter and micromobility programming.
- The Executive Committee also sent a letter of complaint to City Council President Kail-Smith over the City's allocation of funding in the amount of \$335 million from the federal government for the American Rescue Plan.
- Most of this money is budgeted for infrastructure. The CCTFD is asking the City to slow down on spending on any projects not addressing COVID-related problems.
- Rich asked about accessible rideshare businesses. Paul responded that there are some accessible veterans service vehicles but that Uber and Lyft are not required to provide accessible vehicles.
- Mark Schmeler commented that blind and visually impaired users are disadvantaged with these services because drivers are not trained to look for those customers. If a customer can't locate the vehicle, they can be left and unfairly charged.
- Other cities have changed codes to require rideshare companies to include certain accessible provisions. Mark thinks the CCTFD should petition the mayor and City Council to upgrade the code in kind here in Pittsburgh. He added that it's possible that it may be under the Public Utility Commission and not the mayor's purview. John thinks that Philadelphia might have adopted some of these measures, though they are regulated by the Parking Authority.
- John believes that City Council's vote on American Rescue Plan spending happens tomorrow, he wonders whether it might be more useful to reach out to the mayor. Paul believes that the funding allocation came from Mayor Peduto's office.

#### G. Upcoming ADA Events

- Paul wondered whether the CCTFD would be interested in organizing an ADA Anniversary event this week to occur in the afternoon/evening. He would like to reach out to County task forces, advisory boards for briefings on projects they are working on and a discussion on how they might collaborate. Another session could be a public briefing on what the CCTFD has been discussing.
- Caylin offered to reach out to the DHS Advisory Boards if he was interested. Paul thinks it is a good idea for them to collaborate on issues like homelessness.
- Rich asked whether someone could connect him to a lawyer to help him get Comcast to provide interpreters for pay-per-view events. Paul wasn't sure who might be the best group to reach out to for that.
- Leah asked whether they might think about including a session on transportation for children with disabilities to public school programs. Rich recommended

- reaching out to Representative Miller. Hillary recommended that Leah reach out to Tina Calabro.
- Paul asked members to reach out other groups and send Paul their interest and availability for an event next week, currently not scheduled.
  - John added that the annual Richard Meritzer award would be given at the Reel Abilities Film Festival September 8-12. The venue is so far undetermined.
  - There will also be an Oakland Ramp Crawl in Schenley Plaza on 8/20 from 4:00-7:00.
  - Chris asked whether the Task Force was to continue to meet over Zoom, Paul confirmed this.

### Adjournment

John made a motion to adjourn, it was seconded by Rich and the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

*YouTube link with closed captioning:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pE4heNBjBsw>