

# CITY- COUNTY

## Task Force on Disabilities

November 15, 2021

### Task Force Members In Attendance

#### City

Paul O'Hanlon  
Mark Schmeler  
Joe Wassermann

#### County

James "Chris" Noschese, Chair  
Georgia Petropoulos, Cochair  
Sarah Goldstein

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

Paul "Rich" McGann

### Task Force Members Absent

#### City

Leah Northrop, Member at Large  
Janet Evans  
Michelle Walker

#### County

John Tague, Treasurer  
Cori Frazer  
Karen Warman

### Staff Present

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

### Welcome & Introductions

Chris Noschese called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. and welcomed all attendees. Task Force members introduced themselves.

### Agenda

#### A. Minutes approval

- Rich McGann made a motion to approve the minutes from October's meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was seconded by Joe Wassermann and it carried unanimously.

#### B. Petition for a letter of support for the Western PA Disability History and Action Consortium's funding

- Tina Calabro, the Acting Director for the Western PA Disability History and Action Consortium, talked about the organization's goal to be a resource for disability history in the region and gave an overview of their mission and activities.
- She asked whether the CCTFD would be interested in writing a general letter of support for the organization to aid their funding efforts.
- Chris and Paul O'Hanlon abstained from voting as members of the Consortium.
- Rich asked whether the organization is related to Reel Abilities. Tina answered that there is an overlap in membership, but there is no formal relationship.
- Tina mentioned that the group is always looking to expand membership to increase diversity.
- Georgia Petropoulos made a motion to approve a letter from the Task Force. Sarah Goldstein seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.
- Tina offered to send examples of support letters to the CCTFD.
- Tina also reminded the CCTFD about the invitation to participate on the Penn Hills advisory group to the PA Commission on Human Relations.
- Sarah asked whether people can join the meetings by telephone and Tina confirmed that they could.
- Chris asked whether there would be a conflict of interest between those who represent the county generally on the Task Force participating in a Penn Hills-focused advisory board. Tina responded that there shouldn't be a conflict as the advisory board is merely looking to become better informed on general disability rights issues.
- Chris asked what kind of disability demographics they are looking for. Tina said they are looking for all kinds of people.

#### C. Executive Committee meeting report

- Members of the Executive Committee met the previous week. They discussed a range of topics.
  - Response/plan for communications to Eradicate Hate group:
    - Leah Northrop and John Tague would like to speak with Leon Ford, who is a member of the group, about improving accessibility at their events.
    - They would also like to invite Leon to a CCTFD meeting.
  - Extending the reach of the CCTFD as a whole (communications, etc.):
    - The group discussed a range of possibilities for increasing public awareness of the Task Force and their work, including newsletters and social media.
    - Georgia and Hillary offered to help support outreach and engagement.
  - John's proposal to add the previous Chair to the Executive Committee:
    - Members discussed adding the previous Chair of the CCTFD to the Executive Committee.
    - The Task Force would have to approve of this change and reflect it in the guidelines.
    - Chris asked to have this added to the December meeting agenda.
  - Use of Small Differences funds:
    - John recommended that the Task Force use leftover funds from this project to create a follow-up documentary on the subjects from

the previous film. The focus would be on employment for people with disabilities in Allegheny County.

- John suggested having this discussion in December after there has been more discussion about the CCTFD employment project.
- Meeting with Mayor-elect Gainey joint effort with Oakland for All:
  - The groups are interested in live-streaming a conversation between Ed Gainey, Oakland for All, and the Task Force.
  - The groups should try to schedule it as soon as possible, and include Councilperson Strassburger and other representatives.
  - The Task Force should start putting together a list of topics asap.

#### D. Presentation from the Port Authority on the Belasco Station project

- John Binsse from the Pittsburgh Port Authority (PPA) presented plans to make accessibility updates to the Belasco Station on Broadway Avenue in Beechview.
- The station is currently a small island in the roadway.
- Improvements include moving the platform to the inbound side of St. Catherine's church. This will involve removing access to Broadway Avenue from Belasco by car.
- Guard rails and shock absorbers will protect the station and crosswalk from an out-of-control vehicle.
- The platform will have an accessible ramp at both the rear and front.
- Belasco Station will also have a shelter to protect passengers from rain and snow and a bench to rest on.
- PPA has exceeded minimum accessibility criteria by increasing the size of the landing area above the ramp to six feet which accommodates those using larger mobility devices.
- Paul brought up that the design should account for the way foot pedals on a wheelchair may obstruct the footpath when a person is seated near the bench area. John agreed and said that this will be reviewed with the architects. They can make changes around where and how the bench sits in the station.
- Georgia added that the seating area designated for wheelchair users looked to be a bit too close to the stairwell and may present a danger.
- Rich asked whether there were plans to upgrade other stations. John replied that while the Belasco Station is the only station currently being upgraded, they do have plans to improve the other stations in the future.
- Chris brought up that the steps will need something to indicate where they are for people who are blind and use canes. John said that there are tactile strips where the code requires them, but he will double check to be sure there aren't further improvements they can make around the stairs. The City is working with PPA to ensure that all wayfinding improvements for people who are blind and visually-impaired are deployed.
- Chris also brought up snow removal concerns. He wondered if there could be a heating element for people who are unable to see or avoid ice and snow. John said that heated pathways are not an option for this station. PPA's policy dictates that station platforms are a priority for snow removal and there are over 100 folks who do this work in the winter months.
- Joe asked about the kind of detectable warning surface being used. John responded that there would be LED flashing lights and full width tactile strips.

- An attendant asked whether the platform could be longer to accommodate more seating. John said that they maximized the space as much as they could and would not be able to lengthen the seating area further.

#### E. Events and announcements

- Rich had a question about COVID-19 booster shot cards and wondered if there was a smaller card or easier way to make the verification process work.
- Paul raised the issue of nighttime transportation and wondered if there were opportunities to impact upcoming County budgeting decisions around this issue. Chris agreed this was a worthy issue, but added that he prioritizes having 24/7 public transportation services.
- Paul didn't think that insisting on 24/7 service is a reasonable ask for the entire county right now, but emphasized that people need reliable public transportation when they are working at night.
- Joe suggested bringing the issue to ACCESS's attention. Paul replied that he had and their opinion was that it's equally important to emphasize the service benefit even to people without disabilities in order to justify the cost of the service.
- Caylin Snyder offered to reach out to DHS and see if the grant money available could go to evening employment transportation. She mentioned that they have a disability working committee that may be interested in working on this topic with the Task Force.
- Chris mentioned that he will not be at the January and February meetings due to travel plans.

#### Adjournment

Rich made a motion to adjourn, it was seconded by Mark and the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

#### Relevant links and contact information:

- YouTube link with closed captioning: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bHnfLfWMP1g>
- Information on the Penn Hills Advisory Council to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission: <https://www.phrc.pa.gov/EducationandOutreach/Pages/Advisory-Councils.aspx>