

City of Pittsburgh / Allegheny County

Task Force on Disabilities

Monday, October 17, 2016

Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members in Attendance

Paul O'Hanlon, Janet Evans, Jeff Parker, Sarah Goldstein, Joe Wasserman, Karen Warman, James C. Noschese, Milton Henderson, and Rich McGann

Task Force Members Absent

Aurelia Carter and John Tague

Also in Attendance

Richard Meritzer, Georganne Lingenfolter, Alisa Grishman, Ali Abdullah, Dawn Smidga, Kim Mackie, Angela Marcone, Jessie Laset, and Karen Suchy

Welcome and Introduction

The meeting began at 1:00pm with the introduction of Task Force members, followed by the other individuals in the attendance.

Review and Approval of Treasurer's Report and Minutes

There was no Treasurer's report for this month as well as no minutes from the last meeting.

Task Force Informational Videos

Mr. Meritzer shares that the Task Force has been getting money from the City to do informational videos. Before the administration changed, the videos that were being made had an "interview-style". However, when the administration changed, the new director wanted a different look, leading the Task Force to do some new videos with a very different look. The first three have been done, and there is enough money to do three more. Mr. Meritzer moves to show the audience the finished videos.

After the videos have finished being shown to the audience, Mr. Meritzer reiterates that they will be getting a federal grant to do three more videos, and that his team is willing to extend the contract for another three. The videos are located on the web, both on YouTube and on the webpage for the City. Furthermore, they will be working closely, unlike before, with the City channel. He shares that he is very excited about this project because it showcases the work that his office and the Task Force does, and that it is good to show the community the good work that they all do.

Updates on the Police Committee

Mr. Meritzer and Ms. Carter attended the last police committee meeting. Due to Ms. Carter not being present at the meeting, Mr. Meritzer moves to give a brief report. He shares that the meeting discussed additional training and ways to give additional training for officers. There were talks about an app for police cars which allows for interpreting on the spot. This is so that when an issue comes up with someone who is deaf, the police can use the app for initial communication. Mr. Meritzer's team has been getting requests from the police through the Center of Deaf Services to have interpreters come, however, in the heat of the moment, it is hard to get someone to come right away. Furthermore, the team is looking into getting interpretation classes for city employees. They hope to work with the police on getting that accomplished. It is clarified that the interpretation classes would be for sign language.

The conversation shifts to the existing effort from the mental health community to train police officers as well. Mr. Meritzer is asked to relay how the police committee has worked with the mental health community. He responds that the police has been involved with this effort. Furthermore, the committee's reason for focusing on communication issues right now is because they feel that more of the mental health issues affecting the community have to deal with the training pieces that they are working on. They can move ahead with the communication staff while the training pieces are getting together.

One of the members on the committee is the director of the CIT (Crisis Intervention) program for the police. The issue at the moment is to ensure that all new officers get training. Currently, there are officers assigned to each shift and each station who are CIT professionals. The new chief of police is now mandating CIT training for all staff, but it has yet to have begun. It is reassured that all police officers will get CIT training at some point.

Mr. Meritzer addresses the concern of how wide-ranging training can be among branches of police (City, county, Port Authority, etc.) by agreeing to meet with other Task Force members to strategize about how to integrate training for the county police and Port Authority.

ASL Interpreters at Public Events

The conversation begins with a recollection of a recent incident involving a major candidate for vice president who had a public event in which there were no interpreters present. This is an incident that Task Force members and the audience feel happens too often. Furthermore, there is concern that the pushback from the committee regarding the lack of accessibility options such as interpreters will cause the City to just cancel events all together. There are some events where the organizers will not do certain things or bear the costs, and there is the issue with the ACLU where if it is a free speech issue, organizers refuse to do accessibility options because they see it as an impediment of free speech. There are suggestions to perhaps file complaints with the City of Pittsburgh commission on human relations on anything that happens in the city limits that was thought to be discriminatory.

Mr. Meritzer reiterates that if it is a city event, he will provide interpreters. If it is a county event, he assures that Ms. Smidga will deal with that. The same goes for the housing authority as well. If it is an event on city property that is privately sponsored, then under contract, his

team can only provide interpreting if it is in one of their facility locations, or if it is co-sponsored by the city.

Upcoming Employment Event

The upcoming employment event has its date and location set up. It will be in the Valor Room at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial on Monday, November 14th, 2016, from 11:30 to 1:30pm. Lunch will be included. At the event, there is to be a discussion of unemployment for veterans. It will be the first try at making some headway for improving employment for the disabled community that was discussed a month ago. It should be the beginning of what looks like some additional meetings and headway into employment possibilities.

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee; Ms. Warman, Ms. Carter, and Mr. Tague have a call for resumes for potential members ready to go out. It was a combination of requests that were received from 2013. Someone pointed out that they wanted to make sure that the very representative or someone who is a leader of the disabled community as opposed to specifically replacing our call just for a person who was hard of hearing. The committee is in agreement that they keep their options open and make a general call that they are looking for leaders or emerging leaders.

Vox Pop

Ms. Grishman says she remembers a past conversation about an initiative to provide emergency absentee ballots for people who hospitalized the day of the election. She is looking for runners that would take the ballots from hospital to hospital. She asks for anyone who is or knows anyone who would be interested in doing so to contact her.

Ms. Dore motions for a happy birthday for Richard!

Adjournment

The meeting is adjourned at 3:00pm. The next meeting will take place on Monday, December 19th, 2016 at 1:00pm in the first floor Conference Room of 200 Ross Street.