

**City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County**  
**Task Force on Disabilities**  
**June 18th, 2018**  
1:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
**Minutes**

**Task Force Members in Attendance**

John Tague, Karen Warmen, Richard McGann, Milton Henderson

**Task Force Members Absent**

Paul O'Hanlon, James "Chris" Noschese, Joe Wassermann, Janet Evans, Sarah Goldstein, Steve Fowler, Cori Frazier

**Also In Attendance**

Richard Meritzer, Ellen Buanic, Nicole Nagle, Joseph Lehman, Theresa Depace, Dominic Klonicki, Cody Buckholt, Ryan, Tina Colabro

**Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Tague: Most of the items today are staff reporting out on issues. There will be no minutes like there hasn't been for the past several meetings, and there won't be a treasurer's report because our fiscal year ends this month and I have to come up with a new budget and I will comment that the amount of money allocated this year is \$9,000 and we mainly use that for interpretive services or for accessibility.

**Action Items: Review and Approval of the Treasure's Report**

Mr. Tague: I am still working on the budget for this year. I will report at the next meeting.

**Accessible Entrance Business Directory Video Update**

Mr. Meritzer: I was going to play it today but we still haven't gotten the interpreting so I figured I wouldn't. We did finish the first cutoff the accessible directors, Mr. Lehman has been working on it and we finalized the draft so that it is in good order and this week we have started the vetting process so that we can have it ready for distribution by the next meeting. We don't want to put the video on the city webpage or on YouTube until it is ready to be distributed because it says you can come get it. The video includes Mr. Veltri, who worked on it, a gentleman from Manchester who uses a wheelchair, and a person from the business. I have to say that it is a good video and we just got the okay from the city cable director, who said we can finalize it. So hopefully next meeting the Center for Hearing and Deaf Services can interpret and captioned.

Mr. Tague: So what's the deal on this? When are they supposed to do that?

Mr. Meritzer: Now that I got the okay I'll send it to them.

Mr. Tague: The problem is we have no timetable on when this will be available.

Mr. Meritzer: It normally takes them 6 weeks. I think that all things considered we will probably have it for the next meeting.

Mr. Tague: This is about the accessible entrance, no other features, just the entrance right?

Mr. Meritzer: The position I've been taking is that if we get people in wheelchairs in businesses then the owner is much more likely to spend money to make changes to other features to make the business more accessible because they are customers. So my goal is to get as many people into the businesses as I can.

Mr. Tague: That wasn't my criticism, I don't want people to look at something and think that just because their entrance is accessible that the whole business is accessible when it is not.

### **Accessible Traffic Signals Video**

Mr. Meritzer: This video I need help for. This is going to be outside looking at the accessible traffic signals. If everyone isn't up to speed, basically the city agreed to make all traffic signals except for 3 to be accessible to people who are blind and deaf /blind. The 3 that the city isn't are on highway ramps and I don't want people crossing highway ramps. The rest of them we promised the state we would make accessible.

Mr. Tague: So you've identified what signals aren't going to be accessible? What are they?

Mr. Meritzer: Offhand I can only name the ramp from downtown onto the liberty bridge. There is no sidewalk there.

I need some people who would use the accessible traffic signals to be interviewed. We always try to get a community member in the video to talk about why it is important to them. We need people who would be using that so I am putting out a call and asking, so is there anyone we could think of who would be willing to do it? Last time we got someone literally right off the street who happened to be there

willing to do it who was very good. I will send out a request but I figured I'd mention it first. Joe isn't here, Rich is and either of them could do it because what the accessible traffic signal is the one that says 'you may cross this street now' and it also has a vibrating arrow, so Rich would be able to tell when he could cross the street.

Mr. McGann: I just need to know the place.

Mr. Tague: So Rich is volunteering?

Mr. Meritzer: Great, thank you.

Mr. McGann: I know that many deaf/blind people are not able to go out alone if there is too much traffic, sometimes they're able to take an SSP with them, but the important thing is for a deaf/blind person to be able to travel is to be comfortable.

Mr. Meritzer: So the point of the arrows is to give people who are deafblind that comfort because they will know they have the signal to cross, so that is the whole idea because we want you to be an independent person.

### **Wyndham Accessibility Audit Findings**

Mr. Buckholt: It was done on May 31<sup>st</sup>. For the Wyndham Accessibility Audit, Richard, myself, Kristen from Department of Mobility and Infrastructure, and a representative from the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership surveyed the streets around the hotel. We branched out and walked up Penn Avenue and down Liberty Ave, where we found two problems. We found a sidewalk that appeared to not have a ramp, and sandwich boards but that's just a problem all over Pittsburgh, there was also a hole in a sidewalk that would most likely get someone in a wheelchair stuck. The big item that we noticed was market Square, multiple dining areas, planters blocking the way...

The meeting was then interrupted by a fire alarm activation that lasted about 20 minutes.

Mr. Meritzer: Just to say that both Chris and Kristen were contacting all of the businesses who need to make corrections before the symposium.

Mr. Tague: One of the issues is that outside the cafes as people know is that people don't push their chairs in. We looked at market square a number of times and I

hope that they caution the businesses on their sandwich boards. There is no enforcement on that.

Mr. Meritzer: The problem is, as we learned from our last meeting about sandwich boards is that there is no system to permit them yet. So we can't enforce something that hasn't been made legal yet.

Mr. Henderson: You said there was no system for them to not block the way of travel?

Mr. Meritzer: The way the ordinance reads is that if you want a sandwich board you have to get a permit. Unfortunately, there is no system in place to get a permit so you can't cite people for something they can't correct?

Mr. McGann: I know what you were saying with the hole and sandwich boards being an obstruction, so I feel like if we get more people calling 311 about these issues they are going to be more aware.

Mr. Tague: As a task force we need to do something but we don't know exactly what to do yet. Do we need to send a letter or...? I think the issue is that Department of Mobility and Infrastructure needs to resolve this issue and is the Director aware of this issue? If I had the minutes from last month I could tell.

Mr. Meritzer: She did not know that the ordinance existed on sandwich boards. So they haven't done anything to permit them or enforce them because she didn't know the ordinance existed.

Mr. Tague: We need to do a follow up, we should ask the chair to send a follow up letter. We can't vote on anything but the general consensus is that we'll ask Mr. O'Hanlon. Some people think that we are making a bigger issue out of this but the fact is that there is so many of them anymore there are places I've seen that have multiple sandwich boards.

Mr. McGann: So this morning, I was looking on Facebook, this group is called growing up in Mt. Washington, and someone brought up the Pittsburgh trivia and so now Pittsburgh is called 'wheels of government' which is basically how slow everything right now is moving with the government so for example Fort Duquesne Bridge, with no ramp now and it was finished in 1963 but it took until 1969.

Mr. Tague: Any other questions on the Wyndham?

### **Lawrenceville Walkability Survey**

Mr. Tague: The Lawrenceville Walkability survey, who is doing that?

Ms. DePace: Richard and I worked with Lawrenceville United who invited us to do some walkability surveys, so far we've done 3 of them with Taura Mansuno, and we were just looking in populated areas of Lawrenceville trying to find issues with sidewalks and we came across a number of issues regarding things like curb ramps and other items that needed repaired. We noted and photographed things we've seen and divided them up to see what things we can take care of and what he can take care of. We also left a lot of door hangers saying 'can you please repair your sidewalk?' so that they can have a chance to repair it themselves. So we are doing what we can regarding reports that we have in our office.

Mr. Tague: So you have a list of inaccessible places or was it just the sidewalks?

Mr. Meritzer: Just sidewalks.

Mr. Tague: Did you note any curb ramps in disrepair?

Mr. Meritzer: Yes.

Mr. Tague: The gentleman from Lawrenceville United, what is he going to be able to take care of?

Ms. DePace: So they have issues that have to do with...

Mr. Meritzer: If I may, basically Mr. Mansuno was appalled to find out that the city could cite people whose sidewalks are in disrepair because it is an internal political thing in Lawrenceville. They don't want to make any neighbors angry so we decided that we would deal with more of the business areas and they would focus on all the residential areas and they would hand out the hangars and not have them on our list so that they wouldn't get cited.

Mr. Tague: You're talking about homeowners not being cited and they would try to get them to fix it first and then them get cited?

Mr. Meritzer: We're trying to set up some consortiums for sidewalk repair, and that is the next step.

Mr. Tague: That's a funding mechanism?

Mr. Meritzer: Well it's a cost mechanism. What it is that you set up a consortium then you can get more sidewalks repaired for less cost, and you can split the cost.

Mr. Tague: You're talking about with a contractor or something? If you remember last time Director Ricks was talking about possible the city taking over responsibility for sidewalks, but I'm not sure if it is state law or city code that doesn't allow it.

Mr. Meritzer: It's city code. What's going on right now is that there is discussions on state level is for municipalities to be responsible for sidewalks, but they have to look at both cost and liability. So if the city is responsible for the sidewalk and someone falls on the sidewalk, then they can sue the city. So they are in negotiation right now as to how to do it to protect both the residents and the cities moving forwards.

Mr. Tague: Is it a legislative thing?

Mr. Meritzer: I'm not sure. Mr. Klonicki do we know if it is legislative or policy?

Mr. Klonicki: I'm not really sure on whether or not it is a legislation or a policy,

Mr. Meritzer: We'll have to find out. Like I said I have not been involved in those discussions at all.

Mr. Tague: I think we should make that as big a priority as possible; and again you're correct the city doesn't want to take up that liability and the additional cost, but I think it is an interesting thing because the city own a lot of sidewalk already. So I've always thought that this was a good idea, and it doesn't matter what neighborhood you're in there will be some really great sidewalks intermingled with some really bad sidewalks. Anyways, so is there any other questions about Lawrenceville?

Ms. Warmen: Are you doing this for just Lawrenceville or can you do it for other neighborhoods?

Mr. Meritzer: Right now one of our neighborhood planners is doing a sidewalk audit of Manchester which we're helping with. So we are doing more sidewalk audits, the problem is we just don't have enough time.

Mr. Tague: Or person power.

Mr. Meritzer: Oh we have person power we just need the time. We're getting 5 high school students next week.

Mr. Tague: Okay great, Karen anything additional?

Ms. Warmen: I was on a group that did a walkability about Beechview. We did one of the trolley stops, I'll have to give you more details later.

Mr. Meritzer: Please do.

Mr. Tague: Well there was somebody from the city working on that that did come to our task force meeting.

Mr. Meritzer: It was Mr. Palomo 3 meetings ago.

Mr. Tague: Can we get an update from where they stand now with that project. Who was the woman who set that up?

Ms. Warmen: I think they were here at the meeting a month ago.

Mr. Tague: Thank you Ms. Warmen, Richard McGann?

Mr. McGann: Just to clarify with Ms. Warmen, she mentioned different areas like Mt. Washington, the North Side, Brookline, a lot of these areas out there that also need this as time goes on, so I think we are all being patient waiting for this to move along. For example a place like Dormont and an area there where it connects with the city by Beechview those are some areas where we're not sure who is responsible. I know that the actual repair and maintenance is done half by the city and half by Dormont so that is something we need to work on. I think the county needs to decide and some of the surrounding areas need to as well.

Mr. Tague: Are you talking about areas like where Beechview meets Dormont and where Brookline meets Dormont are you talking about those areas?

Mr. McGann: Thanks.

Mr. Tague: Is there any other conversation about Lawrenceville walkability or other locations of walkability?

### **Membership**

Mr. Tague: Next on the agenda is what I'd like to do before we go to Vox Pop is talk about membership a little bit. One of the things that we've had difficulty is that we've had members to replace. We have one on the city and one on the county side. What we did was we set up a membership committee which I chair and we've had a meeting with the city folks and the county folks and the agreement that we came to was we would submit two names if we need one candidate and only three names if we needed two candidates. We have one person, Alyssa Grissman who's already been approved by the task force and is going to be nominated to the city but we have two other nominees that could go either way because they both live in the county but work in the city. The terms we came to was that as long as they live in the county they could be a city appointment. Just want to make sure that is correct. And Mr. Henderson, you've sent in your resume so you're all good the other thing we need to talk about membership attendance. To be on the task force you must attend the meetings, and I'm going to talk to Mr. O'Hanlon about that particular issue. Like I said there are only 11 of us so we don't have a full compliment. So anyways I've asked Mr. Meritzer to send a notice this time a separate notice seeking additional members. If you know any persons who may be interested in the task force please send those ideas onto Mr. Meritzer. What I'm going to try to do is have the committee of Karen Warmen, Steve Fowler, Jan Evans, and myself, get the general sense I have now is that the people we have we all know fairly well so we will be conducting interviews but I would like us to send out another notice to get more people to interview. With Alyssa Grissman, this has gone on longer than 8 months where she has been approved of by this body but it hasn't gone anywhere else. I think we need to tighten up so we don't get a larger turnaround rate and there were a lot of discussions and we could have sent Ms. Grissman up based on the agreement we have with the city and the county we have to send up two candidates. Is there anything you would like to add Mr. Meritzer?

Mr. Meritzer: No I think you've said it all John.

Mr. Tague: Before we move into Vox Pop is there any other comments from task force members?

## **Vox Pop**

Mr. Tague: Let's move into Vox Pop which give people in the audience an opportunity to ask questions, not like they aren't allowed the whole time though, so anyone?

Mr. Henderson: At our last meeting Mr. Gibson talked about the ADA Celebration has he updated us on it?

Mr. Tague: I haven't heard anything about it but last year the task force did contribute but that will come out of next year's budget. What I'll do is I'll send a follow up email about the ramp crawl and the celebration but I'm not sure how they're finding interpreters. I know the city does but I'm not sure about the county having money for interpreters. So since we have no additional comments I propose a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Warmen: I second.

## **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:12 and will stand at adjournment until the next meeting on July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018.