

City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County  
Task Force on Disability  
Monday June 15, 2015  
Meeting Minutes

**Members in Attendance:** Paul O'Hanlon , Co-chair, Joe Wasserman Karen Warman, Janet Evans, Rich McGann, Aurelia Carter-Scott, Jeff Parker, John Tauge

**Task Force Members Absent:**

**Also in Attendance:** Joy Dore, Dean Englehop, Paula Kellerman, Aleisa Grishman, Amanda Nedjahour, Isabela Ortiz, Jesse Lieberfeld, John Lachino, Mike Schwartwalder, Chris Myer, Nick Carolack, Brendon Trailey, Julia Wallace, Joyce Griben, Anne Mulgrave

**Welcome**

**Action Items:**

**Review and Approval of Treasurer Reports:**

Mr. Tague: No report this month. There will be final report in July; or not.

And a couple points, It looks like that we have one of the outstanding bill; a payment for the banner which will be across the Sixth Street Bridge for the ADA celebration, which is something we agreed to do. And with that, the Task Force money for the year probably will be spent. There might be some change left, but I don't think much. And the other thing is, I don't know what our budget is for next year because I haven't received any figures. My understanding it'll be about the same, plus there was \$1,000 allotted for Judy Baricella's cell phone, and that's no longer there. So I'm anticipating that we will have more money than we had last year. So it's something, Mr. Chair that we need to talk about. About what we do next year and whether there's some more ADA celebration stuff we're working on. But that's essentially the treasurer's report. So there's no written report, but monthly meeting in July I'll have a final report.

One of the things across the Roberto Clemente Bridge the first two weeks of July there'll be a banner proclaiming ADA 25th anniversary. The anniversary of the ADA. So that'll be there for two weeks. We would have liked it longer, but there's already someone behind us.

Ms. Warman: I do know one thing. The clubhouse is doing a big banner thing, too, as well and they're going to have where people can tell how mental illness has affected you and sign it. And if she gets them in time, she'll give them bracelets that she's trying to get for whoever signs the poster, paper, or whatever.

Ms. Dore: For the benefit of the general audience do you know the dates of the ADA celebration and how they're going to play out? Like what type of events.

Mr. Meritzer: Joy, this is Richard. We have a calendar of ongoing events. There's stuff happening all year. We have a calendar on the city ADA web page under the City/County Task Force, which you can also have been able to access through the City's main web page. I'll check if it's still

there. If the link is still there, you can access at the front of the City web page. But there's an ongoing calendar and as we found out more things coming, we will add stuff. At this point I don't think there's anything specifically planned for the day of the anniversary here. There is a big celebration in Westmoreland, which I will be going to, in Greensburg. But here we haven't planned anything for the day specifically, but there is stuff going on.

Mr. Tague: It's an ongoing thing. Basically it's going to go on into next year, are the plans. So it's not -- in other words, it's going to be, to some extent, memorialized. So we're going to continue to do that. The Port Authority, for example, has four fully wrapped buses which have Jeff Parker's picture on it. I had to point that out in case you didn't recognize Jeff. And inside the car there's going to be the same thing, except there's going to be brief stories of the folks. And I think there were six folks, Jeff?

Six folks representing the senior community also and people with disabilities. So it -- we were down at the Art Festival last -- yesterday and they have one of the wrap buses there, and we were trying to get people to go in and see what an accessible bus looks like. It's ongoing, Joy

Ms. Dore: Thank you for your feedback. I had a question. I was also there yesterday and that wrapped bus it wasn't highly visible from the front entrance when you're coming into the Point. So it's good they were performing, a public service, the ADA information. Have they thought about having maybe more visibility? It was buried all the way at the back of the Point and I asked the information desk and they didn't know about it. I had to track down a police officer. And people were having trouble finding it. They didn't know anything about it. So is it possible to look into, for the future, more visibility?

Mr. Meritzer: I'll certainly mention that at the next meeting. My understanding, and, John, you can correct me if I'm wrong, these are regular functional buses that will be driving around the City. So they will be out. And so, I think that we will see more and more of those. But I will certainly mention there were concerns about where the bus was placed at the arts festival. It's supposed to be placed in two more events; one is a concert, I can't remember the third one. But there'll be two more events and we'll try to get them as out front as possible.

Ms. Carter-Scott: I had a question around the upcoming events. And there was a sheet that listed some of them so far; I just wanted to know at these particular meetings, because everybody doesn't have computer access, if we would be able to have copies of the actual written pieces of the events going on so we can share them with people here that attend these meetings.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Yeah. The 20th because the anniversary is later that week. Hopefully there'll be more things scheduled in the next month. Any other questions on the treasury report or upcoming activities? It sort of morphed into that.

### **Proposed Bike Lanes and Bus Rapid Transit in Oakland:**

Mr. O'Hanlon: Let's move to the next discussion on proposed bike lanes and bus rapid transit in Oakland.

Mr. Parker: I asked Richard to put this on the agenda kind of as a teaser for a future meeting as well. But in the past month of May and a little bit in June, there have been BRT, bus rapid transit, and bike share bikeway public meetings. And what I've noticed at both of them is that it's not at the top of their agenda, the ideas of accessibility. And I've had a chance to comment on both of them, but I wanted to

bring to the attention of the Task Force is that, for example, with the bike share bikeway meetings -- and the bike share you may have noticed these bike racks located throughout Pittsburgh. There's about 50 of them, 10 of them are in Oakland. And it's mutual sponsored by some corporations and by the City where people can rent a bicycle and ride it to another destination.

But along with the City promoting or helping to explain what the bike share project is, they also talked about bike lanes to be put in. And from my particular residency in Oakland, there are a lot of changes coming up in Oakland. There's bike lanes proposed for Ellsworth Avenue and Bayard and Boulevard of the Allies. Right now, along with the proposals, it hasn't really been thought about what the consequences will be for access. And I mean access with the capital letters and access with the small letters.

So wherever a bike lane exists, there's the potential that our Access Para-transit transportation will not be able to stop at a destination along the bike lane. And there are different determinations of bike lanes. There could be protected ones; those are the ones that have the poles protecting it. There's shared lanes; shared with traffic. At this time it really hasn't been determined how this is going to affect -- especially affect Oakland. So through the mutual work of -- you met some of the executives of these organizations, the Oakland Transportation Management Association, Mavis was here a couple meetings ago, and the Oakland Improvement District, Georgia was here. They're working with the city to bring access to the table. That's access Para-transit, to make sure we haven't shot ourselves in the foot as far as accessibility goes in Oakland and in Pittsburgh.

And I got a very nice response -- I wrote to the City person working on the bike project, very nice response because I had requested that they look at community accessibility as an important criteria. But I also requested that their next moves along the way they include Mr. Meritzer so he has a chance to look for where curb cuts and curb ramps would be affected and where parking spaces would be affected. That they include our City/County Task Force and a chance to look for other potential gaps that I could be missing because I've just been attending as a member of the public. And she seemed very agreeable and Mr. Meritzer thought there were some possibilities of drawing some of these people into a meeting.

Now, the other side -- that's just the bike lane. But interestingly enough, the bus rapid transit project involves bike lanes as well. In the proposals that I saw presented, there's a series of alternatives. The two top alternatives are to run the lanes for the bus rapid transit going in -- one alternative is going in either direction, both directions on Fifth Avenue, and if the BRT lanes run on Fifth Avenue, then the plan is to put a bike lane on Forbes Avenue. The second alternative is to have one BRT on Fifth, one BRT on Forbes, and to put the bike lane on Forbes as well.

What happens with both of these alternatives, if you look at the Fifth Avenue Corridor, whether it's BRT lanes or bike lanes, potentially all along the corridor from Oakland to downtown access will be restricted for drop offs or pickups. It hasn't been considered at this point. Then you have the potential for one side of Forbes Avenue, whether it's a bike lane or bus lane. So I had written in comments to the City also pointing that situation out. I haven't heard back from the city about that. But on top of it, as they present these items at the meetings -- a lot of things are still in flux. For instance, there are potential stations for the BRT, but they'll explain at the meetings that the stations -- it's not been determined exactly where the stations are going to be. So that's still something for us to have input on along the way about what it's going to do, what it's going to affect. But I've written that the location of the stations,

whether the BRTs are going to replace certain or maybe end a certain bus route in Oakland and people will have to transfer, that could be a consideration, it could be a hardship.

Removing bus stops could be a hardship. And there are a lot of potential problems that haven't been put to the forefront yet. I know Mr. Meritzer was picking up on what I was saying and we're trying to arrange to bring some people here to the next meeting. But it's also going to be very important for all of us to look for any opportunities to have input in this along the way. Because I'm just seeing that the concept of accessibility is not at the top of the agenda in the projects going on.

Mr. O'Hanlon: And just to, I think, say in one sentence what Jeff was talking about, both the bus rapid transit and the bike lanes create a competition for the curb. And whether it's the right-hand curb that's completely off because it's a protected bike lane or in some cases both sides could be off. How does an Access vehicle drop somebody off in that stretch? It becomes I think a real dilemma. And my starting point is sort of a commitment that it works for everybody. My concern is that if they don't get people to the table soon with some smarts about Para transits and it's needs, it isn't going to work for everybody. So I'm a little bit shocked that we're this far along and they haven't grappled with the issues. So I'm a little concerned.

Mr. Meritzer: I do know for a fact that there's a meeting planned this week with our Bike coordinator, Christine, and with Access, to discuss the whole bike lane issue. So I know Jeff's input has been heard, and how far that gets is always something to watch. But definitely that is in the works. That she's meeting with Karen.

Mr. Parker: So that's going to be a help on the bike project and it's interesting, John, you have to help us with this, too. That right now the BRT and Access are both elements of the Port Authority, but they're not quite interfacing yet. And that's going to be really important for the BRT project to look at. Can there be exceptions for Access, what can happen along the corridors depending on what the alternative is chosen.

Mr. Tague: Just a comment. I agree, so I guess part of the conversation is what expectations you would have of me, how I could assist in the – because it's about all of us, not just about you and me, Jeff. It's about all of us. How that's going to affect it. I know that the environmental impact studies not been done yet. I know the partial design has not been done. So there might be people that know things that just haven't talked about it. There's talk about just using elements of the BRT as opposed to full BRT. So there's a lot of discussion. But I think the point you're making, and I agree, we have to be at the table. I think its good Access is meeting, but remember Access is a subcontract of the Port Authority. So it would be good if somebody from the Port Authority was there with them. One thing I'll also emphasize, what's driving this is the County Executive and Mayor, not the Port Authority. So we have to keep this in mind. This is where they want to go. So we have to make sure we engage them also in this process, the Mayor and the County Executive.

Ms. Dore: I think it goes one step further than hoping they're developing in Hazelwood or they want to extend the BRT to in what used to be the old steel mills and talking about expanding out there. They need to look at traffic, check the studies and see if it's going to be difficult for a person with a wheelchair or anyone else to cross the street with all these extra lanes traffic. That could be a consideration, too. Thank you.

Mr. O'Hanlon: One thing I just want to say, because I think that the whole issue of this kind of composition for the curb lane is a really important one and not a simple one either. It is that -- it's complicated further by the fact that the plans for BRT are so up in the air. You know, what -- we don't even know if it's going to happen, and at the moment, we don't even know what it would look like in terms of what we would propose. So there's a lot that's still up in the air. But what I want to say is, I'm not sure there's been a lot of talk about the fact that with respect to BRT, there are other accessibility concerns besides the curb lane. Which is that if you're coming from the East End of Pittsburgh, there's still a strong possibility you're going to have to transfer in Oakland to get downtown. And they are absolutely incapable of promising anybody at this stage of the game that you're not going to have to transfer. Even worse, they're almost guaranteeing that somebody is going to have to transfer. And they're not saying who. And the problem is it's not entirely up to the Port Authority, as John said. So there's a lot that's really up in the air about BRT, and if you think it's going to be a simple kind of add-on to our transit system, it could fundamentally alter our transit system where Oakland becomes a transfer point for lots of people because we have to justify using the BRT. It's kind of a -- the same thing as the competition for the bike lane. If you add more routes between Oakland and downtown, they're just not going to pay for themselves given that there's already excess capacity in the existing routes that go from Oakland to Downtown. So there's something that's not going to give, and I'm afraid it's consumer and customer convenience that's going to give. So I'm encouraging everybody to be involved in this BRT process, be vigilant there's a lot that can go on.

Ms. Evans: Also -- this is Janet. You have to educate the bike riders. You really do because they'll run into you and they won't stop a lot of times. An example is around Phipp's Conservatory. If you're not watching them and they're not watching you, they will run into you. So they have to be educated.

Ms. Warman: Yeah. I went to a meeting that the Port Authority did have and they was talking about the bus rapid system as well. And they were showing different spots where stations could locate.

Mr. O'Hanlon: There are a lot of different variations they were considering.

Ms. Warman: Some of them looked like they were too close to each other, and some of them are not spaced out. Some are spaced out too far from, you know, they -- you got some that are like in the single -- that are like there's nothing around them. So, I mean, I don't know if they want to keep on doing that, in that format or what.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I think they're going to be starting the process of narrowing down those options to one or two at the most.

Mr. Tague: First of all, the environmental impact study needs to be done. And the other thing of it is, it's a 30 percent design. So when they get to that stage, you're right, there'll be a decision made on what route. At that stage a decision has always been made to one routing. But we need to be involved in it earlier on. And it's not that we're excluded from meetings, because we're not, it's just that -- Jeff's voice being heard is great. And we have to do more of that, Paul.

Mr. McGann: Thank you. The problem is that people are starting to understand a little bit better about Access. That means that a lot more people are using the bus -- a lot more people are not using the bus and people riding Access is increasing. So bus is going down, Access is going up.

Ms. Dore: I'm just making an observation. One of the groups in Pittsburgh that knows a lot about bicycle policy, they're called Bike Pittsburgh. I'm wondering if anybody thought about inviting them to a meeting so we may be able to ask some questions about this, because they're one of the people behind advocating for bike lanes. And my other question is you mention -- piggyback on what she said about safety and enforcement. I know, to be fair, Bike Pittsburgh does a lot of advocacy in telling bicyclists to be safe. What proposals they have putting forward. Have you ever thought about bringing them to a meeting so you can ask questions?

Ms. Carter-Scott: My comment was just around BRT, and talking in terms of being involved before all final decisions are made. Would it be good to have someone come and do sort of a -- Karen, you said you went to a meeting, but would it be -- I guess, having somebody to come and talk more with us, in general, and having the public, as we have the public now here, to be able to get more in depth information.

Mr. Meritzer: Actually, I invited Pat Roberts, who's involved in this, to our next meeting and he gave me a tentative yes.

Ms. Carter-Scott: We think it's important, and again, when we think about advising City and County government, I think we're in a tentative -- if he can't come if somebody else --

Mr. Meritzer: I think it's a matter of firming it up on his schedule. He said he had no problem coming to the next meeting, he planned on it, but I still have to double check to make sure it's on his calendar. I had not thought about inviting Kristin or Bike Pittsburgh, but I can do that

Mr. Parker: Kristin, she responded to me --she's the one presenting the bike share (bike-ped coordinator)

Ms. Carter-Scott: Just to finish up on my comment. I said all that to say I feel like at times as things are going on we are oftentimes not included until the last minute. Really the disability community and -- I think we have to keep vigilant in ensuring that, before processes move along, we are at the table. I think we're starting to get lost as a community is what I'm saying.

Mr. O'Hanlon: It's a difficult process. I've never been part of a process where the players have felt more on out of control about what's really going on, through the BRT process. Richard.

Mr. McGann: Thank you. Also the problem with the bus is the numbers keep changing. And I don't -- you never know what the bus numbers are going to change to, it's 41A, 41B and 41C. It's been the same for so many years and then it started to change. That's another issue. I think we've gotten lost with people what the new bus numbers are. And some of the routes are so far away, the schedules are different, the times that they arrive are not on time. There are no stops at nighttime, so you can get stuck really easily.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I want to try to keep this to the BRT and bus and bike lane discussion because it could get too big. But any -- so from what I understand then, we're working on a future meeting where we can pull some of these players in and try to make sure that the process includes us.

### **Presentation on Visitability Tax Credit Report**

Mr. O'Hanlon: Let's move on to the presentation on the Visitability Tax Credit Report.

Mr. Meritzer: Yes. Thank you. As you know, the Task Force was instrumental in getting the Visitability Tax Credit passed and has since been instrumental in the visitability marketing community, which is promoting visitability. I have not been as proficient making reports to council, which is supposed to be three times a year. Yeah, three times a year. And it's one of the functions that I have been lax on. When we were audited, that's one of the two things they found that I did wrong. And it's just one of those things where there are all sorts of other things I could be doing better. However, we were blessed to have an accounting student, be it a high school accounting student, come to us this term Malachi, who, actually, has took on the job of doing what is essentially an audit of the program, which is what I sent out to the back table. And Malachi do you want to get up and say what you do, what you did. How you got to this.

Mr. Davis: Well, I was asked to write the report. So I gathered the necessary information and I -- from the board and I set up a meeting with the visitability tax credit unit, and there were revisions upon the report I made and the changes to it.

Mr. Meritzer: He says, yes. He's in the desk right next to mine. So anyway, this is the report. As Malachi says, after the visitability unit there were some changes made. There are still a couple changes that need to be, a couple typos that I missed, and we do expect to add a few pictures, but basically the verbiage should remain the same. Unless there's comments from this group. From here what we do is I set up a meeting with the director -- when is that meeting? Do you remember?

Mr. Davis: July 4<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Meritzer: It's not July 4th. That's a holiday. Probably July 8th. And decide how we are going to deliver this to City Council. So hopefully by that point the report will be finalized. And as you can see, what it says is there hasn't been much progress and the progress was early in the program. And it's sort of petered out. So one of the things that the visitability community says they would like a little more publicity around the report. So that's one thing I'm going to recommend to the director.

>>SPEAKER>> Where's this meeting?

Mr. Meritzer: No. This is just me, the director, and Malachi. This is to decide how we are going to deliver the report to Council. Simply administrative. This is not a public meeting. But hopefully by that point we will have the finalized report. So if there are any suggestions people have about making it better, please let us know.

Mr. O'Hanlon: One thing that you might want to discuss with the director is if there's no public thing at all, then my sense is that one of us is probably going to have to create a public opportunity to raise the issue with Council. Because I think that, for lots of reasons, including the fact that when we went through the process of advocating for the passage of this, we started off with a very different approach. A mandatory approach, which we ended up bargaining away for an incentive approach to get it passed. But at the time we said, if this doesn't work, we're going to be back. Because we're on the verge right now of building whole new neighborhoods. And if we build whole new neighborhoods, they'll look like the old neighborhoods where every house and every entrance to every house has steps in it, because that's just what we do, then there's going to be a problem. So if you guys don't create a public opportunity with Council, one of us are going to have to.

Mr. Meritzer: Of course, there are always two opportunities to create public activity around Council. The first is, I expect since we will be setting it up, I will know when it's going to hit Council. And if they're just going to read and file, which is what they often do with correspondence, there is a time -- this'll probably be at the Tuesday regular meeting, as opposed to the Wednesday committee meeting. At both meetings there's a public discussion air time where people can come and speak on business, and also any council member, I believe, can request a hearing on any topic before Council of relevance or any 15 citizens can request one. So either way they can request that there be a hearing. So like I say, at this point I will suggest to the director that this be delivered in such a way that there be some public discussion, but if there's not, there's opportunity for the Task Force to either present themselves or to contact a council member or petition council.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Mostly I would just want to make sure that he was aware that -- I mean, director should feel free to plan however he wants to present it to Council. But if he has any concern about what our public comment will be and being a party to that or being present or having an opportunity to speak at that point, he might want to decide how he wants to do it.

Mr. Meritzer: And I think, based on past discussions with the director about similar issues, he's very supportive about having the community's voice be heard. So I don't think that's going to be an issue.

Mr. McGann: Thank you. Now a few months ago you had sent out an e-mail talking about setting up this new sidewalks, and I was a little confused on which one, is it downtown or what is -- what's going on with that? Which one is it? The Council seems to be going a little bit off topic with this. I'm wondering what the goal is.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Okay. What's the question? It's going to be an overall design for the entire city, every street.

Mr. McGann: All right.

MR. O'HANLON: Essentially it's a new design that they will attempt to --

Mr. Meritzer: No. The difference, Rich, is that complete streets is something dealing with the public right of way. Visitability is something dealing with individual houses. So that's a different issue. And the whole complete streets things is technically new guidelines for any new development. And, as a matter of fact, I'm working with PennDOT and Public Works on East Carson Street and we're looking at redesign based on complete streets. So that's being implemented, basically, street segment by street segment as reconstruction happens. But, no, this is completely different. This happens to be individual homeowners who are making their houses more visitable as opposed to accessible; it's somewhat lesser accommodation. More visitability so people can visit them who have mobility issues. And it's designed to -- like a lot of what my office is doing right now, designed to be more of a carrot and less of a stick.

Mr. Nochese: It seems like those in charge, like in city planning, are clueless about what's going on in the future in regards to accessibility. This should be accessibility for everybody no matter what their disability is. Like, for example, the electric cars, they need a plug to plug them into, but the buildings here have no plugs. So in the future they need to be planning for the future. Like 20 years from now. So just a question in regards to building new places and making places accessible. Are they going to be thinking about not only accessibility for the future, but also things like the electric cars. So my question is, when they're making these city plans, are they focusing on people with disabilities or are they

focusing on all people whether they have an ability or not, what's going coming down the pike for the future?

Mr. O'Hanlon: If I could add a different wrinkle to that question, because I have a similar question. Knowing that we're on the verge of building whole new neighborhoods in the Lower Hills, probably a whole new neighborhood in uptown, certainly a whole new neighborhood in Hazelwood, and given what we know already about kind of like wiring neighborhoods to make them more accessible for people who are blind or for way finding purposes, have we started to look at all about what we would potentially incorporate into the design features of these neighborhoods to make them more accessible?

Mr. Meritzer: I can honestly say that we have not.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Okay. Because that's the other concern I have. Knowing that this is a train that's moving, we better get on quickly or it's going to be moving too fast. And it's sort of -- I mean, I think we already have the technological know-how to have a sense of what we're on the verge of. The people at CMU and Pitt, I think we should really be looking at is there an opportunity we shouldn't miss when designing these neighborhoods really for accessibility. And when I say "accessibility," I don't mean curb cuts. I mean what's going to keep seniors living in their neighborhood instead of moving into a nursing home, knowing that it's something nobody wants for themselves and society we couldn't afford it. So if we can afford anything, we can afford to make the neighborhood more accessible for everybody. So I think it's a real opportunity in need that we should not squander. Okay. Yes.

Ms. Evans: The Almono project, we have been going to almost every meeting and every meeting we do talk about accessibility. You know, just the regular ones, but now you're putting a new kink into it.

Mr. O'Hanlon: That's the Allegheny Monongahela. That's what they're calling the new Hazelwood development area.

Ms. Evans: And right now they just got money for the infrastructure. They should be working on that now. But as far as accessibility, since you brought nursing homes or all homes should be accessible to everyone, that might be a little hard, but we're in the process of designing and stuff like that. And they want to know all about this. So maybe I'll bring it up at their next meeting. Write to them on their e-mail.

Mr. Henderson: I'm glad you guys have brought this topic up, because the developers are putting the wiring packages in these new complexes to be done. Where the hardship comes in at is nobody's speaking up and saying this is what we need before the fact. When you move into these units, they put it onto the management companies to step in and make it accommodated. And that should not be. This should be dealt with at the beginning stages of development. The wiring packages are in there, they're in there because I know they are. What's happening is that it's not being talked about and the buck is being passed to the owner of the complexes, opposed to those things already being there for the persons with vision impairments and people deaf and hard of hearing. That should be there. These are things being passed, again, to the owners of the buildings because they're saying, well, if you don't ask for it, we're not going to do it. It shouldn't be like that. It should already be there already. Because I'm telling you, I know for a fact the wiring package is already in these new units.

Ms. Dore: I happen to live in Hazelwood and so does another person in this room and I've been to some meetings and it's been in the paper they're starting construction on that this summer. The same goes for

other areas, the Lower Hills he talked about, places in Laramer, East Liberty, all over the South Side. And I have spoken up, but I would like to see more people speaking up about disability accessibility. In terms of what Chris said about the electric cars, there is one CMU-owned free electrical plug you can recharge the cars, but it would be nice to see more of them. Somebody at CMU has been studying that, they haven't suggested it, but they're going to talk more about accessibility. Thanks for your time.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I think this was not an issue we talked about bringing to City Council. I think this might be an issue we bring people here.

Ms. Grishman: We were saying this is just -- because we were saying something about bringing the issue to City Council either way, I'm currently part of a group of people who are creating a disability day of advocacy in front of City Council. I have a meeting with Dan Gilman next week about it. This is going to happen probably late August -- between late August and early September, no firm date set yet. But we're looking for people to bring topics up outside of -- you know, we're already talking about condition of sidewalks in residential areas, the lack of maintenance of cut corners, because residential areas are not looked at at all. So if anyone wants to come to me afterwards, we have the groundwork already set for bringing a lot of these issues to City Council at a public meeting and then requesting a hearing later.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Now, I'm a little bit worried about the time. So I think we need to limit any other comments to the visitability tax credit report because I think it's time to move on. We can raise other issues later. Richard.

Mr. McGann: The problem about how to work out with Pittsburgh and other communities -- yeah. Now Mount Lebanon area of Pittsburgh -- I mean south Pittsburgh, they have pay for the new sidewalks and the curb cuts and things like that, and then that's for Mount Lebanon and then you have to figure out how to get the new sidewalks to go from Pittsburgh all the way into Mount Lebanon, you have to get cooperation between all the communities as well. Because even though you may have new sidewalks here, then we have to get support through each community because they're going to be like no, no, no, I don't need that. Other neighbors will meet up with them, and they have you have problems with wheelchair access and they only get so far then you're stuck in the other area.

Mr. O'Hanlon: That's a different issue. I'm going to have to move on. Because that's a different issue that Richard is bringing up. So let me -- I apologize, but it's -- we're behind schedule.

### **Disability Agenda 2000 Retrospective: Arts and Culture**

Mr. O'Hanlon: I want to get to the Disability Agenda 2000 Retrospective. So for those of you who have been to our previous meetings this year, you've heard this before. If you haven't, what we're doing is, we've looked for a way that we could celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ADA and show, well, what difference has it made. And one of the things we did as a Task Force 15 years ago to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the ADA was to sponsor a process in Pittsburgh that we called Disability Agenda 2000. And Disability Agenda 2000 looked at all the various sectors of our -- we call them sectors of our community, things like culture and the arts, things like primary and secondary education, things like housing accessibility and design, things like neighborhoods and communities. We had a large number of sectors, each of which were chaired -- co-chaired. One by a disability advocate -- a person with a disability who's an advocate in that sector and the other was a mover and shaker in that sector. And they co-chaired -- each sector had those two as co-chairs and multiple -- in some cases hundreds of

people participated in the meetings of those sectors. I think the meeting was community sectors. And that came up with a series of recommendations about what our agenda should be for, you know, 2000 and beyond. So this year what we decided to do is pull out that stack of recommendations and look at, what have we done in the last 15 years. What progress have we made. So that we can sort of celebrate the progress and also, when we haven't really made much progress, so identify where we need to move further and make -- make -- you know, make progress where we haven't. So along those lines we put together this session to look at the culture in the arts sector, and who we have are two guest speakers, Joyce Driben and Ann Mulgrave. I know Joyce was involved in the original process. Were you, Ann?

Ms. Evans: I'm the moderator. All right, I got involved in '07 with the Arts Fest people. What I did was I went to the Art Festival in '07 and took hundreds of pictures of what wasn't accessible. And most of it wasn't because they didn't have the electrical ramp coverings because nobody could get around. Also, it was super crowded and many people who had disabilities had a hard time getting around; especially in motor chairs or wheelchairs. And also they couldn't get to the food vendors. So what I did was took a whole bunch of pictures and went to Richard and gave him the CD, and he goes, let's go to the director of the Art Festival and present your ideas. So they looked over the CD, ahead of time, and the next thing I know they started making changes; starting in '08 and in '09 and in '10. And what happened was, they spread out the Art Festival to where it's all over Gateway Center, all over down where the fountain is, and they put more coverings over the electric. So to me that was the biggest change. And many people who use -- push baby carriages, they're happy; the mothers and the fathers. And people with disabilities, when I explain what I did, basically in '09 and 2010, they were really happy. But I know that there's -- some improvements are ready to be made. But here I want to turn it over to Joyce Driven.

Ms. Driben: Can people hear me okay? 'Cause I discovered sitting in the back of the room I was having trouble hearing speakers up here. So if you can't hear, raise your hand and Ann Mulgrave here will tap me because I, obviously, won't see your hands up here. No hands, good. I got involved in a different kind of accessibility issue and I did a little bit early on, but one of my passions has been audio descriptions for events.

And it really started back in about 2002. I started going to the opera -- or I tried going to the opera with a sighted friend. And after two performances I basically said to her, I won't go and you can't make me. Which is an old TV commercial. She said, why? I said, I can't follow it. I don't know Italian or French, my knowledge of Spanish is very limited, my knowledge of German is almost none existent, except for my Yiddish background. I can't follow the operas. We started meeting with people at the Pittsburgh Opera, and Marilyn Egan is still very, very involved with this. They began to create a program for audio description.

So there is somebody now doing one performance at each opera who reads the titles, who describes the set and the costumes and the staging, and we can hear this through an infrared system. It works quite nicely at the Benedum. We also have braille and large print programs for those of us who can't read print programs. And I don't know how many of you thought about going to a performance where you can't follow the action, you can't read the program, you have no idea what's going on, but it's a very frustrating thing.

So now the opera is doing this, City Theatre does it and does it quite well. Again, with braille programs and they provide a sensory seminar before one performance of each of their plays. So we can come hear a description, sometimes walk through a set, not always. Sometimes check out a prop that can be passed around to those of us who can't see it. And then we hear a description. In both cases I've had a

chance to dialogue with the describers. And they'll ask us, would you rather have this or that described during a performance, and it's wonderful interaction. It's brought a number of people who were blind or low vision into the opera, who had never come before.

The same with the plays. And one time I was there and a gentleman who thought he was going to listen to it with an assistive listening device because of a hearing problem accidentally turned it on to the channel that those of us who were blind were using. And he said he never had an idea what went on in a ball scene in an opera before listening to the describer. So the audio description is hugely important.

One of the things that's also important, and Heinz Hall generally does this quite well, for those of us who are blind -- I can't speak to people in wheelchairs -- is the issue of training ushers in terms of how to accommodate. Talking directly to the person with the disability and assisting us in seating rather than assuming we can't do anything for ourselves. I still see a need in other theaters for usher training, because I've had people make all kinds of assumptions that don't work for somebody who is blind without asking me first. And I'm sure I'm not the only one here who has had that experience.

I still see some need for increased audio description, like public theatre and some other around; usher training. Making things accessible because while I'm totally blind, and it's pretty obvious because I travel around with a seeing eye dog or use a cane, there are many other people -- and this county has a lot of people over 65, and one of the things that begins to happen with senior citizens is they lose vision and lose hearing, and they may not tell you about it. But they may need just as many services as those of us who are blind or have limited vision. I'm not going to continue much longer because I want to allow a lot of time for questions and discussions.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Joyce, were you part of the original group that looked at this?

Ms. Driben: I looked at it, but, Paul, given some other things that were beginning to happen to me in 2000, I didn't do a lot with it.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I was wondering if anybody here had a good snapshot of what the scene was then.

Ms. Driben: I can tell you there were no audio descriptions, ushers were not well trained. I remember an usher screaming at me one time because I hadn't bothered to tell them I was coming with a seeing eye dog. She was like, you didn't tell us you were having a dog. And practically being dragged to my seat with by the usher who was not willing to take any training. That hasn't happened in a while. And no braille programs. Just no sensitivity to people with disability; it didn't matter what it was. This usher, when she was trying to guide me up, was yelling, excuse me. Move. And it was an equal opportunity rudeness to anybody.

Ms. Evans: Also who benefits, I want to thank Joyce for this, people who cannot read. I know people who cannot read who go to the opera and really like it. My friend Georgina has her partner, and he cannot read. But when he listens to the audio, he gets a better feel of the opera or whatever play there is; both at the Benedum and at Heinz Hall.

Mr. McGann: I'm wondering, because we have our own culture, if they understand that also we might need help as well with training, so forth with deaf or deaf/blind. For example, at the Arts Festival, I can't hear and we don't know anything about the Art Festival. We totally miss that information because we can't hear it.

Ms. Mulgrave: My name is Ann Mulgrave, and I manage the accessibility initiative at the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council. I would like to take us through -- this will answer Richard's questions, with a bunch of others as to how this sort of started. In January of 2011, FISA Foundation approached the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council and asked if they would be interested in starting an accessibility initiative, simply because of the issues we've talked about already today. And GPAC surveyed membership. We're a membership organization and service organization. So we support all the arts organization of all kinds. They do the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, and they have like a budget of \$50,000 a year, and professional artists around the City. And there's also the survey where essentially -- and you have to excuse me. I'm under the weather and having trouble today losing my voice. So if I'm rough, I apologize. But the feeling was we understand accessibility is important, but we don't know what to do, and it's not a priority. So we created an initiative.

And basically our goal was to provide arts managers with the skills needed to address accessibility. And as we went through the process, what we realized was the majority of the arts organizations did not own their facilities. For example, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, they run the Arts Festival and they run the Benedum, the O'Riley Theatre, they run the Buyham and -- all the seven biggest ones where the opera is, where the ballet performs and things like that. Partially because of Janet's work and because of Joyce's work with both -- with Three Rivers Arts Festival and the opera, they started to devote a lot of resources to it. They've created a dedicated audio description booth in the Benedum, they've added individual handheld captioning devices. All of the performances that they put on there, they have sign language interpreted performances, they have audio described performances, and they offer a variety of different things. Richard, I'll get to you in a second. If I can just read my summary. For example -- so they devoted a lot of resources to that.

But what we at GPAC have done is we've taken on the education and technical support aspect of it. In the past five years, we've had 21 different accessibility workshops directed to arts managers. 56 organizations have participated in them. There have been over 428 managers who have attended. Every one of these workshops features a national and local speaker who often has a disability. We've had -- for our 21 workshops, we've had 23 speakers with disabilities. We have the disability community represented at those. And they're everything from emergency planning, emergency evacuation procedures and incorporation people with disabilities into it, to the importance of audio description and customer service. So that has been a lot.

But what we've learned is that -- what's most important is for people in arts organizations, they don't see the barriers that we all see when we walk through. But once you start putting them out to them, they can solve the problems very easily. And they've been doing their best to do it, but there are a couple barriers in their way. First of all, if they don't own their spaces, they can't do that. So we've focused on programmatic accessibility as best we can. And we asked them to describe their physical accessibility on their web sites so that people can make informed decisions as best they can while we try to get resources to fix the physical issues.

But the other thing that's important to me is focusing on artists with disabilities. Performances that address deaf culture, that address what it is like to live with a mobility impairment, that address what it is like to be born without sight or to lose your sight. We've had a lot of organizations that have jumped into that. This morning I got an e-mail asking from a literary organization if they can hold a deaf poetry slam that would involve Deaf culture. City Theatre put on a production of Tribes, which while written by a person with hearing disability discussing what it was like to be a person without hearing in a family that was all hearing. Then last year, and Joyce was part of this, a local theatre company did an entire

production on what it was like to not have sight. It was immersive theatre, you were brought into that experience. And Joyce was one of the actors in that. It's been so productive that they're going to do it again in San Diego at a major theatre festival. So there's been a lot of improvement.

But there's a lot of work to do. A lot of room to do it. And that's my job. I go out and provide staff training at all sorts of organizations, the larger ones have their own, the City Theatre, the Benedum, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust have their own things. I go to the smaller one, like the Pittsburgh Glass Center, which every first Friday they offer a glass blowing demonstration. They decided they wanted to offer ASL interpretation. So I went and did production, staff training there, and about a week later they literally posted on the Deaf events list serve and 20 people who were deaf showed up. They had an interpreter there the entire time taking people around. They had a great time. So what we're trying to do is expand it not just to the big things like the opera, but everything. Everything we can think of to open places you can make things and express your creativity, to being a performer to seeing a play. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Dore: I had a question. One of the -- there's a new place in East Liberty called the Tech Shop. You were talking about places they could make things and one of the issues I had there is they don't have any sign language interpreters. Have you thought about expanding that a little bit?

Ms. Mulgrave: Our grants are limited. But I will tell you this much, there is a lot of overlap between artists and tech, and we have had people involved in the Tech Shop. But the best way to do that is to work with the folks at the Human Engineering Research Laboratory, who are in the same building and they also do a lot with the Tech Shop.

Ms. Evans: There is a place you have to watch also. I discovered this last Friday. We went to a male review show and we got discounts through Gold Star. But anyway, we went to the web site and they said -- it was a male review. Wait a minute. So they said on their web site they were accessible to everybody. You know how you go and you have to explore a lot of these on your own before you go. Because when I went there, instead of having accessible doorway, they had a stair lift that you put in your apartment or house. My driver said, Janet, don't even bother because the steps were really on angle and the stair lift, you would have to get onto it. And, I said, no wheelchair, and they said, no. I said, I'm sorry, but I cannot do this. I wasn't told I had to get out of the wheelchair. And the owner says --

Ms. Mulgrave: I deliberately tried to address with our organization. Saying, you can't say you're fully accessible. Everybody has issues with their small places. Even our offices have a very small door that until recently didn't have a button on it. So I say, you just explain that so people can make an informed decision. Because if you say we are at this location and if you work with -- for example, let's take the New Hazlett Theatre on the North Side. The wheelchair ramp is on the side and it's really big and long and they have those big steps. So Karen and I were lucky enough to be part of a performance that was part of a cross disability performance. So what we did was we shut down the front doors for that performance so that everybody had to go in the wheelchair ramp, because it was respectful. And that was our plan. And so what we've said to people is, for example, for the New Hazlett, you have to explain the main doors are several flights of steps, we have a large wheelchair ramp, the door will be open, it will take you into the lobby. We ask people to put that level of detail in. Our doors are narrow, they are only X number of things wide, we don't have a button. If you need help, please call this number and we'll offer curb to seat service. We try to convince people to do that. And a lot of people do.

But the thing to keep in mind, especially with staff training, is a lot of the volunteers at these organizations and the front of house staff, as we call them, there's lots of turnover. So what we've

learned is that we have to offer -- every 18 months we offer a web site accessibility session. Every 18 months we offer accessibility 101 for new arts managers that have been tasked to it. Every 18 months we offer a staff training session. In addition, our ADA grant allows me to go to places and do staff training at these small organizations in between. I have found that has been successful. It is, however, imperfect, because as best we try, we still don't get everybody. And we are doing our best.

But we -- I will tell you two things, top secret, sort of. But I'm saying them at a public meeting, so it's not top secret. We are launching very soon a survey monkey that is a way for you to provide feedback for anyplace you go. It'll be a live thing, I'll have access to it. Arts managers -- like if you go to say a CLO and you have issues with the accessibility or you want to say something is good, the survey monkey will be there for you to do it. I will check the back end of it and pass it along. Technically, male reviews are not part of my professional bailiwick. But if you let me know and it's on there, I'm kind of a squeaky wheel; I'll call and be a pain in the ass. So that'll be a way for you to do it.

In addition, the thing that I'm most excited about that we have been working on for years, we're about to launch a calendar that will be searchable by accommodations. So you'll check a filter, and if you want to go to an audio described thing, you hit audio described, and we've also verified it is E-screen reader, accessible, and very good. I got your back. And so -- or if you want to make sure -- we're trying to set aside where the arts organizations that input their information will also put that accessibility description that we've talked about. It's supposed to launch in about three months. So it will be a way for people to access these events and get those descriptions that we talked about. We're going to do a double-pronged outreach. One will be to the arts organizations. So they know how to populate that information with a level of consistency. So they know put that in and we can track it. The other will be the disability community with information showing how to use it and how to provide feedback.

We are also in the process of gathering a lot of information on how people with disabilities are engaging with arts and culture through what we call The Arts Access Data Project. Where we have all the arts organizations input their data on the number of people that are using their accommodations, the number of people requesting individual accommodations instead of coming to, say, the one performance with audio description. Let's say you can't make it that night. Will City Theatre -- if you request that, did they provide it for you. How many people are requesting it, because we're trying to mark -- we sense a growing demand, but we can't target it. We can't pinpoint it. We can't assess it. And we need to be able to do that so that we can take this regional model we have here and create something to share with other regions.

Because my role, really, is not necessarily as an art manager, but as a disability advocate. I want this to change the world. So we're trying -- it's been very successful here, so we're trying to do it. And there are lots of fascinating things going on that involve performers with disabilities, writers with disabilities, actors with disabilities. And people with disabilities are being hired in these organizations as well. When City Asylum did Microhistory, they hired Chris Milo to document it. They could have hired anybody in the City. Somebody would have gotten them cheaper rates probably, but they hired Chris because they wanted to follow through. These are all things that are very important to me. So it's not perfect. But we are trying.

Ms. Evans: But you know what, my role, I think, is I go visit different places, different restaurants, different hotels to see if they are accessible. See if they are saying what they are saying, because a lot of times I'm finding out they're not accessible. So, you know, I do the eyeball, and if I think it's really important, I take pictures.

Ms. Driben: Okay. And I will just share what I've done. I'm involved with past president of the group called, Bold Blind Outdoor Leisure Development. We do a lot of recreational activities; not just outdoors. And two of our things have been, we've been to the science museum one and the Children's Museum twice. My first venture to the science museum was to talk to them about our accessibility needs, like how much can we touch, sniff, hear. And their first response was, we'll have you stand in front of a case of things and we'll read the descriptions to you. I had to say, that is not satisfactory. Thank you very much. I'll go elsewhere. And then I got transferred to somebody else who was more willing to talk about to me. So as consumers, I think very often people have no way to vote with our money and feet or wheelchairs or whatever, and if you don't ask, you don't get.

The Children's Museum has been great. We've been there twice and I've had wonderful experience with getting their things to be accessible for us. And most of them are accessible for people in wheelchairs, not all, but not all were accessible for people who were blind either. The Science Museum did come through with a lot of persuasion. But I can't emphasize enough, if something says accessible in its web site, make a few phone calls first. By the way, there are some people in this culture yet who do not always use computers. What about a phone line where you can call, maybe not right away, but get information about accessibility. Your box office people frequently don't know. But there should be somebody in an organization who can tell you, is this accessible. Maybe not yet, but that should be coming.

Ms. Mulgrave: There's that issue, the digital divide, which we always are addressing in the arts because not everyone has access to it. It's a very difficult thing for everyone to accommodate. So one of the things that we push is that on all your marketing materials, paper, print, whatever, you list a number to contact so the burden isn't on people with disabilities to figure out what the issue is, but to have the number there to contact and have that person trained and ready to answer. It is an imperfect thing, and it is a difficult thing to do. It would be nice if we had a central phone line, but it is also the way the arts are structured around here is people associate where they go with the organization that's putting it on. You go to the Benedum, you think everything is run by the same people, but that's not the case. The opera, the CLO, the ballet all do things there. So you can call the Benedum and the issue may be with the accommodations being offered by the ballet. That's a problem everywhere with the arts community, and that's a real problem we haven't figured out how to solve yet. But the other big issue we have is museums, and I agree museums have been the hard nut to crack. Some of the smaller ones are better, I think. The Children's Museum is an example of what's perfect. This year – one of the things that we've done that has been very helpful is we've provided scholarships to The Annual Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability Conference. So far we've sent over 50 people from Pittsburgh there. Unfortunately, only one or two, the Children's Museum, the Society For Contemporary Craft will be going this year. We are the largest non-home city contingent for the past three years. They call us the Pittsburgh Mafia because there's so many of us who go. Next year, 2016, it will be in Pittsburgh

Mr. O'Hanlon: "It" being again?

Ms. Mulgrave: The Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability. It's the worldwide leader in arts accessibility. It's run out of the Kennedy Center by Betty Siegel. It will be here in August of 2016. So we're still in planning for that. We're not sure what -- but the disability community will be deeply involved in that as much as we can as the host city. But, you know, there's a lot of work to be done there. And I want to say that my e-mail address is [amulgrave@pittsburghartsanddisability.org](mailto:amulgrave@pittsburghartsanddisability.org) M-U-L-G-R-A-V-E

at Pittsburgh Arts Council dot org. You can e-mail me anytime with a complaint or a compliment and I'll deal with it.

Ms. Dore: I want to thank Joyce for what she said. I have a suggestion. If you're going to have a phone line and say you're accessible, can you also have a way to text or e-mail for those of us that are deaf. Before you say you can use 711, a lot of the deaf are using video phones and other equipment. So have a way around that for us.

Ms. Mulgrave: We always have an online forum. Richard.

Mr. McGann: I have a question for you. You were saying about museums are difficult. Is there financing for -- federal -- do they accept federal financing to support them?

Ms. Mulgrave: They do accept federal financing to support them. I work closely with the person in charge of accessibility at the NEA, because I know they have to be accessible to accept the federal money. Not all of these organizations -- we have a small number that get money from the NEA, maybe 10 or 12. So that becomes -- that stick is not there. So we are -- I work closely with -- our goal -- our mantra is to be welcoming, not to be compliant. And that is more than compliance. Welcoming is more than compliance. It's changing the attitude of the organization so when people walk in the door with disabilities, they are welcomed and not considered a problem. You feel at home, you feel welcome, people ask you what you want, and they carry through. That is our goal. And that you don't have to work hard to get a ticket. You don't have to work hard to get the accommodations that you need. But we have hundreds of smaller arts organizations here. We've hit about 70 of them, and we're working to broaden it constantly.

Ms. Evans: Also, I want to advise anybody that has a disability when you buy your tickets, tell the ticket seller what you need also because sometimes you can get a discount. Of course, we always don't want discounts, but they're nice. But tell them what you need. And if the show -- the ones that escort you to your seat, if they need training, say so if you feel that way. Because we all are different, but yet all of us are the same. And I'd like to put it on record that we need to speak up more. Don't rely on a Joyce or a Janet, but rely on yourselves to learn to use your voice or whatever means you have to communicate. Because it's -- you're not finding -- it's easier just to talk with the people and I know Georgian, who is my aide, she always calls every everywhere.

Ms. Mulgrave: Our goal is that you don't have to do that. Our goal is that you'll be able to, not necessarily walk in the door, but be able when you by your ticket to easily say, I need a wheelchair seat, I'm coming with an assistance dog we prefer to sit on the aisle. To say -- or however you want to do it or just be able to say what you want. But, again, it is imperfect and we do need feedback. We do have an advisory committee of people with disability, and we meet twice a year. Those meetings have been really very helpful. We are in the process of doing a couple things that I think would be important to everybody here.

We are working on building support for a really dedicated group of well-trained American sign language interpreters for a performance. We have a few, but not enough for what's growing. They have what I call groupies because theatrical interpreting is a dedicated skill. You can't be a medical interpreter or something like that to get up and do theatrical interpretation. We are working on having more people available who are trained in audio description to increase the number of audio description offerings. Our

role is to help build the community capacity so as demand grows, it's smoother. So we don't have little fits and starts.

And that's very hard because sometimes we get people who think they're going to be great at audio description and they really suck. Like me. I really suck at audio description, but I try my best. And there are lots of things like that that are fits and starts that we're learning as we go. But I can tell you that the thing -- I worked in disability advocating different capacities, but the arts community, they never look at it and go, we can't do that. That's not something we can do. They look at it and go, we'll figure something out. We'll do our best. It might not be perfect. An example of that is a young man who's a photographer in our area. He got a grant that would allow him to give every baby born in five hospitals in Allegheny County a fine art photograph signed by the photographer. Every baby born in the County got one in one of these five hospitals. All of a sudden he looked at it and said, if that baby doesn't have sight, how is the baby going to appreciate that. So he hired a poet, after calling all sorts of places that create textile mat, to describe them. And he is putting those descriptions online for those babies. Now, we, through our NEA grant, are able to offer people a \$500 reimbursement for accommodations like that. So the only way he was able to do that was because he was thinking about it, but he didn't have the money to do it and he saw that and he said, if you charge me \$500, I can do it. And he did it. So we're trying to make resources available for people who come up with creative solutions to problems as well. But all that, of course, is resource dependent.

Mr. O'Hanlon: So one of the questions I had, really, as we went into this discussion is my sense is that this has been one of those areas that we've seen enormous progress in. Lots of energy and activity. And is there anything that we, as a Task Force, need to do? Because it -- you know, we have lots of things that -- you know, Disability Agenda 2000 didn't have nearly the progress of this sector, and I think it's easy to sit back and think things are cool, but maybe --

Ms. Mulgrave: I think about this a lot. I think about why this works well. And I think it's two things. We've taken out -- we've looked at people and said, you can come and -- like a lot of descriptions go, have you been hiding behind the thought, the belief, the wish that you've been grandfathered into the ADA. If you want to figure out if you have, come to our workshop. So basically what we did is we took the fear out of it. We said -- a lot of these organizations look at the ADA and go, holy crap. I don't know what to do about that. It's too complicated. We don't have the capacity to figure that out. What we did is we gave them a resource to call, but we also gave them a peer network. A whole bunch of people working on the same -- one of our first workshops Joyce was the speaker, and Joyce got up and described the importance of customer training, sales staff training, and the importance of audio description. And all of a sudden I literally saw light bulbs going off in the room, people like, oh, yeah. I never thought about that before. Same thing happened when we talked about ASL for performance and the need for that. So it's almost as if giving people a safe space to talk about it and then teaching them how to do it. You know, in terms of compliance with signage, we had an arts organization come in and say, here's what you do, you make your sign -- they're really picky about signs. They want it to be pretty and everything like that. You put them on the wall, then you take the person with the worst eyesight in your office and have them stand 6 feet away. If they can't read it, fix it. That was the solution they needed to hear, because everybody could do it. If you want to know whether or not your museum is wheelchair acceptable, tape it off, take somebody who works there in a wheelchair and see if they can get through it. If they can't, guess what. Fix it. Simple things like that. Skills they needed. And it's been helpful. Joe.

Mr. Wasserman: I think one of the biggest reasons why in all the areas in the cultural world have made these tremendous improvements in the last 15 years is the fact that probably out of all of the sectors that we tried to look at in 2000 to see where we were, this is one of the few sectors that's not involved with government bureaucracy and institutional red tape, such as education.

Ms. Mulgrave: I think this is a very responsive group. Basically they are DIYers at heart; they build stuff, they make stuff. And they don't go, I'm going to hire a consultant. They go, oh, I'm going to do it. Which is a very different process.

Ms. Evans: I wanted to say something that's really nice and has to do with the culture. One week last year, one weekend, I think it was, you did what they call a crawl for people with disabilities.

Ms. Mulgrave: It was the autism friendly crawl.

Ms. Evans: Yeah. And guess what, I was there and I went and checked out all the culture around there. Some were accessible; some not so accessible. But you know what, I loved it. Some of the areas like the arts and crafts, that wasn't too accessible. You had to go upstairs or do the photography you had to go upstairs. But that was all in the culture district. So I've been there and I've done a lot of that and had nobody to talk with. Now I got you.

Ms. Mulgrave: Oh, yeah. You got me now.

Ms. Driben: The other thing I noticed is that there is a difference, Joe, in some of the other sectors -- I think your point is well taken about government's involvement with the others. I've been involved with some of the others, and they were more of a have to. I think people felt threatened like we have to do this. We don't want to, we have to. Whereas with the arts and culture, when it's worked it's because people are going, I never thought about that. How do we do that. It's gone from have to do to we're willing to try.

Ms. Mulgrave: I also think there's a difference -- and I didn't know this until I jumped into this world, with the people who do this work, who choose to work in art, do it because that you they feel a drive, a passion to share what they do with everyone else. And all of these organizations are nonprofit organizations with missions that involve exposing their work to everyone. And they really are mission driven. If you look at New York City and Broadway, for example, those are all for profit theatres. And if you try to get them -- let's say you call and want audio description one night, no one answers the phone. They just don't have to. They have no economic incentive because they're driven by dollars. But in the arts and culture sector, here in the nonprofit one, people do it because they can't stand the thought of people not being able to access what they love and they do. I think it really is, quite honestly, as simple as that. I would like to say there is positive peer pressure. When this started it was -- nobody was doing accessibility. And then about two years ago it flipped and if you weren't doing it, you stood out. Except for the Pittsburgh Public Theatre, which I haven't figured out how to get to them yet.

Ms. Driben: I'll talk to you privately after this.

Ms. Mulgrave: But it -- there was a switch. And now, the -- it is the priority of accessibility has come up because people are interested in it. And -- for example, all the musical acts at the main stage of the Arts Festival this year -- there was ASL interpretation of all the musical acts, which I think is kind of audacious.

>>SPEAKER>> And a lift.

Ms. Mulgrave: And a lift, yes. And that lift is available for -- the cultural trust anyone in arts and culture in this region can borrow that lift. The other thing I wanted to point out, Richard, is two of the private foundations this year gave two very large grants, two \$35,000 grants that were focused on art by people with disabilities. One was the Microhistory project that happened last week. And the other one is with Bill Shannon, who's designing dance based on the movements of people with disability. And he is a person with a disability as well. That was two grants out of five \$35,000 residency that went to art by people with disabilities. And that has never happened before. Richard.

Mr. McGann: Thank you. Sometimes if you look at the schedule, you want to make sure that it's an accessible time to show up, especially whether it's the blind, hard of hearing, deaf, they'll check the schedule to make sure it's an accessible time. But sometimes there's something else going on at the same time and that's the only time you can go. And so, then you have to see if there's some way to get last minute support or last minute you have to change your plans possibly.

Ms. Mulgrave: We're working on that. I think our calendar will go a long way to allow other organizations to figure out what's scheduled when so that things don't overlap. And you'll be able to find them easily. I've also told people we want our accommodated performances sometime other than Sunday afternoon because it's really kind of a pain the butt to only be able to go to a show on Sunday afternoon. Let's say you want to go out on Friday night, where are you going to go. We're pushing for that as well. But, you know, it is difficult. We are going to have bumps in the road. And we ask for everyone's patience, because it's been years and years of bad experience in the arts and culture. It's going to take years and years to build that trust up again. Which is why we need your feedback, which is why we're creating the survey monkey where you can tell us when things go wrong and tell us when things go right, and I can put that information out to people.

Ms. Dore: I want to commend you on what you're doing, and also, have you thought about listing some of the accommodations on the front of the brochures? For example, at the Arts Festival I had the brochure and it had Joyce Driben's events buried 20 pages back where she taught braille this past Sunday or where there were mentions of the ASL performances of the Western School for the Deaf, they were buried 11 pages back and very hard to find.

Ms. Mulgrave: So the hardest part for the arts managers doing this work is to fight with the marketing managers. Every single line of space in these brochures is months of battle. The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust because Rhonna, who is the person who holds the purse strings there, said, you have to put it in. That is the sort of thing that takes time. You know, it -- I know a lot of individual artists who I support through our grants who were upset their performances were on Page 11, too. It would be nice to have the billing front and center, and I think that would go a long way to push it, especially this past Arts Festival where the theme was unseen and unheard. You know, I will push that along to people, but the fact that we're getting more people even included in their marketing materials is a huge thing and it's taken us four years to get there. So -- because that's the battle that -- and trust me, when you battle with the communications person, it's the worst battle in the world, because you have competing agendas. But we have a good 70 access peers that are fighting those fights, and hopefully will get better over time. Please send me that feedback when we sent out the link and we do our outreach for The Arts Access Data Project, I want everyone to do that so I can pass the information along.

Ms. Warman: I don't know if it was last meeting -- I don't know if it was last meeting or the meeting before. They had -- we had City Asylum here, and as Ann had said, if we get a performance on world history and world economics, that's the -- you know what I mean, it went off without a hitch. Yeah. The first night we had a standing ovation. The second night there was interaction. Which, actually, I think that was actually kind of cool because you got more interaction with disability involved. You know, everybody gets together to perform one big number. It doesn't matter what it is. You can have -- you can have like more -- more turnout on ideas and productivity with whatever you do.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Okay. Was there anything else you wanted? It sounded like you had two issues you wanted to bring up. I wasn't sure. No? Just that one?

Ms. Warman: Just that one. I wouldn't call that an issue. I call that more like an updated report.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I appreciate that. Okay. Yeah, Richard.

Mr. Meritzer: I have a question. Karen, I have a question. Did you get some pictures of it and can we share them?

Ms. Mulgrave: Karen, I'll make sure that we -- I'll share with Richard the link to the photo stream that they shared with us, and they're regularly -- If you would like to check City Asylum's Facebook page or anything like that, they're regularly posting photographs. It was also videotaped. I don't know exactly what they're going to do with videotape yet. But we have over 500 pictures by Renee Rosensteel, who's one of our best local photographers, and we can share that link and you can see the gallery. Because it was -- we had a cross disability cast and an improvisational dance theatre performance, and we had three people who were blind; two people who used wheelchairs; several people with traumatic brain injuries, very little short-term memory; five or six people who were deaf. It was logistics that kept me awake all night for several nights, but we managed, and with a director who spoke English as a second language. I ended up being in the performance because each one of the people who were blind needed a sighted guide. But it was something that I think has not been done anywhere else in this world like this. And it's very well documented and we'll hopefully be sharing all the video, and we will have it described, Joyce, as well.

### **Vox Pop**

Mr. O'Hanlon: Thank you. This is the time of the agenda that we set aside for what we call Vox Pop, hear the voice of the people. So if there are issues that you wanted to bring up, we have probably about 10 minutes to -- if there's anything anybody has to say that wasn't part of the agenda. Joy.

Ms. Dore: One issue downtown that concerns me is what's happening in Market Square, taking all their chairs in the sidewalk. People in wheelchairs and -- it's becoming less and less accessible. And they're about to put additional things in that space, which is mostly a good thing, but for the disability community --

Ms. Driben: If you can't get through, neither can many of us who are blind.

Ms. Warman: I can probably ask -- I think I know someone who knows the person who runs Market Square.

Mr. O'Hanlon: The original promise was that seating would be kept to one half of the pedestrian space where there's sidewalk seating. So they're supposed to police that and make sure people aren't spreading their chairs and so forth to a broader area, but that's a known issue that we were made promises about. So if they're not keeping that, we should be letting them know.

Ms. Grishman: I think within the promises, too, though, when there's special events, that takes up the additional space, because the Farmers' Market, it gets rid of the accessible crosswalk area and getting a walker over cobblestone is a pain. So it's even with the promises, the special events then also contribute to problems for people with disabilities.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Is there somebody who's responsible for the design feature of special events at Market Square?

Mr. Meritzer: I have been trying to deal with the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership on this. Basically the City designed it, URA paid for it, I was involved in the actual construction meetings; although, I wasn't involved in the design meeting. So most of the time I went to construction meetings and said, no, you can't do this; no, you can't do that. I fought where I could. There are still major problems. I've been trying to work with the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership on this, but it's very slow going, and there are a bunch of things we're trying to get done. And we're hoping that -- one of the first things we were worried about, Rich McGann can tell you those tree pits are terrible because we went down and fell into them. So we're trying to get shrubs around the tree pit so they're cane detectable. We're also concerned about the tent. There's also other things I'm concerned about, but I'm trying to tackle one issue at a time, because, as I said, it's very slow going. But we're doing the best we can. But at this point, the City is not going to do anything without the Downtown Partnership's Agreement, because they've allowed the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership to do the programming.

Mr. O'Hanlon: Any other issues people would like to raise? I think that's a good issue. Thanks for bringing that up. Anything else? Karen.

Ms. Warman: Yeah. I don't know how much of an issue it's going to be or how much it can be or if it is. The sidewalks down on Penn Avenue, you know, the grates that they have. I mean, they're like -- you got uneven sidewalks and they're still -- they're going to fix them, if they was to do them, they didn't do it yet.

Mr. McGann: I motion to adjourn.

Ms. Carter-Scott: I'll second that one.

Mr. O'Hanlon: I have a motion to adjourn and a second. All in favor say aye.

### **Adjournment**

**Next Meeting: July 20th, 2015**