

**City-County Task Force on Disabilities Meeting Minutes  
October 21, 2019**

**Task Force Members in Attendance**

Paul O’Hanlon  
James “Chris” Noschese  
Karen Warman  
Cori Frazer  
Richard McGann  
Sarah Goldstein  
John Tague

**Others in Attendance**

Hillary Roman – City of Pittsburgh ADA Coordinator  
Alisha Grishman – AccessMob  
Tina Calabro—Advocate  
Ashli Molinaro—Public  
Arianna Burns—Public  
Natalia Steen—Public

**Minutes Reviewed/Approved**

- September 2019; approved with spelling corrections of names

**Treasurer’s Report**

None

**Items of Discussion**

**Review of “We Count: Pennsylvanians with Disabilities and the Right to Vote”**

- John commented that the voting event was a good and worthwhile event; discussed that all voting places in Allegheny County are accessible according to an event attendee from Washington County.
- Paul said event organizers covered an interesting mix of national and local voting issues, including participation from the American Association of Persons with Disabilities (AAPD).
- Alisa brought up the Allegheny County Board of Elections meeting taking place October 22, 2019 featuring demonstrations of the new voting machines.

**Sidewalks**

- Chris brought up the lack of accessible, public sidewalks and the confusion over what government entity is responsible for sidewalk maintenance.
- Rich agreed and mentioned two high schools near his home, Keystone High School and Lakeside, that do not have accessible sidewalks.
- Paul brought up inconsistency surrounding existence of sidewalks in the suburbs.

## Building Code

- Paul brought up the comments he has submitted to the state on the building code previously circulated to the City-County Task Force on Disabilities (CCTFD). Paul states that he is broadly concerned that thirty years after the ADA there are still one-step barriers that prevent people with disabilities from access to businesses.
  - Paul discussed that unlike federal mandate, the state and city do not prioritize accessibility improvements to buildings. This leads to a situation where there may be other types of barrier removals inside a building where there is not an accessible entrance. Paul said that the state strips the priorities that the federal government has put in place. Paul urges the state to follow the federal priority system.
- Chris said Swissvale is a great example of sidewalk maintenance and wondered why that cannot be replicated.
  - Paul referenced the strange system in place wherein the county does not control individual municipalities, resulting in a lot of inconsistencies. This complicated system of responsibility poses a challenge to the CCTFD because each area is under a separate jurisdiction
- Paul clarified that the issue Chris raised is separate from the building code issue
- Rich wants to clarify that discussions around the curb cut law from the Dept. of Justice (DOJ) workshop included building code and sidewalk issues. The law is not being enforced/enacted when sidewalks are in front of a building
  - Paul clarified that this only applies *if* there are sidewalks in front of the building
- Paul refocused discussion specifically to the building code. Tina asked about the legislation Deb Gross introduced about a year ago about reconciling the code. Paul replied that the city was in consultation with the state about the proposal. There had been a lot of back and forth in city council and they had some difficulties in proceeding with the state. Tina wonders whether the CCTFD can demand a progress report from the city council.
- Paul proposed taking the city building code issues and to Mayor Peduto
  - Paul wants the city to address the overall problem wherein the building code limits or ignores the priorities of the ADA including simple one-step barriers that persist all over the City of Pittsburgh
- Rich agreed and referenced a problem with a building in the past. He continued that the focus of the city needs to shift from bicycles to sidewalk maintenance.
- Paul reiterates that this agenda item is specifically about the building code
- Alisa said that the Dept. of Permits, Licenses, and Inspections' (PLI) argument is that they cannot supersede the state's construction code at the risk of litigation. Alisa says she does not understand why the city doesn't side with efforts toward improved accessibility over being sued by the state.
- Paul feels the next step is to approach the mayor's office and request a meeting with Chief Dan Gilman. Alisa stated that she is working on it.
- John asked whether there had been contact with Deb Gross, Paul said no. Paul's preference is to go to the mayor in order and continue on from there.

- John asked whether the approach was to take action as the CCTFD. Paul said that he wants to advise the mayor whether as the task force or individually; he stated that he is ready to move forward either way.
- Rich wonders whether the DOJ should be involved. Paul stated that he had no interest in contacting the DOJ under President Trump.
- Rich asked if the landlords of the buildings should be involved in discussions. Paul said that it doesn't matter whether it's the landlord or the tenant because it's a city and state issue, specifically because of the state's requirement that 20% cost of renovations be put towards ADA compliance.
- Cori wondered how we move things forward without improving government relationships because some people aren't even aware of the CCTFD. Paul replied that the CCTFD has had a sporadic amount of influence with City Council over the years. Cori thinks it would be a good idea to think about how to improve relationships in order to improve effectiveness, to not just be present when making a complaint. They emphasized systematizing relationships in order to make progress on CCTFD initiatives and areas of concern.
- Paul discussed that a city priority focused on bike lanes has been a problem. Accessibility has become a secondary priority to bike lanes. Paul says that the city needs to take this more seriously and is prepared to go to war over it.
- Sarah asked if there was another committee Paul serves on that could join with the CCTFD to take on the issues at hand.
  - Paul clarifies that there are overlapping initiatives with the Fair Housing Act, and he had in the past served on committees that work towards sidewalk maintenance and one-step barrier removal, but those conversations are not concurrent with his present plan for action.
- Tina asked whether Oakland for All would be a good partner for this action. Paul says he's open to suggestion as to who should be in the meeting with Chief Gilman.
- Rich asked whether it would be helpful to bring in a media entity to involve the whole community.
  - Paul thought this move was unnecessary, the first step is to give a "heads up" to Chief Gilman since the mayor is likely busier.
- Alisa says she thinks she can get a meeting with Mayor Peduto.
- Sarah agrees that a meeting with Dan Gilman is a good next step. John wonders if PLI needs to be there, Paul says that PLI isn't helpful or effective in enforcing the ADA.
- Chris says last time the CCTFD visited the mayor's office was about three years ago. He thinks CCTFD should revisit with the office and list out the problems to correct any disconnects that may be in play.
  - Paul is concerned that giving the mayor a laundry list of grievances with diffuse the building code issue and take away focus.
- Sarah agrees that it would be best to keep complaints to a minimum in order to improve the chances of success. She suggested that one-step barriers should be the item to take precedence.
- Paul and Rich agreed with Sarah.
- Paul says that he can no longer make progress with PLI, would like to go to the Dept. of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI instead).

- Tina brought up legislation introduced on July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 by Deb Gross to change the building code to require accessible entrances when businesses seek permits for renovations.
- Tina also brought up July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 proposal from Mayor Peduto to allocate \$100,000 to a city program to help businesses remove entrance barriers. She wondered whether that proposal was ever approved and suggested that the CCTFD might be interested in finding out what happened to that proposal.
- Paul brought up the fact that around five years ago, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) was promoting business renovations program without including barrier removal and the CCTFD was able to make some changes to their policies.
- Paul concluded that he will be moving forward with his concerns one way or another.

### **November CCTFD Meeting**

- Paul addressed the change in meeting structure next week with Hillary's attendance to the Mid-Atlantic ADA Conference.
- Hillary reminded the CCTFD that if the task force would like to have a meeting in November, Caylin Snyder, the Allegheny County ADA Coordinator will be available to fill in for her and facilitate the meeting.
- John brought up that CCTFD Guidelines specify that the task force only needs to meet four times per year.
- Chris said that he will not be able to come to the meeting in November or December because he will be traveling to South America.
- Sarah asked if there were any other items to be discussed next month. Paul reiterated that building code issues and sidewalk issues are the main issues of major concern. If the task force meets in November, Paul wonders whether the CCTFD should try to get Karina Ricks from DOMI to come.
- Cori wondered if another item to add to next agenda could be systematizing relationship improvement. Paul said that part of the challenge in maintaining relationships is government fragmentation. Cori stated that they would like to address it.
- Rich expressed a desire to include the County and surrounding areas in these discussions. Paul said that fragmentation is exacerbated as the focus expands outside the City.
- Alisa suggested that the CCTFD use next month's meeting to expand focus to other municipalities and talk to Caylin. Paul doesn't think that the county has much enforcement power or interest in ADA issues.
- Chris expressed his dream that the county commissioner would freeze the funding to all 120 municipalities until they all come to a CCTFD meeting where the task force will voice all of their concerns.
- Paul is reluctant to involve the county because he has not seen much involvement with the county on ADA issues.
- Tina suggested CCTFD leadership work on systematic relationship building with ADA Coordinators outside of regular task force meetings.
- Paul and John suggest adjourning for informal conversation with Hillary to take place after this meeting's adjournments.
- The CCTFD decided that next meeting's issues will focus on county issues since Caylin will be staff for the meeting.

## **Miscellaneous Issues/Concerns**

### **Discussion of Events**

- Alisa announced The Disability Show and Tell Community Symposium taking place October 22, 2019 at Point Park University Center for Media Innovation from 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m.