

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES  
NOVEMBER 15, 2010  
MINUTES**

- Location:** First Floor Conference Room  
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street  
Pittsburgh, PA
- Members Present:** Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Janet Evans, Sarah Goldstein, Milton Henderson, Rich McGann, James C. Noschese, John Tague
- Members Absent:** Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Liz Healey, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman
- Others Present:** Dianne Gallagher, Megan Hammond, Phoebe Xuewei He, Chuck Keenan, James Kindler, Lea Lach, Richard Meritzer, Asia Pruden, Tamara Siegert, Joseph Wassermann, Emily Wilcox

The meeting was called to order by Mr. O'Hanlon at 1:00 PM.

**INTRODUCTIONS:**

**ACTION ITEMS**

**Review and Approval of June's Minutes**

The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Review and approval of financial report**

Mr. Tague asked Mr. McGann and Mr. Wassermann about their problems of reviewing the electronic version of financial report. Mr. McGann responded his problems had been solved. Then Mr. Tague moved to the issue of changes of the format for the budget report. Now, one column shows the budget for the whole year, one column for the month. The expense for October is not clear because Mr. Tague hadn't received the bills for the interpreter for October's meeting. We can hold 8-9 meetings, depending on the current expense. Mr. Tague separated the expense for Disability connection from us. The question is whether the task force wants to take it out, because it might cause confusion.

The amount we have spent so far is listed in the last column. What we have left is a thousand dollars, which will be enough for another meeting. The assumption is we will have 8 meetings, but the expenses for each meeting are different. For example, we scheduled no captioning this meeting, which will save \$400. Mr. O'Hanlon added the concern is so far the budgets have no reflection on the gap between the need for us to 10 meetings and the current budget we have is only for 8 meetings. Mr. Tague responded he will work on that. Ms. Goldstein asked if we don't use captioning, will the money disappear or we save that. Mr. Tague responded we will save that money, and that's how we can have another meeting.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked about the disability connections' budget of \$7,335. Which group is using that money? Mr. Tague responded it is part of the overall budget for the task force. Mr. O'Hanlon added whether it will be possible to separate our budget from the disability connections, which might help to reduce the administration fee we have to share. Mr. Tague responded that might not be able to work out. Mr. O'Hanlon then asked since we didn't have meeting on August, why we

still have administration fee for that month. Mr. Tague responded how we calculate the administration fee is we divide the total amount for the whole year grand by 12, and add the monthly fee each month. Therefore no matter we have meeting for that month or not, the fee will be added.

The motion passed unanimously.

## **STAFF REPORTS**

### **Calendar – Richard Meritzer**

Mr. Meritzer reported it has been a very busy month, and will be the next couple of months. Mr. Meritzer went to ADA Title II Round Table meeting. The copy of the handouts for that meeting is on that table. He found out what he was doing right and wrong. He had also made a lot of contacts. For example, he talked with colleagues from Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, and the great Washington area, and found out what they are doing.

In addition, from this week, students from high school for people with disability start to help with facility surveys. This is very exciting. The students will get a lot of experience they normally won't get, and have a chance to understand what this is mean to people with disabilities, why it is ADA.

Mr. Meritzer had also attended meeting for 2011 wheelchair games. Wednesday will be the next community meeting, from 9:00-12:00 in this room. If you want to help, please let he know. We are looking for people to attend when the national office came in, because he requested people with disability go out with the office to observe the sight are using. They commented how accessible the courses were and what the office should do to make it more accessible. The office staffs were impressed and they want us to help every next time.

Mr. Meritzer will be going on the December 2<sup>nd</sup> to the hearing loss state conference. He will handout the taskforce material on that conference. It is also a chance to talk to peers from the states learn about what they are doing. The conference will be held in Harrisburg

Mr. McGann added it is wonderful to hear that. He also mentioned if there is a possibility to invite people from other area, working on disability to our task-force meeting. Then, we can do education. Mr. Meritzer responded we are working on that. After last month's meeting, the two interns Phoebe He and Lea Lach were searching for the ADA coordinators for the city and county of Pennsylvania separately, and collecting contact information of them. When this work finished, Mr. Meritzer will send out the information and work on invite them to attend our meeting.

### **One Step – Lea Lach**

Ms. Lach reminded everybody that, when the Task Force last met, she was coordinating feedback from all the departments involved in the One Step process. She then reported that the amendments she has proposed to waive some fees for step removal have been approved by legal experts at City Planning. Ms. Lach is now putting the amendments into the proper legislative format and will hold a meeting on the Monday after Thanksgiving to discuss these amendments and where the project is going from there.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked Ms. Lach who will be attending the November 29 meeting. Mr. Meritzer replied that it will just be a small staff meeting. He then described how the amendments will become law, in response to another question. He said that once they are in the right format, they will have to go before the City's Planning commission. Then, when the Planning Commission approves them, they will be introduced to City Council on behalf of the Mayor's office. This will probably be a routine matter because no one in City Council is pushing the project right now.

Mr. Tague wanted to know whether the Task Force members will receive the amendments. Ms. Lach said that as soon as the legal experts approve the final versions of the amendments, she will send them out.

Ms. Evans wanted to know if there was anyone she could contact about bringing the One Step Project to Homestead. Mr. Meritzer pointed out that Homestead is not part of the City of Pittsburgh. Ms. Lach suggested that Ms. Evans contact Judy Barricella or an organization dealing with County accessibility instead.

The Task Force also discussed sidewalk repairs at this time. Mr. Wassermann asked whether City Council has held a meeting about this matter as planned yet. Mr. Meritzer said that he doesn't know much at this time but added that Mr. Wassermann can directly contact City Council for more information. Mr. O'Hanlon explained why sidewalk repair is an important issue and suggested inviting Councilman Bruce Kraus to a future Task Force meeting.

#### **ADA Strategic Planning Meetings – Phoebe He**

Ms. He introduced the ADA strategic planning meeting is a quarterly meeting for all the City of Pittsburgh Departments to talk and evaluate the accessibility in the city. The meeting was held on November 5<sup>th</sup>. The biggest follow up for the previous meeting was we invited Raymond Demichiei attended this meeting to talk about emergency evacuation. There will be several forthcoming reports on this issue. He will send it to Mr. Meritzer to ask feedback from ADA perspective.

Mr. Meritzer added if there is anything the taskforce want him to raise on the ADA strategic meeting, please let him know. This is the chance for all the departments from the city to discuss how are things going in the city. Mr. Tague asked how seriously the meeting was taken and how often do you meet. Mr. Meritzer responded quarterly, and very seriously taken. Mr. Noschese added it looks like a good place to talk about the interpreter. I know that those groups each have a contract with a company. We should consider giving a push through the meeting to include people with disability to work for the company. Mr. Meritzer responded the representative from CIS is with disability, and he is very active.

Mr. McGann commented some time I get emails from other groups. They would like to know this happens. They would like to have a voice in this, and contact those persons. And vote for those people. Is it possible to distribute those minutes? Mr. Meritzer responded this is an internal meeting. Taskforce is public. But this is different. The minutes should not be published. When there is an issue inside the city, he will bring other related department to the meeting. But this is the staff meeting and is not public.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked is there on the higher floor, a device to get people with disabilities to the downstairs? Mr. Meritzer responded there are rescue people to help people with disability to get downstairs. Mr. McGann asked for deaf and hard of hearing, how they can hear those issues? How to inform them? Mr. Meritzer responded that we've talked about that, message communication will be helpful.

Mr. Kindler asked is the existing equipment like a fire alarm within the reach of a person with wheelchair? Mr. Meritzer answered under accessible design, they are supposed to be, but will depend on the age of the building. Mr. Meritzer is doing the evaluation, but so far no requirement on the checklist is for the height of the fire alarm.

Mr. O'Hanlon hopes the snow remove will be on the agenda of the next ADA meeting. Mr. Meritzer added the issue have been putting on.

Mr. O'Hanlon mentioned we wrote a letter to the city, raising the issue of the enforcement of the city code regarding snow remove. We did get an agreement that they would enforce it. But on the news, the Mayor responded we won't writing tickets to any resident for snow removal, which is after that. Therefore, at this point, what is the city's attitude on enforcement is an open question. Mr. Meritzer added it could be a communication issue. He will re-contact the director of Public Works, forward him the letter we send him last time, ask him are we going to enforce the snow remove and see what he says. Mr. Meritzer will bring the result back to the meeting.

### **Silver Spring Workshop-Richard Meritzer**

Again, the Powerpoint for the Silver Spring Workshop is at the back. Mr. Meritzer mentioned that under the new accessible regulation, which is only marginally differently from the old ones, if you are currently in compliance with the existing regulation before the change, you don't have to ever bring yourself up to the new regulation; if you are making the changes in 2011, you can choose which regulation you want to use.

The biggest change that affects people is the whole idea of service animals. Comfort animals are no longer protected under the law. Only dog and miniature horses can be service animals. They should be trained to provide service. Mr. O'Hanlon asked whether it means they should be trained by a certify agency or an individual. Mr. Meritzer responded all it says is trained to help people with disability. Also the animal should be at the side of the person they are serving all the time, or it will be no longer considered as the service animal.

There are other changes being mentioned.. The accessible way has to be the most commonly used way when ever possible. There are also a lot of discussions on historical preservation and the ADA. One of the most interesting discussions is about the security building in Washington, where the accessible entrance is the back entrance. There was no guard at the back entrance. Therefore people with disability need to wait for the guard to open the door. But at night, it is open with out a guard. The discussion is, if it didn't have to be locked at night, it didn't need to be lock at daytime. Mr. Meritzer was happy to have gone to this wonderful, productive meeting. He will continue to go to these trainings, and bring back information to the task-force.

Aide of Ms. Evans asked whether the small puppy of the stadium and showed as a service comfort dog is covered by the new ADA regulation. Mr. Meritzer responded technically it is no longer covered by ADA. There are issues about how to define comfort animal. A lot of people cannot leave their residence without their dogs. But the dogs are not trained to the service. Then they are not covered.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked what was the training to bark? Mr. Meritzer explained dogs need to be trained to bark, and that bark should have meanings to the person. Therefore the key issue is the training. Also they are decreasing the animals to be covered as service animal.

Mr. McGann commented also it was important to encourage hospitals and restaurants understand there are people with disability using service animals. They should accept that. Mr. Meritzer added up until the conference, the people feel they need that animal, the legislation will protect them. That also encourages both business and people with disabilities to contact me asking about that. Education the community on this issue is the best we can do.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked what is the meaning that the service animal should be at the owners side all the time. What will be the punishment if it doesn't? Mr. Meritzer replied if it is not providing the service, either people should control their dog, or take it out. Under ADA, the service animal should be well maintained. If the service animal is not being aside all the time, then it is not well maintained.

**Discussion - Paul O'Hanlon**

The first issue is about follow up of URA: whether we should invite councilman here to discuss about our concerns to take to the URA. Mr. Meritzer answered he did have a meeting them. Mr. Meritzer got the information to their legal person. He was going to discuss with the director, but they never get back to Mr. Meritzer. Mr. O'Hanlon added his concern was how they remedy their previous actions here. He was worried that he didn't see the response. Mr. Meritzer responded he would like to reach out the director again. Mr. O'Hanlon said it seems to be a policy issue. He wanted someone doing the policy issue to discuss with, like the executive director or board members. Ms. Evans commented that she noticed for URA property, they have fixed the side calks and the curb. She thought they were making changes.

Then Mr. O'Hanlon asked about the progress of Convention center. Mr. Meritzer responded that he and Ms. He is working on this issue. We are scheduling a meeting at the convention center to review and discuss the accessibility. The date to go will be decided this Wednesday. Ms. Evans said she would like to go there as well.

The last discussion is Public space erosion in downtown Pittsburgh. There has been legal require public spaces that have been privatized. He think the disability community have invested the public space in the downtown area. Mr. Meritzer responded he asked the colleague of City Planning who is the right person to talk about this issue, but never got response from them. Mr. Meritzer will keep following up on this issue.

**Vox Pop**

Ms. Evans raised the issue of there are little service for people have hearing problem at nursing home. Mr. O'Hanlon said it had been a long time issue. Currently there is some law suit regarding this issue. Ms. Evans added she want to bring this issue here to raise the awareness.

Mr. O'Hanlon commented you can contact James Noschese that at the 32 meeting, there are number of people at deaf community brought the issue nursing facilities for deaf people, and Mr. Noschese is engage with the particular issue.

Chuck Keenan, chair of the local house option team for Allegany County, added they have been working on a lot of housing issues including house accessibility. They have a small project called incubator targeting certain population of a building. There are a group of people represent deaf, deaf and blind working on this issue, and identifying a building that we would like to model in Columbus county. It is a nursing home, and they are trying to redevelop that. They are also working on other projects increasing housing support for deaf and deaf blind people, including mobile crises team have sign language and interpreter members in it. They also trying to develop opportunities for people with disability to communicate and talk together, to reduce the isolation, and to educate the provider, nursing home. Ms. Evans asked whether she can give this information to Jeff Parker. Mr. Keenan agreed.

Ms. Evans raised another issue that there is a huge tree in the sidewalk on Johnson Avenue. It is a private property, but need to be removed, or it will cause problems. Mr. Meritzer responded the city will reimburse for half of the bill to remove the root of the tree from the sidewalk. If Ms. Evans will give more information, he can do follow ups.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING (Subject to change):

DATE: Monday, December 20, 2010  
TIME: 1:00 P.M.  
LOCATION: Large Conference Room  
200 Ross Street