

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
JANUARY 24, 2011
MINUTES**

Location: First Floor Conference Room
Civic Building, 200 Ross Street
Pittsburgh, PA

Members Present: Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Sarah Goldstein, Milton Henderson, Richard McGann, James C. Noschese, John Tague

Members Absent: Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Liz Healey, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman, Janet Evans,

Others Present: Phoebe Xuewei He, Council Member Bruce Kraus, Richard Meritzer, Joe Wassermann

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

INTRODUCTIONS:

ACTION ITEMS

Review and approval of financial report

Every Task Force member had a copy of the financial report.

Mr. Tague said what we have left was \$3598.40 for the remaining month. If you notice in the column, every month, except August, we have a meeting. There were fees for the interpreter services. There was not much spent on CART. Only October meeting had CART. Under the column for interpreter services, we only had \$798.30 left. Technically, that could only support for one meeting. But we were anticipating the CART saving will balance that out. That's why Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Tague were saying it is hard to predict how many meetings we can have.

There were two things the committee asked Mr. Tague to do. One is talk to Judy about the administrative cost. Mr. Tague called but had not had a chance to talk to her. He would call and talk to her again. The other thing was to provide John from the department of Human Services some figure about what the Task Force have remaining because we need some additional funds.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked whether we need to cancel any of the meeting based on current funding. Mr. Noschese asked did we have enough money for the David Lawrence Convention Center meeting. Mr. Meritzer responded the city absorb that under their contract.

Ms. Goldstein suggested we discussed that we should have two less meeting based on the funding. Therefore we should cancel one meeting as we have already had the December meeting. Mr. McGann responded February worked for him. If there would be an emergency, we can set up the meeting again. Mr. O'Hanlon responded that's possible. If we had to cancel a meeting, February would be a great time.

The motion passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION

Sidewalk Conditions – Council Member Mr. Kraus Kraus

Mr. Meritzer said he had just got a letter from Judy Baricella, the ADA coordinator for the county. Judy used wheelchair. She was not be able to show up today as snow built up on the curb cut and she was afraid of being stuck. This could be a good story to start the conversation on sidewalk conditions. Mr. O'Hanlon said he got stuck on his way to the city building. He asked who own that building used to be the John's Law Building and who had the duty to clear the snow. Mr. Meritzer responded it should be the company who own and build that hotel.

Mr. Kraus thanked the task force for inviting him to the meeting. Integrating the sidewalk condition issue to the bigger picture of the city, they are trying to build a mobile city, which would be access to everyone. Plan written on paper was one thing; another was the action to prove we are committed. One aspect for the commitment of the Council was looking on the wheelchair wraps in terms of snow clearing, in term of parking, in terms of enforcement. They are committee to make the wheelchair wraps clear and free of icy walk.

The reason Mr. Kraus was invited here was to talk about side walk adjustment. He brought a piece of Legislation the Council wrote on January of February 2010. What they doubt on the legislation specifically is sidewalk cafe encroachment to the public right of way. As city officials, what they tend to look at is the public's right of way, and right to have free, clear and un-obstacle navigation. On page 5, Mr. Kraus highlighted some pieces, where fits specifically to ADA compliance, in terms of encroaching into the public space, and your requirement to be compliant with ADA standards, if you want to encroach to the public space. Mr. Kraus read through and explained some of the highlights. Mr. Kraus was open to any questions.

Mr. Noschese said when he had a problem, he did try to call 311 using the video phone. He never got through that service. Therefore Mr. Noschese emailed the service and had some communication with 311 through email. Mr. Noschese told them 311 should be accessible to users of the video phone. He asked Mr. Kraus whether he can help with that. Mr. Kraus responded that he would find it and report to Mr. Meritzer. Mr. McGann said that blind people would have very hard time with video phone. Another issue was the complaints about obstruction built.

Mr. O'Hanlon said as a group, we highly value accessible of sidewalk accessible. The first question is: Are you saying there isn't current law on the books regulates on that? Mr. Kraus responded it is completely unregulated; the only term in the city code is attached signing to a building that procure public right way. Mr. Meritzer said when the first issue came up, I check with our zoning office, technically they should be assigned automatically. Mr. O'Hanlon asked who has that responsibility. Mr. Kraus said public work department. I think there should be at least some guidelines for the sidewalk. If this is the sidewalk, everybody has to be intentionally navigate, which is clearly not happen now.

Mr. Wassermann asked we also talked about the huge traffic like boxes hang on some of the pool. Did you have a chance to check on that? Mr. Kraus responded he hadn't had a chance yet. Part of the conversation we will have here is how can we improve our public space in the city that was clearly built. The point is, we are truly committed to a truly walkable city, every one. The big picture is when design our buildings and when we install our utilities, we keep in mind the big picture is for everybody to be able to navigate. We are committed to say street strict being planned. Everybody get a little piece of what they want, but not the whole picture. We want to ensure that everybody is able to navigate and care about it. That's the current purpose.

Mr. McGann said most of his concern is that many landlords of these buildings cannot afford to make the previsions. Fixing is cheap. I don't understand why landlords complain about it since it

is so cheap. Mr. Kraus responded he agree the cost to accommodate is significant less than the cost to pay for the liability claim.

Ms. Goldstein added she noticed that people sometimes put out things and put them close to their business. I am wondering that if parking meter people could instruct people where to put them. Mr. Kraus responded it can be under the preview. Little policy was established how to do it, but I don't think it comes out the preview. Ms. Goldstein said they move the little signs around a lot. Mr. Kraus responded it seems to me that the simplest way to fix that problem is find way to either fix it within the window or on the building itself. Every sidewalk is different from others in the cities. Some are very narrow while some are easily navigated. At this stage of the game, I would be infinitely grateful just have a political will from the public work department administration to at least start to look at the situation. Whenever new sidewalks are installed, the handicap should be cleared noticed. The yellow nod service isn't installed. One of the thing I have talked with the engineering department about, in our public work department, is there should be clearly identified that this should be for the handicap. There has to be a certain differentiations between the two services in terms of color. But people clear think it is acceptable to either park in front of them, or to park right to them. We don't up here to have political insurance those are treated as they are supposed to be, and those citations are clearly issued.

Mr. Meritzer added issues about the color. The color is the same color as "do not park". The color's issue is people do not understand. That is exactly the same color we used for fire hydrant, or your curb cut. So I don't think when they look at the color, they don't know what it means, but I think the issue is they don't care.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked another question is I see Policy man occasionally on the street sign. But I never see people from department of public works siding people. Do they have an army on citation? Mr. Kraus responded that's a very great question. I would argue that the answer is in differentiation of the space. The public work department is going to be charge of citing sidewalk issue; policy and park authority are the citers of parking on the street. Policy also has power to preview sidewalk related violation. But it all is about a matter of timing. If public work is close to 5, the policy will take the obligation to cite after hours.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked how that one triggered that process to occur? My top 5 hated sandwiches walks that I have to navigate around every day. I am not sure the navigate system know how to trigger that. Mr. Kraus said I would argue start work with 311 calls to get laws to that situation. Also my office would be happy to follow up on those records. My office number is 4122552130. Maybe the next logical step might be inviting all interested party to have an open discussion together. The conversations I see is about everybody's view on what is right to have public rights of way equally.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked one of the related issues is snow removal. The city had run into practice to not citing every private property owner for fair to remove snows on sidewalk. I think it is similar to sandwich walk. If it is illegal, and the city is not treated at serious, it is a problem. I think there is a big public education process we should begin. City-council post agenda might be a good place to start. Task force will be interesting to support. Mr. Noschese agreed that many people not know about the specific laws you are talking about. Making some announcement warning people once a month, or even weekly, to provide more information and more warnings could prevent a lot of problem. Mr. Kraus responded that political will take the good idea and implement. One of the follow up is enforcement. We like to avoid enforcement and more toward education. But if education fails, enforcement should take place.

Ms. Goldstein suggested there should be a place put to the business owners if we talking about the sandwiches walks. There should be something to read. Mr. Kraus said there are all kinds of

venues we can use to get the message out. It could be local newspaper, or local develop companies and local community councils.

Mr. McGann asked if owner of the business saying they support the disability community but they don't really care about it. There is a conflict. Do you think they are still doing it? How we can fix this? Mr. Kraus responded it matters whether we want to establish a policy. If not, how we get everybody hold to it. The first is developing a policy in terms of encroachment right away. Mr. O'Hanlon asked for the blind community, sidewalk is a huge issue. My attitude is if people don't know what the law is, then it is a big barrier to get them to follow them. Hear that department of the public work is the entity responsible for keeping the sidewalk clear, my question is what is the penalty for the violating that? Mr. Kraus responded there is no penalty if there is no clear legislation. In terms of sandwich walk, there would be no penalty because here is no law about it. Mr. O'Hanlon asked would it be a good idea for council to clarify the duty in some legislations? Mr. Kraus said that would be a great first step. You will help me to decide when we should start to force. It can be done with all affective parties, though took times. Mr. O'Hanlon asked the post section agenda you have talked about have been scheduled yet or not? Mr. Kraus responded not yet. I was hoping to bring up here today. I can call for a meeting. I would argue a boarder, more open meeting, to discuss about it. We try to promote a walkable city all the time. But it doesn't enforce that will be happened. We need to take the work to ensure those happen needs more work and time. Mr. O'Hanlon said in terms of get the task force participate the post agenda, perhaps you can let Mr. Meritzer know the agenda. And he can inform everybody. Mr. Kraus said we will make a meeting with Richard, let the council president to find a time to talk to you. Mr. Noschese added we like to visit your office. But they don't have interpreter. I would like to have something be set up so we can visit. Mr. Kraus said we can do that. Mr. Meritzer said they can talk to Linda, to schedule contract interpreters. Mr. Kraus said we can do that, and that will be great.

UPDATE

Bus Stop at Fifth and McMasters

Mr. Meritzer said he had a number of emails and phone calls determine how we can deal with the issue. Pittsburgh downtown agreed to host a meeting between business, and people appointed by the task force to serve as the committee to look at the issue. Port authority will have all the stations reviewed next year. I will have that taskforce involved. The specific issued will be enrolled multiple interest groups.

Mr. Meritzer said the problem is they tried to relocation the bus stop, but the other business refused. They don't want to have discussion about the bus stop of the whole city. They only want to discuss the certain stop. Mr. O'Hanlon said the question is why not creating a bus stop at 6 & liberty. They all have the same giant. Mr. Tague asked who's decision is this. Mr. Meritzer responded it is the city. Mr. Meritzer said it is the Director for engineering ,transportation planner and traffic planner. Mr. Meritzer said a number of committee involve. If that happened, they will respect the task-force's opinion. Mr. O'Hanlon said they ground rule doesn't work.

Mr. Meritzer said the port authority concern is they don't want this to be a global discussion at this stage. They will have the whole discussion and arrange a talk to hear from both the community and the business next year. Mr. O'Hanlon explained his concern now is the whole swaths downtown is without a stop. If we create a stop at Liberty and 6th, is that could be a suitable, compromised push? Mr. Meritzer responded he will send an email to clarify, is that acceptable to move an existing stop to here. Mr. Tague asked why this conversation for the county on the bus stops cannot start earlier. Mr. O'Hanlon said we need to concern what do we need to get involved in that decision so we are not late for that decision making process. Perhaps we need to discussion our representatives for this meeting. How many representatives do we get? Mr. Meritzer replied they haven't assigned the number yet. The meeting hasn't be set up yet. Mr. O'Hanlon said another concern is attendants for the Heinz center are normally elder and with less

mobility. They are not disability group but also impacted by the bus stop station. I am not sure they have a representative for the meeting.

Mr. Meritzer confirmed at the end of this section that the representatives will be John Tague, Joe Wassermann, Richard McGann, Paul O'Hanlon and John Robinson. There will be technique assistants in the port authority meeting.

STAFF REPORT

First of all, Mr. Meritzer welcomed the new intern Stafine, who will work on a number of projects, and welcomed phoebe's back.

For the 2011 wheelchair game, we are meeting monthly the third Wednesday. The last meeting is very productive. Everyone please write down on your calendar on June 20 to 24, when national office will come to finalize the preparation. I want to make sure people using wheelchairs will be involved in the site visit process. We need a lot of volunteers to go out with the national staffs and local staffs to double check and make sure all the accommodations were made. The site visit will last from 9am to 4pm for four days. They will go and check everywhere and make sure everything is accessible. Most of the game will be held in the Convention Center. The swimming activities will be at Tree's Hall at Oakland. Mr. Meritzer introduced some of the activities, events and locations for the Wheelchair Game. There is lot of information on the back table. Please feel free to take. Interpreting services will be provided if is requested.

About the building evaluation reports, Mr. Meritzer was continuing working with high school students. We got a lot of support on staffs. The visitability meeting was held on November 24th, 2010 and we will get that information for you on how was that going. We have 6 approvals and 2 denies. I am getting together a report to the council and will send to the task-force as well.

Mr. Meritzer was audited by the controller office. They said most of Mr. Meritzer's work is acceptable. They have some comments on some of the things Mr. Meritzer was doing. Mr. Meritzer would like to make changes according to the comments, such as Mr. Meritzer was not aware his is responsible for compliances from employees with disability against the city. They pointed out all the building service over the years has not been consistent. Some time is more intensive review than other times that we have no standard form to use right now. We will make a response to their audit. One of Mr. Meritzer's concern is they did not contact people from disability community asking about the job he was doing. Mr. Meritzer has suggested several times. City controllers are the auditor. As soon as the audit is available to the public, Mr. Meritzer will send out the link to entire disability community so they can have a look on what has been determined and what Mr. Meritzer will correct.

Mary Alice asked as a city county task force member, is the audit only speak to the city staff. Mr. Meritzer responded the audit was by the city and I was reported as a city staff member. At the same time, I feel the city county task force can represent the disability community so they can have some input.

This morning Mr. Meritzer picked up a wheel chair donated by UPMC for the city building. Anyone coming down to the building need not bring their own now.

On Wednesday there will be a meeting organized by the city's volunteer coordinator discussing volunteers for snow removal. This is an internal city departments meeting. But Mr. Meritzer will report back to the task force.

Mr. Tague asked is there an update on the council. Mr. Meritzer responded tomorrow there will be a meeting discussing that. Issue for discussion is traffic flow plan, including accessible street

parking. The meeting starts at 2pm in this room. This is a public meeting and you are welcome to come and speaking.

Vox Pop

Mr. McGann asked about the convention center meeting, whether there will be interpreter. Mr. Meritzer responded for the convention center events, they are responsible for answer that question. Mr. McGann asked who to contact. Mr. Meritzer suggested calling the general number to ask. If they cannot, let me know. Mr. O'Hanlon said we would like to know how people response and evaluate how easy and how hard to get the commendation they need.

Mr. O'Hanlon brought up the request for people to talk to him. He had got inquires from people on issues that individuals park the car on the sidewalks, making it impossible to access. We need to discuss whether this is a problem, how big is the problem and where is problem. It seems lots people routinely park on the sidewalk. If any people notice that in your neighborhood, please talk to me.

Mr. McGann asked if there is a parade, will there be interpreters? Mr. Meritzer responded that if it is a city parade, we can provide the interpreter. If it is a Steeler parade, it will be unclear. But we will try to get it happen. Mr. Noschese said we need some of the path to get in to see the interpreter. Some of the people were stuck and cannot see the interpreter. Mr. Meritzer responded he will make sure there will be a section for people to see the interpreters.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING (Subject to change):

DATE: March 21st, 2011
TIME: 1:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street