

**CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
JUNE 20, 2011
MINUTES**

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

Members Present: Aurelia Carter-Scott, Janet Evans, Milton Henderson, Richard McGann, James C. Noschese, Katherine D. Seelman, John Tague

Members Absent: Paul O'Hanlon, Chairperson, Linda Dickerson, Sarah Goldstein, Liz Healey, Jeff Parker

Others Present: Dennis Briggs, Judy Baricella, Dianne Gallagher, Bingbing Hou, Charles Morrison, Elijah Hughes, Larry Hockenberry, Megan Hammond, Richard Meritzer, Susan Rademacher, Lucy Spruill, Rob Stephany, Shirley Weiru Shi, Quaishawn Whitlock, Quianna Wasler

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Seelman at 1:00 PM.

ACTION ITEMS

Review and approval of April and May Minutes

The motion moves unanimously.

Review and approval of financial report

Mr. Tague would like to have financial report reviewed at next meeting.

DISCUSSION

Urban Redevelopment Policies toward Accessibility

Rob Stephany, Executive Director of Urban Redevelopment Authority and Quianna Wasler, Main Streets Development Specialist in commercial façade renovation program were invited to the meeting to discuss accessibility issues regarding URA projects.

Mr. Stephany gave a brief introduction of how URA works and how accessibility element functions in that process. He said the Main Streets Development project has much of the discussion over the last year. He agreed that the deployment of street face capital into main streets of the city should have an accessibility requirement. The spirit of the program has been more publicly enjoyment, not necessarily the private entrepreneurs.

The intent has been to catalyze the community development on main streets with highly visible signs of investment. After the start of this conversation, URA looked at the performance level, and they found seven out of thirty façade street programs are more accessible since 2008. Some renovation projects with four or five steps have substantial community development impact. They can't be accessible occasionally because it's for private use, such as a gallery. URA is trying to enforce reentrance. At the meeting they had Mr. O'Hanlon agreed the exception to that since the dialogue. URA is preparing to have accessibility forms as a part of their street face program requirement. Another acquisition of the conversation is Mayor's Storefront Renovation Program. URA Street face program is more from a historical renovation standpoint, from a comprehensive plan perspective. URA provides approvals and capital to renovate the building façade. Based on the conversation, they decide to include sidewalks and that will provide a chance to become zero-step entrance. Up to \$2,500, there is a matching fund so that if the entrepreneurs invested \$2,500, URA would also bring \$2,500 in grant funds to emulate that.

Mr. Stephany said some of projects are possible to meet the requirements. Some of the projects where there are private studios, on main streets, in targeted districts are installing a lift. They don't meet requirement. It will be an unused lift. However, there are couples of instances highly cornered, visible property that would do a good for community development to see the investments will not overcome the accessibility piece.

URA has its own portfolio of street programs when there is a step up in some restaurants, they have to overcome it. The other thing is one applicant can't be funded twice; however, to provide accessibility previous applicants could also apply for this \$2,500 matching fund.

Concerning the origins of the funds, most of URA's funds come from the States. Right now, the current funds are city-bound funds. There are some loan-repayment funds. URA rarely limited their sources.

Regarding the gallery mentioned above, the reasons why it couldn't be accessible are first of all, it is a historical house; it is hard to get it accessible. Besides, it is for private use. Probably, it could be accessible with installing a lift or other mechanism. Probably if it is a public gallery and people want it to be accessible, URA could go to the State and get things done if it could happen. URA is kind of requirement-oriented and tries to get people to do this with their available capital.

Ms. Spruill talked about portable ramps in a restaurant of Sharpsburg. The restaurant brought ramps out when needed. But personally she doesn't like it, if anything could be done, it would be better. The solution may be the adjustment to sidewalks with internal or external ramping. URA is also open to this issue.

Another support URA will offer is to pay the costs of adjustment to the sidewalks, the ramping required in different levels, curb encroachment permitting than just sign a company of modification. They will support the cost of consultant side of adjustment.

Ms. McGann raised an example of stubborn landlords. To clarify that, Mr. Stephany clarified they react to people who come to them with projects with budgets. They can't detect or assist.

The city has a guideline of accessibility and Mr. Tague advised URA to use that as a useful tool.

Mr. Noschese talked about a community center in 1854 Forbes Avenue. It has 7 steps to go down. The staff there is trying to apply for loans from bank, city grants and county grants to overcome it. But nothing came. He wanted to know if URA could help them. Since it is on the main streets, it is eligible to apply for up to \$2,500 grant piece once the guideline has been passed.

Mr. Meritzer requested if he or Mr. O'Hanlon could attend board meeting to support as a requesting side when the guideline of the street façade program handed in to the board. Mr. Meritzer wanted to give one-step-packet information once it is approved to URA's business. The business can apply for that, if they have one step in the front of their stores.

Ms. Wasler had read the packet and wanted to discuss with Mr. Meritzer where they put it with URA's information. She added that the Storefront Renovation Fund could fund what the business wants to do with the one step packet.

Ms. Spruill made a suggestion about seven interior steps. If there is room and these devices become more compact over the years, it is very probable that a stair lift is going to be a better solution with 7 interior steps. Because it would take a lot of ramping for 7 interiors steps and save a lot of money.

UPDATE

Air Port Accessibility Meeting with the FAA

On June 6, 2011, Mr. Noschese, Mr. McGann and Ms. Evans had an audio conference with three staff from FAA.

Mr. Noschese updated that they were surprised because Greater Pittsburgh International Airport does have ADA coordinator. It's uncertain if she is knowledgeable about ADA issue or not, but it would be good to invite her to discuss with or to be exposed by the Task Force about ADA.

Mr. Meritzer connected her several times after meeting but she was on vacation at that time and she hasn't returned Mr. Meritzer's call yet.

Mr. Henderson met Airport ADA coordinator once before and He thought she doesn't seem to be knowledgeable or has willing to attend the Task Force meeting.

Dr. Seelman suggested inviting both her and her boss to the Task Force meeting.

Mr. McGann added that it was important to invite one representative for aviation safeguard and one representative for the ambassador. Both services do have volunteers to help people with disabilities. But they don't know how to communicate with deaf people. He suggested involving them and ADA coordinator to communicate the needs in order to improve their communication with deaf people.

Mr. Noschese argued that it would be overwhelming for ADA coordinator to meet too many people at the same time. It would be a good start to leave things to ADA coordinator alone.

Mr. Hockenberry added that a deaf person with cochlear implant is forbidden to board.

Mr. Henderson would contact Airport ADA coordinator and try to get her to the Task Force Meeting, though; he didn't think it will help a lot.

Ms. Carter-Scott commented her unpleasant experience in the airport, Mr. Tague suggested inviting the people from Transportation Security Administration (TSA) as well.

Technically, the airport is administrated by County Aviation Authority, not the county itself. Ms. Baricella is willing to help invite the staff to come.

Ms. Spruill commented historically, FAA didn't help a lot in improving accessibility issues.

The problem deals with FAA, County Aviation Authority, TSA and Carriers. There are numbers of carriers involved in.

Mr. Noschese and Ms. Evans advised to build relationship with the people in the airport, letting them know the needs from the meeting.

UPDATE

Merger of T-Mobile and AT&T

Mr. Tague introduced briefly the documents sent before the meeting, which contains the topic about merger of T-Mobile and AT&T. The one thing he emphasized is when technology comes out, people with disabilities want to be assured that it is accessible. On the other hand, the merger will expand the uses of broadband which will increase the accessibility for people to the internet. Two important issues related to it are education and healthcare. He raised this issue so that task force members could have a discussion about what position they could take on.

Dr. Seelman has been very involved in a coalition organization for accessible technology. When she first visits www.internetinnovation.org, the website had little sense of accessibility issue. On the other hand, the COAT and SEC is on it. Dr. Seelman stated

that we don't have a local leverage on it, what we can do is to educate. She advocated inviting representatives from those companies here.

Mr. McGann commented that it was very important to have someone train the people with disabilities when new technologies came out. Mr. Noschese agreed with that.

Ms. Evans added she can't learn how to use the technology when she buys it.

Mr. Hockenberry talked about his experience with T-Mobile and AT&T. He emphasized that the staff there wasn't fully aware of his situation, and called him with voicemail. With inconvenience in communication with them, he can't be explained many issues related to his phones, such as texting services only and service plan fees.

Dr. Seelman directed all of the audience to www.coataccess.org to look at what community of disability is doing on information communication technology issues.

STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Meritzer wondered if Task Force wants to reprint the brochures which produced years ago. Mr. Tague is concerned about the cost of it so that he could include it into next year's budget. Mr. Meritzer would like to check it and return this issue to the task force later.

Secondly, Mr. Meritzer briefed the summary of last strategic planning committee meeting. He is still waiting for the information of accessibility regarding Emergency Management and the Baker Reports are still not on the W driver. Mr. Meritzer and his interns are still working on facility survey for the comprehensive plan. High school students will continue to go to facility survey with him next calendar year. At the meantime, Mr. Elijah Hughes was trained on that and hopes to do a facility survey on Schenley Park this summer. The interpreting contract was finally finalized and starts to pay the bills. This contract includes CART. The amount of the contract was probably \$25,000 a year. Mr. Meritzer clarified that the money is from the city, and works for all public meetings of the city. Ms. Shirley Shi is in the process of setting up a second show for Accessible PGH. In the meeting, the committee also discussed about Disability Mentoring Day. He introduced that many companies and agencies are encouraged to have some students with disabilities work with them on Disability Mentoring Day and the date is October 19th this year. In the meeting, Mr. Meritzer also talked about the Veteran's wheelchair games in the meeting. He is working with the police, with the emergency medical management, and with EMS to get it done on the city side. The veterans established a relationship with EMS to work with them directly for emergency even if they have staff in hospital with routine medical issues. That's what basically happened and ADA office is setting up a strategic meeting now.

Mr. Meritzer went over his calendar. In May and June, Mr. Meritzer had veteran's wheelchair games meetings. Ms. Jeanne McNally was doing site surveys with some

people from advisory committee to make sure the facility is accessible. Mr. Meritzer appreciated Ms. Baricella's input to better improve the accessibility in those venues. Mr. Meritzer also attended Pittsburgh Arts Council and Fines Workshop on public facilities accessibility on the arts. This was the first series. And He found it very interesting and educational. He made his office available as a resource. There are several other workshops in this series. The information is on the table. He encouraged people who have interests in arts to attend because that is a new frontier for accessibility. Mr. Meritzer had two visitability tax credit meetings. Because some people from the meeting expressed some concerns regarding people getting the right information when they call the City of the County at May meeting, they had another meeting last week. They had some council members to talk about some involved issues. The good news is 9 tax credits would be awarded.

A new project is ADA office had a phone meeting with Dr. Kim Mathos. ADA office is doing the second hospital compliance guideline manual for cognitive disabled. Dr. Kim Mathos is helping to set up a meeting with right organizations. Ms. Jeanne McNally is contacting the hospitals. Because it is harder to get input from the variety of cognitive disabled people than it did for first manual, Dr. Kim Mathos suggested doing a short introduction presentation of manual instead of a questionnaire. Mr. Meritzer also encouraged input from the task force for this issue.

Mr. Meritzer also attended graduation ceremony and he was proud that the high school students he worked with were given leadership award.

Next week, there will be a meeting with ACHIEVA to discuss about the manual. He was the board of the Trail Blazers Boy Scout Council to provide technical advice on accessibility and outreach information.

Ms. Shirley Shi worked on Accessible PGH and had the first show tape captioned and interpreted. Once it is ready, it will be put on the web page of ADA website. She is also setting up the next show to talk about One Step Packet.

Mr. Elijah Hughes reported about visitability meetings. He tried to clear communication barriers between city and county staff members. One Step legislation will be on city clerk's doc next week. Mr. Meritzer will inform every one the council's agenda and whether there will be a public hearing on this.

Ms. Bingbing Hou currently worked on audible traffic signal project. She is contacting citywide Lions Club International Foundation to raise grants from them.

Ms. Carter-Scott questioned about the variety of focus group in hospital compliance guideline project. She mentioned the family members of the disabled were supposed to be included.

Mr. Meritzer responded that when they did manual for deaf, deaf/blind and hard of hearing consumers, they do include family members and he was also looking for organizations that work for supportive family members.

VOX POP

Mr. Hockenberry raised an issue about deaf culture. He thought it should be prohibited that the hearing world had the deaf kids heard. He advocated preserving the deaf culture.

Mr. Noschese added that professionals emphasized the audiology and overlooked the sign language.

Dr. Seelman responded that audiology professors and students were also concerned about cultural deaf and had heat discussion. There is always reasonable disagreement.

Mr. Noschese gave the example of children who are taught play the piano. He was worried about the pressure of profit on businessman will neglects deaf people's life quality. Mr. McGann agreed with that.

Mr. Hockenberry emphasized that children should have their own right to choose cochlear implant. He agreed with Mr. Noschese on his previous point.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM

THE NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING

DATE: July 18th, 2011

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street