

CITY OF PITTSBURGH/ALLEGHENY COUNTY
TASK FORCE ON DISABILITIES
March 21, 2011
MINUTES

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

Members Present: Paul O’Hanlon, Chairperson, Janet Evans, Richard McGann, James C. Noschese, Jeff Parker, Katherine D. Seelman, John Tague

Members Absent: Aurelia Carter, Linda Dickerson, Sarah Goldstein, Milton Henderson, Liz Healey

Others Present: Lauren Arnita, Judy Baricella, Lester Bennett, Adolphine Birescik, Ed Buran, Gerhardt Egri, Chuck Keenan, Bob Kohlmeyer, Donald J. Kovacic, Danielle Lengle, Charles Morrison, Richard Meritzer, Teresa Nellans, Gerald Penna, Robin Smith, Lucy Spruill, Shirley Weiru Shi, Tamara Siegert, Joe Wasserman

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

INTRODUCTIONS:

ACTION ITEMS

Review and approval of January Minutes

The motion moves unanimously.

Review and approval of financial report

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

Mr. Tague reported 2 things, a piece of good news and a piece of bad news. The good news was that based on a request put in the department of human services, they approved an additional \$3000 for this year to be able to do a couple of things. A strategic planning retreat is being planned, not just in future. One is strategic planning session, and possibly an annual meeting and couple other things depend on how the money is spent. That’s good news. The bad news is funding source, human services development fund, was zeroed out of the state level. There is always a hope some of these could be restored, but not sure that’s going to happen. Mr. Tague was not sure when to start to use these funds. These will be part of discussion left to determine in the strategic planning session.

Mr. Noschese pointed out an error on the report. The very last column, at the beginning of the budget, it showed \$3,000 and \$400 had been used. Shouldn't that be \$2800 left? Mr. Tague said he would revise and resend it.

Mr. Meritzer talked about the change in the CART. The city recently went out for the contract that it would put a budget for interpreting and captioning. And the city took about number of proposals in, for both captioning and interpreting. A new company that came into town actually submitted a subcontract at the Center for Hearing and Deaf Services at substantially lower cost than the company currently using. Because it worked perfectly when using in the city, because their charged substantially lower and because it was through Center for Hearing and Deaf Services that made a lot easier to coordinate, Mr. Meritzer suggested using the new company. So far, unlikely the original company, this new one is willing to give their transcripts, which will make it a lot easier to do minutes.

Mr. Tague asked Mr. Meritzer to give updates of the automatic system the city would be using eventually. Mr. Meritzer responded that the company was asked to come before contracting so that staff could observe what CART was, because it was all new tool to some of them. And they were in the process of ordering a program to do that automatically finds voice, operative system currently using. They have to defend it to the budget office based on how it will help the city, not how it will help the task force. Mr. O'Hanlon asked what "it" meant. Mr. Meritzer answered it meant the automatic captioning, the program, because they would buy the program.

Mr. O'Hanlon said we should seriously look at it, but it should not be on conclusion because as the research showed, it was a less perfect product. Dr. Seelman agreed with him and added that any consideration of such a system should be assessed by technical team and it would be used by hard of hearing and deaf community widely. And she asked if the new contractor of CART worked well in meetings. Mr. Meritzer responded that it is used well in several meetings, such as convention center meetings and mayors meeting with city council. Mr. O'Hanlon suggested it was still not ready for a prime time. Both Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Noschese suggested Task Force cooperate with CMU or University of Pittsburgh's research program for little.

Mr. McGann asked Mr. Meritzer the estimated cost. He responded it would not cost the Task Force anything because the city government would buy it for general use. Mr. McGann thought it was great and Mr. Meritzer definitely would get it if he could. All agreed if there was no cost on budget. But there were still some concerns about the technology part because it was very complex.

Mr. Noschese asked Mr. McGann if he could feel the captioning since he could see it. Mr. McGann responded that he could through Bluetooth. Mr. Noschese commented each deaf-blind people required interpreters. But with this system, it would be a great help for deaf-blind people. Mr. McGann added that there were some deaf-blind people who

couldn't read the Braille. Someone couldn't read it as rapidly as others did. Mr. Wassermann added there were some blind people couldn't read the Braille, unfortunately.

DISCUSSION

Continued Funding for the City of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County Task Force on Disabilities

Mr. O'Hanlon asked if the funding or funding related issues were finished. He said they had discussed the issues about financial report, funding uncertainty with the governors zeroing out the HSDF, which legislation may restore. They had also touched upon some of the sort of captioning, CART costs.

Mr. Parker suggested that we should think about who would be alternative funding sources. For example, FISA, supports different types of activities involving disability people. Senator Ferlo has done some donations towards things. He suggested trying to figure out correct balance of keeping the responsibilities and accountability, also not waiting until the last minute. Potentially looking at the other sources will be alternatives to keep things going.

Mr. O'Hanlon suggested task force table this issue in the strategic planning meeting that later on the agenda.

Meeting with Mayor

Mr. O'Hanlon gave a briefing on what happened, what task force did. The first was the meeting with the mayor. This meeting involved the mayor and a handful mayor's assistants. Meeting was attended by everybody on the task force and maybe 4 or 5 additional individual. It was a good meeting. Mr. O'Hanlon asked how to make such a good meeting into something like a process. He mentioned Dr. Seelman's a suggestion of something like a dashboard to get issues updated that task force could track or follow. Dr. Seelman point out that it was actually Ms. Healy who suggested it.

Mr. Wassermann said either on this discussion or strategic planning, one of the definite things is making sure that task force could get six month or definitely an annual accounting, for example, from the mayor's office. Mr. Wassermann emphasized that sense of progress was important. He suggested annual meeting with mayor

Ms. Baricella asked if there is a list of the issues discussed and recommendations made for mayor to do.

Mr. O'Hanlon responded they did stretch a wish list for mayor including issues of transit funding, issues of port authority, sort of dismantling process of things were going on, how critical the public transportation was for disability community. He said they tried to keep it to mostly city-related issues and could bring a copy of agenda and hand it out the next meeting.

Dr. Seelman advised to go down these issues to this group, which was nice platform to go further.

Mr. McGann said marketability was needed so that the process could be shown, as well as the interpreter training.

Mr. O'Hanlon asked the audience if they were already in Richard's email list and said they would send the minutes of this meeting to them.

Ms. Evans said it was okay to meet mayor. The only concern is how long it would put into action.

Mr. O'Hanlon responded that he would like keep open the discussion for any other comments or questions. There was a good conversation that can happen to see how to follow up next steps or continue to advocate round these issues. He decided to postpone this until next meeting.

Mr. Wassermann said he remembered that there was nothing on the book with regard to regulations with sandwich boards but in the meeting with mayor on the 28th of the January, mayor said that there was something with regard to regulations of sandwich boards. Are they both on the same page?

Mr. Meritzer said there was nothing on the books, because there was no permission to do that or there was no process to do that. Or maybe mayor's saying was that technically, there was a process to regulate anything that was in the side walks. In theory, public books could regulate them based on the current regulations which they didn't say sandwich boards, they didn't fit sandwich boards. But clearly they were not, they were having some trouble regulating, the cases was that he ignored the research issues adequately, and which just speaking with his knowledge of how city works. Mr. Meritzer thought it was not any attempt to mislead or to modify.

Mr. O'Hanlon concluded that the issues of agenda would be send out and held to the next meeting for discussion, how it would be followed up, tracking process, and accountability, expectation, etc.

Council Post Agenda

Mr. Meritzer said just task force members were invited because post agenda were by invitation only but publicly viewed. Mr. Meritzer sent a public notice to everybody that this was happening so that anyone could attend.

Mr. O'Hanlon summarized the discussion with Mr. Kraus about his intention of proposals to regulate sandwich boards on sidewalks. The task force had a great concern about the issue of sidewalk accessibility and believed that things like sandwich boards have an impact. So Mr. Kraus invited task force to this agenda meeting. Mr. Kraus set the agenda broader than only focus on sidewalks. The meeting was almost 2 hours. Eventually a

growing number of council members came in some point of the meeting. The attendees built a good opening relationship with city council and suggested that sandwich boards be considered to use for accessibility rather than advertisement only.

Mr. Tague stressed the lack of enforcement. He said people talked about what can be done, but lack the sense of enforcement.

Ms. Baricella asked that if any plans to meet with the County Executive or County Council. She was thinking more about policy, employment, ADA compliance, on county-wide.

Mr. Meritzer pointed out that actually the task force didn't initiate either of these meetings. In both cases, they are initiated by elective officials. So it's not like the task force decide city-wide or county-wide issues they should talk about. In the one case, some specific issue may be more into the city side. For the mayor's office, his offices contact Mr. Meritzer and said they would like to have meeting with the disability community and who should be invited. So in both cases, the task force was the recipient of invitation, not the initiator of the meeting.

Ms. Spruill said the major shopping malls could all be understood as public accommodations and if one started with the side walks within the majors shopping malls that would be a limited number and there was no doubt that this body has a legitimate interest to major public accommodations and that somebody in the county should be responsible for ADA enforcement and major public accommodations. So that would be an appropriate place to start. As far as the city, she said some conversations about whether its BBI or public work that enforced this issue of all these infringements of side walks, undoubtedly, it should be one of these city entities. But she believed that this was an ADA issues also. So there was an overall responsibility that could be adjusted. Say this was BBI's responsibility; this was public work's responsibility. It was not only the city code, it maybe also ADA responsibility. She said we should back at the enforcement mechanism.

Mr. McGann said don't forget the shopping malls, and big malls, such as Wal-mart. For Ms. Baricella, sometimes, it's difficult to communicate with some of the staff in county office without interpreting for deaf-blind. And some of county officials do house, but the deaf people might be not sure what their purpose was.

Mr. Tague asked if county has ADA coordinator like city does? He was not sure whether they perform the same function or just a connection. He was not sure how that works. He asked Ms. Baricella to explain a little bit.

Ms. Baricella said she was called upon for ADA information, but she was not official ADA coordinator, the county has none.

Ms. Spruill said UCP could bring some of the county issues up.

UPDATE

Convention Center Accessibility

Mr. O'Hanlon summarized the meeting. He said they had a meeting with the management team of convention center. This was the follow up meeting after the first one. They walked through the convention center and then discussed various elements of buildings, where accessibility are needed for. They suggested how convention center could improve their marketing for disability community, accessibility logo, everything from lighting to sounding.

Ms. Lengle said after working with them afterwards, they are continued to promise, but it seemed that they were overwhelmed. They overwhelmed how they could provide interpreters, so on and so forth. Her opinion was that it was positive experience and they were opening doors for feedback and looking at them at schedules. She said see what would happen for future events but she did think that they are left positive feedback with talking with the community.

Ms. Spruill added that the convention center, like the airport, run by authority. She suggested authority should have ADA coordinate benefit for community. Her experience in convention center was that it's a vast open space without anything.

Mr. Noschese said they had already suggested them.

Ms. Lengle, said in terms of putting different interpreters in different days, it had progress. But it's not convention center's responsibility, it's ones who putting the show. She advised to just make sure to follow up unless than another year.

Mr. McGann asked if the city of Pittsburgh already had an ADA coordinator, why the other authority should have one as well. So who was responsible? Why don't they just get in touch with them? They already know what to do. He was confused. He also said it's also important to know how to encourage them. Why city authority and city of Pittsburgh work together?

Mr. O'Hanlon responded they were different entities; they worked as city and county. He said task force should learn how to work with them.

Mr. Meritzer said authority is single-purpose; co-terminus, independent municipality, just like and county. Task force has no more power over these authorities; all could be done is try to work with them.

Mr. Noschese said that Mary Conturo controlled the deliverable of convention center. And also Mr. Noschese was involved with Heinz field, PNC Park, Consol Energy Center. In the four different places, he met different people. He said he just had to find the key to how to get the information and to get these all four places to apply. And he thought it would be a great idea to a meeting, tell them it is vital.

Mr. Tague said keep in mind also the authorities were separate. There are some processes that can affect those authorities.

Ms. Lengle asked who's going to set up a follow-up meeting. They were willing to hear the thoughts from different community.

Mr. O'Hanlon wanted to set up a subgroup to talk with them. Mr. Penna, Ms. Lengle, Mr. McGann, Mr. Noschese, and Ms. Evans would be on the small subgroup.

Ms. Lengle said perhaps their availability would be more open during the summer according to their words. She also wanted to add Ms. Nellans in this small group.

Mr. Meritzer said Convention Center will provide accommodations, if they don't. Let he knows.

Ms. Spruill said many events would be held in convention center in National Veterans Wheelchair Games. She suggested anyone in the small group should make sure that convention center has certain accessibility cater to their need and make sure they don't do temporary efforts.

Mr. Meritzer said he was working with them as the community advisor and they have someone assigned to convention center, and he would convey this request to them.

Strategic Planning Meeting (Retreat)

Mr. O'Hanlon said next is the postpone discussion about the strategic planning meeting. So far, he had added to agenda to discuss on the issue of continued funding of task force, reaching out to the county and he thought they would have the growing agenda for that meeting. He asked Mr. Tague to remind him of the dates when the meeting will be held.

Mr. Tague responded that what he did was to send out to the task force members and Mr. Meritzer and Ms. Baricella dates, April 21 and May 21. He was trying to get consensus of what was the best Saturday would be. So they had to determinate a process for members to provide input. There was also going to be some additional focus he hasn't done anything yet mainly because he wanted to see what task force members wanted. And Mr. Parker was working with him with setting up ideal logistics. There was probably being on one of these Saturdays. Mr. O'Hanlon and Mr. Tague could can about 9:30-3:00 and appropriate UCP and that's what Mr. Tague has set up so far.

Mr. O'Hanlon said the first question he had was could they wait this discussion until then for outreach and funding or should they start something with the people they've contacted in the County. Is he the person Task Force start with?

Mr. Tague responded that he needed a little bit direction of where they are going.

Mr. O'Hanlon said it was not the DHS issue. He asked Ms. Baricella to get her thoughts.

Ms. Baricella said if task force set up a meeting with John and Reggie Young, it's a waste of time right now. Because nobody knew what was going. The only thing she knew was there was no money. And if anything got restored, it did probably not going to be the level it was. So she suggested looking at and reducing the money, getting where they can get rid of money. She said that's what they, inside of DHS, were doing for the programs. She suggested task force look for other money and can't wait until 21st May to discuss.

Mr. O'Hanlon said they may estimate and ask the chief executive to reach out then.

Ms. Baricella said it might be a good idea to send Reggie Young and copy John Liss an email saying, we know that HSDF Funding, is there any source of funding that we might be able to look at. And she suggested task force report they had looked at when they saw Dan. She said she heard no discussion internally about task force.

Ms. Spruill said she would go to foundations and State Legislators probably.

Ms. Evans might have other contacts.

Mr. Parker was looking for facilitators. He suggested if Mr. Meritzer and Ms. Baricella could be invited to this planning team.

Ms. Evans suggested 21st May be the date, or it will be rushed.

Mr. O'Hanlon responded this was what they wanted to do.

STAFF REPORT

Introduction of Shirley, taking Phoebe's place

Mr. Meritzer continued to go to city special events committee meeting, and had been more and more conveying what came out from these meeting to the greater community. As the matter of fact, he has recently got updated an application from the Regatta, which initially was not providing accessibility and now they are. So apparently having the community know they are not providing accessibility has gotten some additional information to them which they are reacting to. He thanked everyone who involve in this. He also said but having the community, verifying the need was certainly a good thing. He would continue to get that information out of the community and let others know what was accessible and what wasn't accessible.

Two weeks ago, Mr. Meritzer gave a lecture in Duquesne Nursing School and has gotten an application from one of those students to work with him. And several other people were very interested. He has in the internship process been approached by somebody from Penn State College of hospital administration. That was how the Hospital Compliance Guidelines for The Deaf, Deaf Blind and Hard of Hearing came about. Another student approached him. That may be a really good opportunity to not only move that project but a intuition for addition, but also to start hopefully, next annual

would be getting a lot interest cognitively disabled community about a similar document for them, and also to deal more with insurance issue with doctors' offices. So he was hoping some of these projects could be moved forward.

Mr. Meritzer continued to go out with the high school students to evaluate buildings. Much to his surprise what was happening was rather getting the same students, which was originally planned. He had now gotten a setup rotating students. Every week, He had got different students to come out with him. So now, number of students, not only senior, but juniors to sophomore, from McNaughton, had been going out with him. It's a Pittsburgh public school for the cognitively disabled. Teachers said it really made a difference on their attendance and their self-worth. It's really making a difference, the city staff met them and saw that they were very interested in and very involved. And Mr. Meritzer was actually getting some good data. One of the results of their evaluation was that city parks ordered a hundred of restroom signs appropriate to make a setup for all of their centers after they kept on going evaluations and say there was no sign there. That's an easy fix. They fixed it. So Mr. Meritzer's team was moving ahead with some of this easiest stuff. And of course the big fix was going to be when they do the major facility assessment management plan to bring up all the building to make sure their accessibility are a part.

The Visibility committee needs to meet. There was an issue written there, the visibility law. Mr. Meritzer was planning to call a meeting very soon to see. Once that was verified, United Cerebral Palsy agreed to print the first round of brochures which was designed by Yoko Tai, and put them together. Mr. Meritzer had a lot of meetings. He said once we get the board, we don't need to make any changes based on what states' changing, we can get those out. Also there wasn't an issue with how the states wording changed are local wording that caused some confusion. So we wait and see if states are changing any other wording, then Mr. Meritzer was going to put them together all these changes to clarify that.

Mr. Meritzer reported that they got planning commission to approve the One Step Ordinance with one minor change. They were going to add that wording and they were going to get legislation up and that would happen very soon.

VOX POP

Mr. Noschese said he was wondering if Mr. Meritzer would do a follow-up with water authority. He said if there is anything that they could be able to do. He wanted to do a follow-up with Mr. Meritzer.

Mr. Meritzer responded the issue and said he would have some feedback to Mr. Noschese.

Mr. O'Hanlon said whether the individual involved can get some kind of an agreement to pay it over a time.

Mr. Meritzer said that's between the water authorities. Some water authority do, some don't. He thought it's his role to get water authorities together to discuss the issue. He was reluctant to get involved individual issues outside the city government.

Mr. Noschese said they could discuss it later.

Mr. Meritzer said: Let's discuss via email.

Mr. McGann said he was in.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM

The NEXT TASK FORCE MEETING

DATE: April 18th, 2011

TIME: 1:00 P.M.

LOCATION: Large Conference Room
200 Ross Street