

# **People with disabilities** **Constituent Meeting**

## **Public Involvement Task Force**

September 8, 2003, City Hall, Lovejoy Room

### **MEETING NOTES**

**Attendance:** Anne O'Malley, Sue Rhoades, Joan Hanson, Terry Maxwell, Doris Julien, John Captain, Karen Hanson, Jan Campbell

**Host:** City and County Advisory Council on Disabilities

### **Goal of Event**

Goal of event was to help inform the Public Involvement Task Force on issues and concerns from people with disabilities. The task force is charged with developing recommendations for improving public involvement efforts within the City of Portland to be considered for approval by City Council.

### **Summary of Comments**

Below are summaries of comments into broader themes.

**Question:** What are the best ways for government to get input from people with disabilities about decision-making efforts? What things would make involvement by people with disabilities easier and more likely?

#### **Reinstate Human Rights Commission/Center**

There was strong interest in bringing back a Human Rights Commission or center to emphasize the City's commitment to upholding basic civil liberties and rights for its residents.

#### **Dedicated staff people for outreach to diverse constituencies**

City needs to fund specialized public involvement positions to reach out to diverse constituency interests. Specifically, the City needs to continue to fund a disabilities coordinator and reinstate a position for immigrant/refugee outreach.

#### **Role of customer service awareness for needs of people with disabilities**

City leaders need to communicate with bureau management and back to the public that the City values quality customer service for people with disabilities. Be clear that harassment of people with disabilities will not be tolerated. Access to emergency police and fire services is a priority for people with disabilities.

- ❑ Have standard signage at all customer service desks for non-English speakers directing them to write down their language so the City can contact AT&T language interpretation services.
- ❑ Provide support to re-build City volunteer language bank. Provide financial incentives to City employees that assist with interpretation and/or translation of non-English languages.
- ❑ Provide training for front desk and customer service staff on interacting with people with disabilities. Emergency service providers need to be trained in awareness of special needs for people with disabilities during emergencies.

### **Communications need to be ADA accessible**

Management needs to take the lead to ensure public outreach materials are ADA accessible including:

- ❑ Web sites and print documents are 14 point font,
- ❑ Fliers note meetings are wheelchair accessible, ideally with logo,
- ❑ Contact info listed for special needs assistance, including 2 days notice,
- ❑ Stakeholder outreach lists should include disability advocacy organizations,
- ❑ Use ASL logo when sign language used.
- ❑ Provide basic City and bureau brochures about services they provide in Braille.

Jan Campbell (City Disability Coordinator), ADA Information Technology Center, and OHSU can provide trainings and technical assistance.

### **Use communication strategies that work for people with disabilities**

Email and web sites are increasingly most effective means for communicating with people with disabilities. Ensure up to ADA standards. Use community newsletters, such as Community Ear, for people who are deaf. Better to go out to existing community events where people with disabilities congregate to make presentations vs. having meetings downtown.

Utilize various service agencies that produce newsletters which are mailed out to many individuals including: ARC, Independent Living, Commission on the Blind, Community Ear, Portland Habilitation Center, qualified rehabilitation centers (ask Ann.)

### **Public involvement events need to be accessible**

Transportation options need to be accessible including ensuring meetings are on bus routes, work with Tri-Met to get bus vouchers for those who need them, availability of disabled parking spaces, bathrooms need to be wheelchair accessible. Neighborhood Association meetings need to be wheelchair accessible (send letters to chairs to remind them.)

### **Role of disability committee to review public involvement plans**

The City County Advisory Council on Disabilities should be consulted to review and approve that public involvement plans meet ADA requirements. Review efforts to recruit people with disabilities for Citizen Advisory Committees.

### **Inclusion of targeted outreach to gay, lesbian, bi, and trans communities**

Be inclusive of GLBT communities in public involvement efforts. Particularly recognize historical discrimination against transsexuals.

### **Recognize importance of self-esteem for people with disabilities**

Recognize that many people with disabilities have given up trying to be engaged in civic dialogue and struggle with self-esteem issues. Public involvement staff need to be extra vigilant to support the rights of individuals to be involved and make the extra efforts to reach out.

## **Raw Comments**

Raw comments recorded at the event are listed afterwards.

**Question:** What are the best ways for government to get input from people with disabilities about decision-making efforts? What things would make involvement by people with disabilities easier and more likely?

- ❑ GLBT in involvement process
- ❑ Brochure / Handbook for people with disabilities – translated into Braille.
- ❑ Human rights center / commission bring back.
- ❑ Signs for non-English and sign language,... have signs at front desks that we can access
- ❑ AT&T translation. Write down language.
- ❑ Volunteer translators, language bank, provide extra incentives to staff volunteers.
- ❑ Training for front desk people on customer service sensitivity training working w/ people w/ disabilities.
- ❑ Communicate to bureaus & to the public the city values effective customer service for people w/ disabilities. “PR”
- ❑ Print – documents need to be legible, 14 point.
- ❑ ADA IT center, OHSU can do trainings.
- ❑ Meeting accessibility: Transportation – work w/ TriMet, meetings on bus routes, flier say it’s wheelchair accessible, bathrooms accessible, parking disabled spaces.
- ❑ Self-esteem. People have given up. Need outreach to encourage people they have a right to participate. We’re listening. Will go out of our way.
- ❑ Better for city to go out to existing community group mtgs. and forums.
- ❑ City needs to subscribe specialist positions that can reach out to public, role of the MHRC, commission to advocate on research.
- ❑ Refer to Disability Committee to review plans, etc.

- ❑ Require bureau PI plans to meet w/ disability review committee. Special advisory committees.
- ❑ Transexual outreach.
- ❑ PI needs to be accessible. Fliers say mtg. Accessible. Mtg sites accessible. Stakeholder lists include disability.
- ❑ Special advisory committees.
- ❑ Bring back MHRC/special positions.
- ❑ Fliers need to have phone number to call for “special needs”. Have ASL logo
- ❑ Neighborhood Association meetings need to be wheelchair accessible. Send letter to NA.
- ❑ Access to police, fire is priority. Harassment big issue.
- ❑ Communication: Email works. Documents on web/ADA requirements. Community newspapers. Various agencies do newsletters. ARC, Independent Living, Commission On Blind, Community Ear, Portland Debilitation Center, Qualified Rehabilitation Centers – Ask Ann.