ART COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF February 23rd, 2011
BEGINNING AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION: **Astorino, Briggs, Indovina, Luckett, Slavick, and Mike Gable in place of Kaczorowski**

PRESENT OF THE STAFF: **Morton Brown, Noor Ismail**

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Brown stated that last meeting the minutes for the November and December Art Commission hearings could not be approved since a quorum was not present. However, there was a sufficient quorum present at this meeting.

Mr. Astorino moved to approve November's minutes. Ms. Briggs seconded.

Ms. Briggs moved to approve December's minutes. Ms. Luckett seconded.

B. Correspondence

Mr. Brown submitted letters of support from the Department of Public Works – one for Mellon Square Park Phase I Improvements Interpretative Panel, and the other for Gateway Plaza amendments to the approved plan.

C. Items for Review

a. Mellon Square Interpretative Panel: Submission of Additionally Requested Materials for Conceptual Review
   - Susan Rademacher, Parks Curator, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Ms. Susan Rademacher introduced herself from the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. She stated she was happy to be back today to present the conceptual design for the interpretative panel at Mellon Square as part of their Phase I work. She presented to the Art Commission additional letters of support from VisitPittsburgh, Allegheny Conference, and the BNY Mellon Charitable Foundation.

Ms. Rademacher stated it is a keystone of the Parks Conservancy's mission to provide high quality information to park users and visitors. They do this partly because they know from experience that knowledge engages people, engenders people's greater respect for a place, and supports long-term stewardship.

Ms. Rademacher then introduced Ms. Patricia O'Donnell of Heritage Landscapes as their Preservation Landscape Architect and Project Team Leader.

Ms. O'Donnell stated they have gone back and looked again at their interpretative wall for the Smithfield Avenue front after the hearing in July when they were asked to revisit the wall and lighting design as conditions for Conceptual Approval. She displayed a centerboard which showed the overall landscape treatment plan from 2008, and then showed the as-built plan from 1955. She stated the concept design for Mellon Square that was generated by Mitchell & Ritchey and Simonds & Simonds, and their firms looked at the issue of the terrace and the Smithfield front. She stated one of the geniuses of the design was to use the grades of the street that run uphill on both Oliver and Sixth Avenues, and raise the park so that it could create a habitable space underneath that was intended to be an active, vibrant storefront.

Ms. O'Donnell explained that the phasing that they are working through now for the first phased plan is the renewal of the entire Smithfield edge, which is the most degraded component of Mellon Square, to do the cascade fountains, the steps, the terrace, the green roof canopy , the interpretative wall, the storefront

signage and lighting, and the planters. Today they were resubmitting the interpretative wall and lighting design along Smithfield Street for Conceptual Approval. Ms. O'Donnell then displayed the lighting design. She explained there is basically a sign box that was created in the 1950's, and initially in the front of the sign box were silhouette letters and a consistency along the façade which they do not see today. What they looked at with the interpretative wall was to use a device above to flow one washing light downward and to flow light across the sign panel itself. She stated instead of moving two pieces of lighting, they are containing them above. She stated they are also looking at under-lighting the canopy which was intended to be fairly bright historically, and is looking pretty dull and dim now. They will then wash the light downward onto the surface of the wall as well.

Ms. O'Donnell stated they brought two concepts. She said they changed the title of the wall from "Modern Masterpiece" to what they feel is the more appropriate title, "The Square in the Triangle." She stated knowledgeable sources will know what this is, with "triangle" referring to the Golden Triangle Downtown, and the "square" being Mellon Square. She said they feel the title is also catchy enough for those unfamiliar with the history. She then displayed two schemes on the wall.

Ms. O'Donnell reminded the Commission that historically, there were three small storefronts with the closest being "Parklane Hosiery." The stores were fairly lively with glass fronts. She said with AAA using this space, the area has essentially become a black granite veneer which is quite dark and certainly does not have any tactile quality. She stated AAA is a long-term tenant. She then stated they have worked with Port Authority and found this wall is available to use for this interpretative panel.

She stated the notion of the panel is to follow some concise themes and tell the story of Mellon Square by beginning with Pittsburgh and Renaissance I. She stated they would spend most of the wall panel talking about the concepts of the Renaissance of the city and its particular nature of evolving the design for Mellon Square, the genius of the design, and the concepts being sought in Mellon Square which was to be an oasis, nature in the city, a place of solitude, a place to hear water, see birds, and be enclosed in a very thin green screen with high rises all around. She said they will then talk in the final panel about the enduring value of Mellon Square and its preservation and stewardship into the future.

Ms. O'Donnell explained the text is in progress and not final. She reiterated they are looking for Conceptual Approval, and are showing two layout ideas. Concept I is a continuous, tonal varied from gray smoky city to blue-green, which are the tones that were used in the original fountains. The panels in the first scheme will be modularly constructed, but will be assembled to make one puzzle with no breaks. She stated the second concept uses the same story but puts it in chunks. She explained the first-half panel will focus on the Pittsburgh Renaissance, the second, on the story of the creation of Mellon Square and its design, and the third, on the as-built and final preservation.

Ms. O'Donnell then presented a sample of the caveo material that she stated is widely used for interpretative signs. She stated it is very durable, relatively indestructible as you can remove graffiti from it, has a good outdoor lifespan. It is used in national parks and historic sites, because of its relative low cost and good durability against weathering. She said it also has very good graphic capability, and can pick up any type of imagery that they seek to use.

Ms. O'Donnell stated additionally, the light above creates a shadow above the title. She presented a graduated sample, with the intent to have the bottom white, so the fixture in the box will not be visible and light will shine above onto the canopy. They are looking to manipulate the light through the graduated panel. She stated what was interesting about the sign for "Parklane Hosiery" was that the letters were silhouette free standing. Therefore, they are thinking of putting the letters, in metal, on the surface of the graduated material, and duplicating them on the backs, so that you will have a three-dimensional quality to the actual letters and how they read. This way they will have a shadow line with a duplication of just the thickness of the graduated material between. Ms. O'Donnell then stated she would be happy to respond to any comments or questions.

Mr. Astorino asked the applicant to clarify how the interpretative sign will work with the rest of the wall of the entrances, as the sign appears to be out further than the doors.

Ms. O'Donnell explained the doors actually vary, and the glass plane is at the same plane as the doors. She stated it does not appear this way because it is currently so dark.

Mr. Astorino asked if it would be consistent.

Ms. O'Donnell stated that interestingly, it is actually less consistent than it was historically, because Port Authority has angled the wall, in addition to the door being inset. She said the door of AAA is out on the same level, so there is a bit of variation. She stated it is coplanar, and sits in the façade due to the canopy and band of original granite and black granite that starts right away. She said their intent was to replace the water course of granite at the base, and to use a silver material on the façade not covered by the interpretative panel – either aluminum or stainless steel with an orbital finish. She said their goal is to have a very durable, bright façade. Their intent is to work with Port Authority to extend the box sign across the entire face as tenants change out, in order to unify the design.

Mr. Astorino stated he was not in attendance the last time the applicant came to the Art Commission, and asked Mr. Indovina if he recalled what the exact issue was that made them require the applicant return with more information.

Mr. Indovina stated that one issue, which is one he still has, is why the panel needs to be there.

Ms. O'Donnell replied they asked Ms. Rademacher to start out with this information. She stated the issue is that Mellon Square is a place of historical significance for Pittsburgh, and is also a place with a fairly deep and intensive story. She said they have found with their own work in parks for 26 years, and working with the Parks Conservancy for over 12 years, that if the public knows more about a particular space, they experience it more richly, they understand it better, and often then respect it more than they do if they have no consciousness of how it came to be. She stated this is also a path or opportunity to parks and open space advocacy. She stated knowledge brings advocacy brings supports. She said this is one of the pillars of PPC, which is long-term ongoing stewardship, and the ability of the citizens who share a commonwealth of parks to respect and enjoy them, and advocate on their behalf.

Ms. Rademacher stated there are some additional benefits and aspects as well. She explained that during the planning phase they heard repeatedly that until someone dragged them up there or there was some forced opportunity to discover Mellon Square, most people did not even know there was a park there. She stated that part of this is bringing the park down to street level, and hopefully engaging people's interest so they'll want to explore and begin using the park. She said the content is also to establish the historic context. She said what makes Pittsburgh great is our ability to grapple and solve problems, and really lead the nation in many ways with the story of the first Renaissance, and the repeated efforts since then, is an exciting story. She said it is a story that many Pittsburghers of her generation know, but younger people and tourists do not know. She said they feel it is important to establish this context.

Ms. Rademacher stated they will go for the National Register nomination to establish the context in time for why this is an important place. She said it is not just the design value or association with John Simons, but it is also the association with the history of Pittsburgh.

Ms. O'Donnell stated to reply to Mr. Astorino's question, at the meeting back in July, she believed they were the fifth presenters and everyone was running late. She said they had the whole project to discuss, and they had actually not done as much work on this design, so she felt there was a lot of pushback. She stated she thought the Commission had too much on their plate that day, but also thought the work they brought forward had an undeveloped lighting plan. She said it is clear to them now that the light from above will be a better detail, more durable, easier to maintain, and also more effective in lighting the wall. She said the intent to light from the rail puts a band of light across, but does not reach the full panel height. She then explained they pushed out the box so that it would be slightly further over the interpretative panels and wash the wall better. She stated they have also worked harder on the reflection. The arch they are discussing placing in the box will spread the light well, and will also allow the top of the maybe brushed aluminum piece unify with the gray tones and stainless steel and aluminum detailing.

Ms. O'Donnell replied she felt the design has come a considerable way for how the story should be laid out as a concept. They are looking at historic imagery, quotes, storyline descriptions and custom graphics to make it a very lively and interesting façade. She said they have a 16' lean rail that will act as an invitation for people to come, look, and stand at the right distance to see the material.

Mr. Brown stated he did have a copy of the concept from the last hearing if any of the Commission members wanted to look at it.

Ms. Slavick stated she cannot read the text on the design, even though the applicant stated it is still in progress, so her comments may not be relevant.

Ms. O'Donnell stated it is not intended to be read, as they would have given the text. She explained they have chunked the stories, and looked at the text to imagery relationship. She said they know people learn in different ways, so they are looking to please the reading learner and picture learner. She said the intent is just for people to really understand the stories of the Mellon family, Pittsburgh, and the Point. The second is Pittsburgh's Renaissance: the creating of a modern masterpiece, and the preserving of a treasured landmark. She said they wanted to emphasize the reason to chisel a park into Downtown.

Ms. Slavick stated she did not know if the applicant could merge the pedagogical qualities and design sleekness of both concepts, because visually she finds one more elegant than the other. She stated she thought the other looked more cluttered and like a mismatch of signage. However, she does know whether the other design can convey all of the same information.

Ms. O'Donnell stated in the last hearing they presented their design as a timeline, and they received the reverse comment to integrate these rather than completely separate them. She added that the timeline draws you into filling in the times and the dates. Now they have gone away from that to say what they really want to talk about is the condition Pittsburgh was in – smoggy, people changing their shirts two to three times a day, not very aesthetically appealing, not a good place that would draw strong talent. It would then move to why the square was created, why it is important and a work of genius, and the preservation of the space Downtown. She stated where the timeline proposal really fell apart was the 1955 panel to the present. She also stated it is not a very uplifting story, because it is basically a story that states we built a great place and over 25 years it fell into massive decline, so we put a lot of money into it, and again 25 years later it fell into massive decline.

Ms. O'Donnell stated that their intent is to look at this from a position of stewardship and long-term durability. They are looking for ease of maintenance, ease of replication, ease of replacement, functionality of systems, dealing with the basic issues of Mellon Square like rat infestation, using metal pipes not PBC, and all sorts of details that will have this place work in the longer term. She stated the PPC has agreed they will be the stewards of the property with the city into the future.

Ms. Rademacher added their intent for when they do receive Conceptual Approval is to then further develop the design, refine the text, vet it, and bring back to them the final submittal with panel by panel imagery and text.

Mr. Indovina stated it seems they are trying to cover a lot of ground with this piece, and he is unsure if they are trying to interpret the Renaissance as a whole or just this particular piece of architecture. He then stated there are many innovative things about the garage and having storefronts integrated into the building, but in his mind what is more important is the park on top of the garage. He stated he is unsure if the storefront area is the appropriate place to interpret park area of the design. He added that it feels disconnected to look at the sign from below. He said he also does not see how the story of the Renaissance draws one up into the park.

Ms. O'Donnell replied the themes carry from the first panel is that "history placed in context has more meaning." Ms. O'Donnell stated the four panels are all about Mellon Square, so they are basically introducing Mellon Square, and why the garage was a part of the solution, and then talking about the Mellon Square idea itself. She then stated she thinks they have simplified the story because they feel there really is some great documentation, photos, documents, and quotes that can make it pretty personal and rich rather than just storytelling mode. She said they like telling the story from multiple voices. She said these stories and messages go back to the PPC pillar of stewardship of these kinds of places, so they are honing the story to what PPC's mission is all about.

Mr. Indovina then stated that the overall design of the park is very delicate and strong with a few simple concepts. He said the impression that he gets with the interpretative panel is that there are a lot of things going on that does not seem really clear and elegant. He further noted that he is not sure about the disconnect with the railing which also seems to be an inelegant solution if they are concerned about keeping people away from the sign, but are at the same time trying to draw people to the sign. He replied

this is a mixed message, and wondered what happens to the 18 inches between the railing and the sign. His last point regarded the lighting box where they have a graduated frit pattern that typically did not exist in the 1950's. He stated if they are going to try to restore this to its former elegance, he is not sure they should use something that came to popularity in the 2000's.

Ms. Briggs stated she agrees with almost everything that has been said. She stated she thinks Mellon Square is one of the great treasures of Pittsburgh, and although she understands the spirit of trying to tell the history and the story, she does not find the proposal of the placement of it, the relationship of it to the street, the graphic design, the signage, the railing, or any of it to be executed at the same level of beauty frankly as the park. She stated this is one of the most important facades of the park, because the park is hidden compared to the other sides where you can see more glimpses into the park. She stated she thinks this whole band needs to have a lot more attention paid to it. She said she feels the same way she did at the last hearing.

Mr. Indovina addressed the audience and invited them to comment on behalf, in general, or against the project.

Ms. Mary Kay Poppinburg introduced herself and stated she has been working with PPC on Mellon Square mostly in the area of fundraising. She stated she would like to speak in favor of the interpretative panel. She stated Mellon Square is a great story and great opportunity to engage people in why it is so important, the significance of Mellon Square and also how it fit into the "fabled" Renaissance. She said the more people who know about the park and the history of Mellon Square, she thinks the more they will become engaged with the park. She further added she has had countless people say they love this park, (not at this moment because of the way it looks), but then wonder what is so special or different about this park that makes it so appealing. She stated this gives them the opportunity to tell them that story of why it is so appealing.

Ms. Poppinburg stated that when the park opened in 1955, it was a great point of pride for Pittsburghers who turned out in huge crowds, first for the dedication, but then to use the park because it was their park. It was also part of the energy of the city that cleaned up the air and the water and had the genius to make this kind of park with a parking garage that had never been built in this way before, and to have both the public and private community come together to do it. She said this kind of partnership continues in Pittsburgh and the Square represents an awful lot about the energy and determination of Pittsburgh. She stated we need to keep telling this story, especially to young people, because when they understand the history of their city, and particularly places as exceptional as Mellon Square, they are much more likely to stay here and bring their friends here. She further added they are working very hard on the text which has to be just right. They are talking with funders and Pittsburgh experts in the history of Pittsburgh to make sure every word counts, so people will stop, take a look, read, come into the park, and have a better idea of why they really love this place.

Mr. Indovina asked for further discussion from the Commission.

Mr. Astorino stated his main concern for himself and the citizens of Pittsburgh is that this becomes a National Landmark. He said they should not do anything that impedes that, and this should be their number one goal. He stated he understands this can be a very back and forth role where they will be told they can do this and not that. Given that, the location of the signage does not bother him, nor the idea, and the notion of having something on Smithfield Street that moves you up above makes some sense to him. However, when this was initially designed, it was designed as a storefront, and one of his concerns is if there are taking away storefronts is if this going to impact the landmark status. He stated if it would not, then he would not have an issue of where it is located. Mr. Astorino then stated the issue of the railing does bother him a little, and he wishes it was not there. He added this is still conceptual and they are not approving the content of the material today, but are approving the concept of the location more and how it is going to be lit. He then reiterated as long as the signage does not impact the National Landmark status, he does not have an issue as to where it is proposed to be located.

Ms. Briggs stated she has no idea whether the interpretative signage will impact the landmark status, but she does think it impacts the life on the street. She stated it seems to her forcing the hand of renovating the storefronts as part of the park would have a much greater impact on the quality of life on the street than this interpretative signage concept.

Mr. Indovina stated the storefronts went away a long time ago. He stated this was a Union National Bank, which is why part of it was taken away. He said conceptually, just taking the unfortunate blank wall and just pasting something on top of it, he is not sure improves the overall impact of the design. Mr. Indovina stated that conceptually it may be better to replicate the storefront and flip the signage behind the storefront as though the storefront was conceptually there. He stated he is not concerned with the location, although he is still concerned about the disconnect of someone confronting this on the street and somehow realizing this is inviting you to go up and experience the park.

Mr. Indovina stated he applauds the effort conceptually, but thinks further thought is necessary.

Ms. Luckett stated she is also wondering how the signage would invite someone to go up and experience the park. She asked if there was anything invoking people to go up.

Ms. O'Donnell stated the issue is is that they are indicating information about the place above, and indicating how it fits in with the city. She said the images will draw attention to the Alcoa and U.S. Steel buildings, William Penn and Oliver and how it fits in a context. She stated they have discussed writing the text as an invitation for people to visit the square.

Ms. O'Donnell explained they have done behavioral studies of the square, particularly morning rush, lunch hour, and end of day, crossing movements that come from the ends of the streets up and down either set of stairs. She added they have watched the bus traffic and the queuing that happens there, and they have found that of all the places around the vicinity, it is probably the place that has the most opportunity to invite people to experience Mellon Square. She stated they have also been talking with the William Penn who feel they have a big steak in this because it is the front door of the hotel, and we have many national and international visitors from many places that are at the William Penn. She said the whole notion of telling the story in a public way rather than putting out a brochure box, is a very well tried process and been understood for a long time. She explained the National Park Service has many historic sites and landmarks that use signs to indicate the story. She said they are telling it in a somewhat more robust way because they have the space and the story. She stated they feel this is a very important component to have people gain respect. They have researched and proven that knowledge helps people become more respectful for a space.

Ms. Luckett stated she is not in disagreement about informing people about history, but added there is still a disconnect.

Ms. O'Donnell then stated she thinks there is a connection and that it is not disconnected. She stated she is sorry, but she did not know how to address this concern. They are telling people about the Square at the stairs where you go up into the park. She added the question would have to be restated, because she really did not understand what was being asked. She reiterated again that she does not think it is disconnected at all, but is very connected.

Mr. Brown offered a "silly" example to try to describe the situation. He asked about a scenario in which there was a very small sign that simply said "You are here" that simply showed viewers on the street that they are at the foot of this piece.

Ms. O'Donnell replied "You are here" signs are always good, and that people always want to know where they are.

Mr. Brown stated another silly way to solve the issue might be to have an arrow pointing from the base of the stairs up into the park. He stated that they are not going to do that, but the concept of the arrow is what he believes are the concerns he is hearing from the Commission. He further added if you just happen upon the panel on the street side, you will not be able to necessarily visualize where you are in the space above.

Ms. Briggs added that you are not in the space above. She stated that oftentimes interpretative signage is explaining to you what you are looking at or what you are standing within. She explained she takes her students every semester to Mellon Square, and they stand in the middle of the Square and discuss the Snelson sculpture, the design of the park, the Alcoa building, PPG, the US Steel Building, the history of industry in Pittsburgh – and they can see this all from where they are standing. She said she believes the disconnect for her is exactly that. She stated she is not saying the panel should be in the center of the park either.

Ms. O'Donnell stated they are very much opposed to putting signage in the park. She explained the message of the Square when you are in the upper level is what the Square is all about. She said to make another point, the Smithfield Street frontage garage and Square are one project, one idea. She stated the interpretative panel speaks to the fact of providing the garage in the city, the storefronts on this front under the same design ideas. The frontage is not disconnected from the Square. She stated the parking garage, the frontage, and the Square are all the same project.

Mr. Indovina asked for a motion for Conceptual Approval.

Mr. Astorino moved to grant Conceptual Approval. Ms. Slavick seconded.

Ms. Luckett stated she was not sure if she was in favor or opposed. She asked if the applicant had tried to communicate the story about the Square in other ways.

Ms. O'Donnell stated that it does not make any sense to put signage boards in the Square itself, because of the story of the Square. She stated in regards of telling this information in other ways, the PPC does do a mobile tour that is available on cell phone, and has a robust website. She said the issue in part here is this is an area with a lot of pedestrian traffic, activity, and people moving about. She added it is a dark, negative hole, and they think this is a very positive way to make it more bright and more of its original concept. She explained the frontage was intended to be bright. To do the lighting and sign board starts to enliven that set of facades and would begin the process of changing out the rest of the black, not inviting fronts to become a more inviting streetscape. They see this as a beginning piece to continue the sign and the lighting above to continue to put the lighter granite and water course. They may even use the brushed metal and the façade of the building to have, in general, a more uplifting streetscape that is part of the Mellon Square sequence.

Ms. Ismail asked the Art Commission if they would consider granting Conceptual Approval with conditions. She said it appears the PPC has done a lot of work on the signage, and she agrees the current area is very dark and could use some "lightening up". She asked that they give the applicant some form of guidance so they can more forward.

Mr. Astorino stated they have talked about the genius of the idea, and he thinks there are many facets of that genius. He said the one idea that is commonly overlooked is the fact that it hid the garage. He added the genius is apparent, but what is not apparent and what people do not even realize is that it is blocking a garage. He said to him, it makes the most sense to put it in a place where it is not recognized, so that it is giving more awareness of it. He stated they do not want to put it upstairs for sure – it speaks for itself. This is why he does not have an issue with the proposed location.

Mr. Brown stated this was a concern from the Art Commission last time, whether this sign should be in this location at all. He said he believes they have established a majority here today of commission members who agree the location is fine to have a sign there, but the details need to be fleshed out further.

Ms. Briggs stated she did not know if they had a majority, as there were only two people who agreed with the location.

Mr. Astorino agreed.

Mr. Indovina stated that he thinks it is possible to have an interpretative sign in that location that would convey what he thinks is important to convey, which is the unbelievable concept that the design is hiding a garage in the city by placing a park over it. He said he just has a problem with the way it has been presented, and the way the sign relates to the building.

Ms. Slavick asked if Mr. Indovina was not opposed to the location, but was just instead questioning the design and the content. She said since this information will come at a later stage after Conceptual Approval has been received, could Mr. Indovina go along with this.

Ms. Luckett replied she could go along with this.

Mr. Indovina joked it is irrelevant what he thinks now.

Ms. Slavick explained she feels the same way as Mr. Indovina. She stated she does not mind the sign's location or purpose; she just has a problem with the design of it. She said she feels it is very jumpy, and it just clutters rather than enhances this gorgeous design.

Mr. Indovina added it is overbearing. He said just looking at the façade, he prefers the look of the façade without the sign.

Ms. Briggs stated she agrees.

Mr. Indovina stated that if something conveyed more of the original look of the building that would be much better. He said the concept of having a sign there is not a problem, the concept design of the sign is a problem.

Ms. Slavick stated in an ideal world she would agree. She asked if the PPC had purview over the rest of the storefront—that it seemed that the PPC would not be able to renovate the rest of the storefronts along Smithfield, so the original look and feel of the space would never be able to revert back to the way it was.

Ms. O'Donnell stated they are just partnering with the Parking Authority, and currently there is not a feasible way to renovate the storefronts totally.

Ms. Briggs pointed out that this one section in particular is within PPC's purview. She said she is not willing to believe it is impossible to do so for the rest of the system of storefronts. She added that she cannot quite put in the back of her mind, as far as she can understand, that there are people on the other side of the black granite working in the dark with no daylight or opportunity for daylight or air. She stated now adding this new piece to the streetscape is just going to further seal that coffin. She said certainly the PPC does not have the power or authority to reverse that, but conceptually she cannot help but think this.

Ms. Rademacher stated this was actually one of the first questions they asked when dealing with this space. She said everyone agreed it was one of the biggest problem areas, and people asked if they could get the windows back. She stated the Parking Authority was quite clear that AAA has a long-term lease, and they and previous tenants wanted this blocked off so they could use it for storage and other activities not visible to the public. They do not consider themselves retail. She stated that AAA shut that door—that the window in question will not be reopened as long as AA is a tenant. She said they were interested in this project too, and now are trying to give people something of value upon which to look.

Mr. Brown asked what if the signage was shrunken so that they can still have the black frame of the window behind it. It would look more like a storefront in that way. He asked if this would be something of interest.

Mr. Indovina stated that as an architect he will always have an opinion, but he is not going to take up the brush to design this—out of respect to the applicant. He said he would be happier with a horizontal sign rather than a vertical sign that added another layer of obstruction to the black granite. He pointed out he is not trying to tell anyone how to design this. He stated at this point, the motion has been carried. He asked if they could add conditions to this.

Ms. Slavick asked the applicant if they had thought about a monitor without sound, but with the same text and rotating images.

Ms. O'Donnell affirmed they did. She stated the problem is that it is too much like a commercial sign board. She stated there was a lot of pushback on this idea.

Mr. Brown stated that the Commission could, indeed add conditions of approval at this time.

Mr. Astorino stated they need to see the subject of the signs so they know and approve the final content of it.

Mr. Indovina added they need to know the breath, width, and impact of the sign from the streetscape.

Ms. Slavick stated the sign should emphasize the horizontality more, since it creates more of a flow.

Mr. Indovina agreed that this was a more simplified image. He said the other sign covered too much ground, and maybe they should try to do the opposite. He stated the applicant should choose a message and make their content very succinct.

Ms. Briggs stated the first image is more contemporary graphically and more sophisticated. She said the template is something very common you would find in Microsoft Word, and no one would ever describe the park in this way. She asked the applicant to design the sign in every way as elegant as the park has been designed.

Mr. Indovina stated that the motion has been carried subject to additional comments.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual Approval to the proposal of an interpretive panel for Mellon Square to be installed at the proposed location within the left side of Smithfield Street storefront.

As the project returns for Final approval, the following conditions and considerations must be addressed:

1) **Exact text, dimensions, materials, etc. of the sign must be submitted**
2) **The content of the sign should be more succinct**
3) **The design of the interpretative signage should be given as much thought and care as the overall park. The elegant design of the park is very delicate and strong with a few simple concepts. The sign should mirror these traits.**
4) **The sign should not seem imposing in the storefront space by size or form—it should help "complete" the storefront and add a lighter element to help offset the existing darkness of the site**
5) **Horizontal aspect is favored over vertical**
6) **The proposed railing is not preferred, and is requested to be removed from the proposal**
7) **The design, form, and functional elements of the sign should appear to be conducive to the 1950's era**
8) **There should be evidence provided that the addition of the sign would not negatively affect the potential for an historic landmark status of the park**

MOVED: Astorino SECONDED: Slavick

IN FAVOR: Luckett

OPPOSED: Briggs, Indovina CARRIED

b. Accessory Structures at the Center for Sustainable Landscapes; Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens: Conceptual and Final
   - Richard Piacentini, Executive Director of the Phipps Conservatory
   - Chris Minnerly, Principal/ Shareholder of The Design Alliance Architects

Mr. Chris Minnerly of the Design Alliance architects introduced himself. He stated he was there to provide an update to a previously approved project, which is now under construction. In particular, he wanted to describe the accessory structures they would like to install.

As an overview, Mr. Minnerly explained the project is located in a corner of Schenley Park at Phipps Conservatory. He stated their project, the Center for Sustainable Landscapes (CSL), is located in the old Public Works maintenance yard which is now leased by Phipps Conservatory. The CSL will function as an administrative, education and research center that will support Phipps' organizational mission to inspire and educate visitors on issues of sustainability. The new center and associated site work will be integrated into the public visitor experience of the existing conservatory and botanical gardens. Much of the design was guided by the principals and criteria described in the Living Building Challenge (LBC) issued by the Cascadia Chapter of the US Green Building Council. He explained that one the goals was to create a building with net zero energy, which requires them on site to generate as much renewal energy over the course of the year as they use for this 24,000 sq. ft. building. He explained the Accessory Structures are

going to be used to fulfill this requirement of a net zero water balance. He stated he will not get into the complications of calculating this, other than to say they are to manage the storm water and sanitary water treatment on their site. Effectively, they are not to pull from the municipal system, and they are not to push back into the municipal system's sewers and storm water conductors. He added they are very tight on space to do a lot of the things they need to do.

Mr. Minnerly briefly stated the building is two floors, primarily administration, but because of the function of the building it is a showcase for Phipps Conservatory. Phipps Conservatory is very into sustainable issues as part of their mission, so they intend to bring people through this building as well through a series of garden systems. From the terrace of the forest watering system, people can actually come out onto their green roof. He explained they will mainly be discussing the maintenance building, however.

Mr. Minnerly stated they are here for Conceptual and Final Approval for the Accessory Structures, since they have already received Final Approval for the entire project. He replied he hoped the Art Commission would be satisfied with what they are seeing. He explained they have several options, and added they would be seeking further approval from DEP, the Allegheny County Health Department, and the Pittsburgh Sewer Authority.

Mr. Minnerly stated the first accessory structure is a Photovoltaic (PV) Array, which is ground-mounted. The second structure is a vertical-axis wind turbine (VAWT), and both of these are aimed at helping them reach their net energy goal. He stated the third and fourth structures are to get rid of excess treated effluence that has to be managed on the site that they cannot dump into the municipal system. He explained they are treating all of their water through a system of plant and sand filters, so the treated water can be reused to flush toilets and things like that in the building. However, since they cannot generate their own potable water yet, they are taking municipal water to do this which is acceptable to the Living Building Challenge. However, that does change their balance. He stated they have excess effluent to do something with that has been treated, but there are limitations to what they can do with it. In short, the DEP will not let them infiltrate it into the ground for a number of reasons, but they are running out of ways to get rid of the 150 gallons of water a day of excess treated effluent because of they are required to do that. They have come up with two alternatives that will allow them to do this.

Mr. Minnerly explained the first option is a solar distillation unit that concentrates the sun into a very hot condensed location that heats it up and effectively makes it clean for them to reuse. The second option is an evapo-transpiration greenhouse which takes the extra effluent, pulls it into a greenhouse, feeds the plants with it, and evaporates the excess effluent into the air essentially in the greenhouse. He explained any of these options require space, so that is what they would like to discuss with the Art Commission.

He showed different building locations to install the PV array, which will be roof-mounted and essentially two to three feet off the ground. It will also be at a slight angle to catch the sun. He explained they have run out of roof spaces to place these, so they are proposing a ground-mounted array that will be placed right on the site and angled to catch the sun. He then displayed an aerial view of the what the PV array structures look like on the existing buildings, and said these were essentially the scale and materiality of them. The general size of one is about 144' long, 10' high, and approximately 16' wide. He then explained the structures are also proposed to be placed on the hill going down to Panther Hollow. He said they may need to do some trimming or pruning of the trees and shrubs in this area in order to install the PV arrays. Phipps Conservatory will work with CitiParks and DPW.

Mr. Minnerly explained the wind turbine will be located right on the roof of the building, due to the fact there is not a lot of wind available in this area. However, their engineers have designed a vertical wind turbine, and they are going to attach this to their rooftop unit. He stated the rooftop unit will generate a fairly constant stream of air in order to meet general requirements. Rather than relying only on natural wind availability, the CSL VAWT will utilize the existing building ventilation exhaust air stream from the RTU to generate electricity. A patent application has been filed for this remarkable new design approach, which will also help the CSL meet the Net-Zero Energy requirements of the LBC. He said this is essentially free power. He explained it will essentially be the height of the rooftop unit which is about 8', so it does not have a real presence as an object.

Last, Mr. Minnerly explained the two options for solar water purification. The first solar distillers would be mounted on the northern edge of the roof of the buildings. He stated from the height of the roof they are

about 12' tall, the diameter of the dishes is about 8', and they anticipate needing between 12 and 15 of them.

Ms. Slavick asked what the lumpy covering on the tubing was.

Mr. Minnerly stated this would probably be insulation to keep the water at the appropriate temperature. He explained that since they cannot afford to pay electric bills to run a distillation unit to clean this water, they have a system that involves hot water that automates the process. He stated if they had to use electricity for this purpose, the whole campus would end up being covered by Photovoltaic cells. The solar distillers are far more efficient in generating energy than the PV cells. He stated again that hot water will run the distillation unit.

Mr. Minnerly explained they are hoping to use the solar distillers rather than the evapo-transpiration Greenhouse. However, they would like the Art Commission's approval for both in case they have to go with one over the other. He stated the ET Greenhouse is approximately 18' wide, 40' long, and 11' tall. He then displayed design exercises of what the structures would look like.

Mr. Indovina asked for questions and comments from the Art Commission.

Mr. Indovina asked what the relative elevation from the top of the maintenance building where the solar distillers would be to the tropical forest.

Mr. Minnerly stated he believed the P&G buildings are probably 20' high, the grade is about 30' below the height of the terrace.

Mr. Indovina replied this would be at or below the elevation of the terrace.

Mr. Minnerly affirmed that it would not be right at eye level.

Ms. Briggs stated that since the point of these structures is zero energy, and that the structures are enormously present in their forms and elements on the landscape, she wanted to know why the design team was not aware of the possibility of the need of these kinds of elements. That way they could have used the structures to drive the design of the buildings, so they would be more integrated into the design of the buildings rather than added on. She stated in particular for the Photovoltaic structures that are ground-mounted, she never understood why the structures have to be just planes on posts. She thought they could provide shade for activity under them, cover from snow and rain, and could be integrated into the overall design rather than just positioned. She asked why this was not done from the beginning.

Mr. Minnerly stated he agreed that the integration is important, but there were logistics involved in the way the design process had to work due to Phipps Conservatory being a nonprofit. He explained they were trying to determine whether they were going to lease the structures, and what sort of financial arrangement would be put into place to get the potable takes as part of the project. So while they were part of the design thinking, they were not part of the design engineering. Therefore, they tried to get an understanding of the size the structures would take up. However, determining whom they would have a specific arrangement with to purchase or lease would ultimately determine what kind of panel would be used, how many would be needed, are they on rotating racks or not – things that would be part of a financial arrangement with a particular vendor.

Mr. Minnerly stated they could only assume where the structures might go, but knew they would take advantage of the roof-tops as best they could. He said they would like to try to use the panels for shading, but stated the project is already over budget. Therefore, they have to do things that are cost-effective, and acknowledged this is not a compelling answer but at the end of the day it is part of it.

Ms. Briggs replied that these decisions are being driven to meet net zero requirements. She asked Mr. Minnerly to expand briefly on this. She added the applicant made the net zero energy sound almost like a game they wanted to win.

Mr. Minnerly replied that the net-zero energy part is really quite simple. He explained you generate power on the site based on your annual calculation. In the summer, they will generate way more electricity than they need, so they will push it back up the hill and feed that energy to the main campus at Phipps. When

they need it in the winter they will draw it back down again. They do calculations which tells them how many Photovoltaic panels they have. To meet their Living Building Challenge goals more simply, they require a year's worth of bills to prove it. Therefore, they will not know if they have a successful design until after a year from now.

Ms. Brigg's asked what the applicant will receive if they achieve this – a car?

Mr. Minnerly stated it is an important milestone for Phipps as an institution to demonstrate the work they do is living up to the highest sustainable standards. He explained they have a website known as the Cascadia Chapter of the US GBC, and the west coast has issued this challenge. They had hoped to be the first, but unfortunately they will not be. However, the project is still very important and has been discussed at conferences like Green Build.

Mr. Minnerly stated it is more difficult to do the data calculations for the water intake, but they know how to do them. Still, it is not easy to do a year's worth of metering to give to the Living Building Challenge, so this assessment will be more design and data driven. They are not going to look at water bills like they will with energy.

Mr. Gable asked if the solar panels are reflective at all. He stated he was concerned that across the Anderson Bridge, someone could get hit with a lot of light, therefore, he is assuming they are not.

Mr. Minnerly replied that looking from the photo he believed they must have some reflective quality.

Ms. Briggs replied they will be visible from the top of Greentree hill.

Mr. Gable stated that if one was not used to the brightness it could be very distracting, so this was something to think about. He then requested in regards to trees for the applicant to please work with David Yahn. He said he did not think they would agree to any topping of trees, but he will work with them to prune the trees. Additionally, he pointed out that in the agreement with the city and Phipps, any time improvements are to be made, they really should come through the Department of Transportation and Engineering in Public Works before the review of the design itself. He stated that when Mr. Kaczorowski asked him about a letter of approval for this project, he asked if Mr. Gable had looked at the drawings, which he did not see. Mr. Gable stated this project was obviously already so far along, but at some point they will need to see the as-built drawings. However, whenever improvements are made, request for approval needs to come through his department.

Mr. Minnerly stated he was glad Mr. Gable mentioned this. He stated they have been through--he did not know how many committees and agencies for approval--the Art Commission included. Meeting with Public Works was never mentioned to him.

Mr. Gable stated the reason is that they are never going to get the Zoo, Aviary or Phipps Conservatory back because they are good and solvent. But if in the event that this ever does come back to them, it becomes its star asset. Just like in Schenley Plaza, if the PPC does not work with Eat n' Park, that building becomes theirs.

Mr. Minnerly stated this makes a ton of sense to him, and he wished he could answer why this did not happen.

Mr. Brown stated Public Works gets an Art Commission packet when it gets to this point, but what Mr. Gable is saying is very valid. Well before you come to the Art Commission, the plans should go to Public Works for its approval. This is a prerequisite to the Art Commission application, in fact.

Ms. Ismail stated they have this process laid out with other nonprofit entities that have agreements with the city. She stated it is sort of a built-in review process.

Mr. Minnerly replied this is a huge oversight that he does not feel good about. They are where they are today, but he is glad he found out about it now.

Ms. Briggs asked the commission their thoughts on the importance of weighing sustainable technologies and buildings against the human experience of the site and of the building. She wanted to know where

everyone falls in regards to this issue. She stated she did not want to stop the project, but felt it was pretty bad. She said the structures were clogged on the tops of the buildings and arrayed across the hillside as elements in the landscape. She stated she was interested in them having a discussion before making a motion.

Mr. Indovina stated the bulk of the accessory structures are on a maintenance building way down in the valley, which is quite an elevation difference. It is sort of midpoint between any really public location of either the lake or the top where Phipp's campus is. He said in that respect, it is really kind of a maintenance, mechanical space. If they wanted to put this on the front lawn, he thinks he would have a little bit of an issue with it. In this location, he stated he does not really have a problem, and thinks it has some advantage of being an educational tool to show people what these things look like. Mr. Indovina stated he has seen the big distillation structures being promoted for third world applications because they are very inexpensive and are a good way to get clean water. But in regards to Ms. Slavick's earlier question, he too wondered why that nasty wrapping was there. He said he would encourage the applicant to try to make the piping straight.

Mr. Minnerly stated the folks who designed this are from Pittsburgh, and the name of the company is Epiphany. They only recently heard about them within the last two weeks, so this was a quick mock up by one of Epiphany's engineers. He stated he will not be happy nor let that kind of detailing happen because they do expect this to be part of the viewing experience from that upper terrace.

Ms. Briggs stated she does think you will be able to see a lot of this stuff based on the drawings. She said that the other turbine is a clearly mechanical thing that no one will see, but the rest of it is pretty present.

Mr. Minnerly stated he wanted to add that Phipps Conservatory expects the user experience to come from this project's description of the sustainable components of what is happening here. There is a difference between integrating this into the architecture and integrating it into the experience. They are trying to find a balance similar to PPC finding a balance between signage and experience. They want and expect this stuff to be part of the user discourse, and for that reason they care what it looks like since they will be pointing to it and explaining it.

Ms. Luckett stated this was a case where design must follow function, especially due to budget constraints.

Mr. Minnerly stated they could have considered design if they had had a different process, but that is the downside for them as the architects for not being able to make that happen.

Ms. Slavick stated that as they transition into these sustainable types of architectures, they are going to have these awkward phases.

Ms. Briggs stated they have been in this transition for 20 years. She added we have had these panels since she was in college.

Ms. Slavick stated that even having these things exposed lets people know this is a real option, adding people are starting to do this more and more frequently. It is a kind of advertising that will not always exist, but for now, she is okay with it.

Mr. Astorino stated in this region it is difficult to have Photovoltaic cells without having a lot of them. It just does not work in Pittsburgh.

Ms. Briggs agreed.

Mr. Astorino stated this is a demonstration project, and given that it is a maintenance building he is okay. If it was, as Mr. Indovina stated earlier, on a front lawn, he thinks he would have an issue. He stated he was concerned about the view from Panther Hollow Lake, but he thinks this will be pretty well masked. He added that sometimes visually you want to demonstrate.

Ms. Slavick stated she would be upset too, but you can already see these buildings from the lake. To her, it is no less pure of a view because the fixtures are there.

Mr. Indovina asked for a motion.

Ms. Slavick moved for Conceptual and Final Approval.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual and Final Approval to the project as submitted.

MOVED: Slavick SECONDED: Astorino

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: CARRIED

c. Amended Plans for Plaza at Gateway T Station: Final
   - Jerry Marinzel, Project Manager, Port Authority

Mr. Jerry Marinzel introduced himself as the Project Manager for Port Authority of Allegheny County. He stated he was there to discuss and propose modifications to the Gateway Plaza which was previously given Final Review by the Art Commission in 2008. He asked that since there were new Art Commissioners if any of them would like him to review the history of the project.

The Art Commission stated they are pretty familiar with the project already, so discussion of the modifications alone would be fine.

Mr. Marinzel stated that in the last Art Commission hearing, the chair, Dina Klavon, asked the Port Authority if they would consider adding more green space to the plaza. He explained in the original design the plaza was shown as all terrazzo paving. Additionally, the board of directors from one of their funders, the Colcom Foundation, had also asked if they would consider additional green space in the plaza. So the Port Authority, Light Motion Collaborative, made up of Edge Studio and Pfaffmann Associates, formed a collaborative. They have reviewed these requests and have proposed modifications to their design based on that.

Mr. Marinzel explained they have taken the rustic terrazzo and converted it into a sod lawn. He explained through construction, they discovered two high pressure steam pipes that are only four feet deep. They also added granite paving in one location because there was not enough depth to support the grass. He said these were the only real changes.

Ms. Briggs asked if the person who designed the green space was the same landscape architect they used before.

Mr. Marinzel affirmed.

Mr. Indovina asked if the rest of the details have remained the same in the raised seating area near the garden.

Mr. Marinzel stated that in the seating/ planter area they did add a row of granite paving, so that if you sit on the bench, your feet will not be in the lawn.

Ms. Slavick asked if there is traffic across this piece of grass, or is it a mini park-like area now.

Mr. Marinzel stated that most of the traffic is intended to be through the station and along Stanwix Street, corner to corner.

Ms. Slavick replied there is no tendency to cut across this.

Mr. Marinzel explained that it used to be a grass area, and there were never any paths cut through there because the buildings discharge people away from the area.

Mr. Indovina asked who will maintain the lawn.

Mr. Marinzel stated they are working with the city right now, specifically with Mike Gable and Pat Hassett. He stated WPC has agreed to continue to maintain the garden, and they will hopefully talk them into maintaining the other planter. They also have to decide what other maintenance issues they have. He added they initially spoke to the original owners of the Gateway buildings, and they were willing to participate in the maintenance, but now do not seem receptive.

Mr. Marinzel further explained this area has always been maintained by the city, since the whole triangle is in the right-of-way.

Mr. Indovina stated that the path in front of the benches is only two feet wide, so it is not really an impact, but just a place to rest your feet. He asked if they had thought about making this a path that people could walk along.

Mr. Marinzel explained the intent is just to have people walk from the plaza and cut across the grass.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any additional comments.

Mr. Indovina asked if anyone from the audience would like to speak on behalf or against the project.

Mr. Indovina asked for a motion.

Mr. Astorino moved to grant Final Approval.

MOTION: To grant Final Approval to the project as submitted.

MOVED: Astorino SECONDED: Slavick

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: CARRIED

Meeting adjourned