ART COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF March 24, 2010
BEGINNING AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION: **Indovina, Cooper, Astorino, Haskell, Luckett, Kaczorowski**

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

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Indovina asked for approval of minutes from February 24, 2010.

MOTION: To approve meeting minutes for February 24, 2010.

MOVED: Haskell **SECONDED: Cooper**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

B. Correspondence

Mr. Brown announced to the audience that the Schenley Park Restaurant applicant asked to be removed from the March meeting agenda. He stated that there are extenuating circumstances with their application materials and they plan to present to the commission at the April 28th hearing. He added that the audience can check the City Planning website to see if the project is on the April agenda.

C. Items for Review

a. World Environment Day Banners

Mr. Court Gould of Sustainable Pittsburgh explained that he represents the Pittsburgh World Environment Day Partnership chaired by Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, County Executive Dan Onorato, CEO of Bayer Corporation North America Greg Babe. He introduced the project as the intent to place 100 banners throughout the city for a six week period from Earth Day to World Environment Day: April 22 to June 5.

Mr. Gould stated that there are over 90 events for this six-week period, primarily focused in downtown Pittsburgh, Oakland, and around the zoo. He distributed a list of street locations and a map for the proposed 100 banners. He added that he is working with Allegheny County Printshop to produce the banners to the desired specifications.

Mr. Astorino asked for clarification that the banners would be up from April to June.

Mr. Gould answered that the desire was to have them up from April 22 to June 5.

Mr. Astorino asked who would install the banners.

Mr. Gould answered that it is their request that the City of Pittsburgh would be responsible for installation and de-installation of the banners.

Mr. Indovina asked if the banners are all identical.

Mr. Gould answered that they plan to have identical banners.

Mr. Indovina asked if the banners are two-sided.

Mr. Gould answered that the banners are two-sided. He added that he presumes the banners will be two-sided, but needs to clarify the specs sent to Allegheny County Printshop. He stated that they had specified soy-based inks and environmentally-friendly material for the banners.

Mr. Brown asked if all the banners were regulation-sized and if there were any over-sized.

Mr. Gould answered that the 3x5 regulation size is what size the World Environment Day banners will be.

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

Mr. Indovina asked for a motion regarding Conceptual and Final Approval on this project.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual and Final Approval for World Environment Day Banners.

MOVED: Cooper **SECONDED: Haskell**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

b. East Liberty Gateway/ Penn Circle Streetscape

Ms. Katherine Camp, Planning Coordinator for East Liberty Development, Inc., stated that Penn Circle is a problematic road in East Liberty, so converting it to a two-way street has been an ongoing process. She stated that the first section of Penn Circle South was completed several years ago and now the section between Highland Avenue and Collins will be completed. She explained that although this is a City of Pittsburgh project, ELDI was engaged to make this a pedestrian-friendly, welcoming, and attractive streetscape.

Ms. Camp directed the commission to the streetscape design guidelines. She added that this is the first project to be using these guidelines. She added that, where possible, they will be using City standard elements like blue recycle bins and Three Rivers bike racks. She explained that since there is not a City standard for every element, they will be using a black bench and a black trash can designed by the local firm Forms and Surfaces, as well as tree guards designed by Landscape Forms. She stated that these black elements will match the black streetlights.

Ms. Camp stated that there will thirty-three trees going in of five different species and several species of ground cover, too. She added that all the street furniture will be owned and maintained by the City.

Mr. Indovina asked for clarification of the extent of this project.

Ms. Camp directed the commissioners to an orientation map in the front of the application. She stated that the project starts at Highland Avenue and Penn Circle South/Centre extends east to the busway loop that will disappear and become a development site. She added that the buses will now stop on Penn Avenue, where larger tree wells will be. She added that the project extends partway to Penn Avenue and up Penn Circle East to the corner with Broad Street- the future site of Target Department Store. She added that other streetscape will be completed in the future.

Mr. Brown asked to ensure that the project would not impact the City public art piece at Baum and Whitfield streets.

Ms. Camp and Mr. Pat Hassett answered that no, the project would not impact that area now or in the future.

Mr. Indovina asked for clarification about the City standard benches.

Mr. Hassett answered that the City does not have a bench standard for the Public Right of Way, though it does have a wooden standard for parks that would be appropriate for streetscape.

Mr. Astorino commented that he likes the proposed bench and the trash receptacle for the project.

Ms. Haskell asked about the funding for this project.

Mr. Hassett answered that funding for this project is approximately $4.5 million from the URA to the City from a State public infrastructure grant and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) from the Target store. He added that the Target Redevelopment project is well under way, so they will be using TIF from that project to fund $2.5 million of the Penn Circle streetscape project.

Ms. Haskell asked when Target will be breaking ground.

Mr. Hassett answered that ground has already been broken by the developer, but has not yet been turned over to Target. He added that the land is expected to be turned over to Target in early May and is scheduled to open July 11, 2011.

Ms. Haskell asked if the Target will definitely be built.

Mr. Hassett answered that he cannot make a definite comment in this economic climate. He added that the Penn Circle project intends to go ahead to meet the tight Target deadline and will advertise in March 30th's paper.

Mr. Indovina asked about the schedule of the project.

Mr. Hassett answered that after advertising in the paper, it will take three weeks for the project to open, another three months to get notice of receipt out, so most of the work will be done this summer and next spring will start paving and landscaping. He added that a drop-dead date in the contract of May 26, 2011 in which the contractor will have to have the street open to two-way traffic and the landscaping in and around the Target site completed by that date to avoid penalty fees.

Ms. Haskell asked how the busway would function with the loop being taken away.

Mr. Hassett answered that that most of the passenger activity will occur on Penn Avenue, however bus activity will still occur in the loop, but the buses will have a new entrance to the busway further down Penn. He added that Public Works installed a new stoplight at McPherson and Fifth next to the bus garage to assist the new arrangement.

Mr. Cooper asked if the current ramp on the map will be removed.

Mr. Hassett answered that the Centre/Penn Circle South entrance will be removed, replaced by a secondary entrance on Penn Ave, but the bus loop will remain.

Mr. Cooper asked if the right hand turn will be removed at Centre/Penn Circle South and Highland.

Mr. Hassett answered that the slip ramp that exists will be removed. He added that there will be more outdoor open space for Plum, or any other restaurant, on that corner. He added that this change increases safety for pedestrians since they will not have to cross that slip ramp, while giving outdoor space to the restaurant.

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

Mr. Indovina asked for a motion regarding Conceptual and Final Approval on this project.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual and Final Approval for the East Liberty Gateway/Penn Circle Streetscape project.

MOVED: Astorino **SECONDED: Cooper**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

c. Spring Hill Mosaic Art Sign

Ms. Amanda Wolf and the artist Linda Wallen introduced the project and stated that they are looking for Conceptual and Final Approval to build a parklet to house an historical mural created by students in the community.

Ms. Wallen directed the commission to pictures of her first and second houses in Spring Hill that contain example mosaic murals inside and out. She added that there are eight of her mosaic murals on this street in Spring Hill.

Ms. Wallen stated that her daughter who works with Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG) and students created another mosaic mural on a house adjacent to Ms. Wallen's.

Ms. Wolf stated that the murals created with students of MCG started in 2007 and one was installed in 2008. She added that in 2009, MCG employed funding help from the Charm Bracelet project and garnered more community input for the next mural.

Ms. Wolf stated that they intended to create an historical mural to be placed in a more public location. She stated that within the art course, students met with residents of the neighborhood and Ms. Wallen did research.

Ms. Wallen stated that they learned a lot about the history of the German settlers that came to Spring Hill with their pigeons and cattle. She added that they originally intended to put the mural on the Spring Hill Firehouse, but in conversations with the city, the walls around the firehouse were not solid enough to hold such a mural, so they decided to turn it into a welcome to the neighborhood sign.

Ms. Wallen stated that the welcome sign would be adjacent to the actual spring depicted in the mural. She added that the spring is currently being restored thanks to Councilwoman Darlene Harris.

Ms. Wolf directed the commission to images of the mural panels. She stated that the panels are approximately three feet high and twenty feet long. She added that there have been several key partners in the this project including the Charm Bracelet project, MCG, Councilwoman Darlene Harris, Spring Hill Civic League, Vernor Krupp a resident and design consultant, Morton Brown, Mike Gable, Bob from Steel City Boxing, and Guy a resident that offered construction labor and materials.

Ms. Wolf directed the commission to a schedule for the project in which ground would be broken in May and installation of the mural would occur in June.

Ms. Wolf stated that the Spring Hill Civic League created a maintenance fund account and donated $200 to it.

Ms. Wolf stated that project location is at the corner of Damas and Homer Streets in Spring Hill, adjacent to the original spring. Ms. Wallen added that there is a castle-like stone structure built by a German settler in the 1930s on the other side of the spring.

Ms. Wolf stated that they set up two workshops at the Spring Hill elementary school to have the community create mini-mosaics that will be included along the border of the larger panels. She added that these mini mosaics will say "Welcome to Spring Hill" across the top border.

Ms. Wallen directed the commission to letters of support from the president and vice president of the Spring Hill Civic League that state that the League opened a saving account for maintenance of the sign.

Ms. Wolf directed the commission to newsletters included in the application that highlight the mosaic's progress.

Ms. Wallen directed the commission to Vernor Krupp's drawings of the sign and site in which the sign will be placed on a cement block wall with a substantial footer. She added that on either end of the mural there will be plaques commemorating those that contributed to the project.

Ms. Wolf stated that Public Works agreed to dig the footer for the sign, as well as clear and level the site.

Ms. Wolf directed the commission to a bird's eye view of the site. She stated that the site will be set back from the road by the sidewalk and shrubbery.

Ms. Wallen added that there might be a woodchip covering on the surface to prevent people from parking on the site. She added that, as suggested by the Civic League, there would not be any benches to discourage loitering.

Ms. Luckett asked about the budget of the project and the maintenance and upkeep of the project.

Ms. Wolf answered that there are still some monies left over from the grant received for the project. She stated that most of the materials will be donated by residents and the shrubbery and woodchips would be donated by Public Works.

Ms. Wallen stated that maintaining her own murals over the past 16 years cost approximately $30. She stated that occasionally she re-caulks or chips out a bad piece to replace it, otherwise the murals do not require much maintenance. She stated that the $200 in the Civic League account is sufficient to cover any additional maintenance costs.

Ms. Luckett asked if Ms. Wallen would be responsible for maintenance.

Ms. Wallen answered that she had signed on to maintain the mural.

Mr. Brown stated that if the commission accepts this project, the City would write up a maintenance agreement for the mural.

Ms. Haskell asked about the location of the sign within the community.

Ms. Wallen answered that this corner is an entrance to the middle of the community as this is where the two hillsides come together, and the site is also a gather place since it is across from the community center.

Mr. Astorino commended the project for including the community in the process. He asked about the alternative renderings included in the application packets, wanting to know which one they will use.

Ms. Wallen answered that one of them was a previous iteration and pointed out the accurate drawing.

Mr. Astorino asked about signage.

Ms. Wallen answered that the signage that says "Welcome to Spring Hill" will be in the top middle mosaic border of the sign.

Mr. Astorino asked about the size of the border.

Ms. Wallen answered that the letters will probably be 6 inches tall.

Mr. Astorino asked about the stucco finish of the cement block wall, expressing concern about that treatment's maintenance and durability. He added that the cap should also prevent the mural from being dripped on by water and snow.

Ms. Wallen answered that she would rather have it be bare block.

Mr. Cooper stated that the locations of the other community murals on houses have a greater impact than one placed on its own. He added that the contrast between the mosaic and the siding or brick makes the work more prominent and contributes greatly to the urban texture.

Ms. Wallen agreed about the impact of murals on the sides of houses, stating that this mural was designed for placement on the firehouse.

Mr. Indovina asked about the steel beams on the side of the sign, commenting that cortend steel might be difficult to find and bleeds rust which might ruin the mural. He added that he would encourage the project to look closely at the materials to be used and find something that will last. He added that he also has concerns about the stucco, similar to Mr. Astorino's concerns about maintenance and durability, so they might want to consider a decorative wall made of mosaics.

Mr. Kaczorowski asked who owns the property and where the spring is in context of the sign.

Ms. Wallen answered that the City owns the property.

Mr. Brown answered that the spring is located to the right of the sign when you are facing the sign. He also stated that the sidewalks were recently installed near this site and that he looked at this project with Mike Gable.

Ms. Ismail asked about mosaic mural reactions to the freeze/thaw phenomena in Pittsburgh.

Ms. Wallen answered that through experimenting with other murals, she was able to figure out how materials worked with the weather. She stated that she found the most durable materials like high-quality cement with a proper aggregate and polymers to be firm and flexible.

Ms. Luckett asked Ms. Wallen if she had plans to do any more houses.

Ms. Wallen answered that she does plan to create more murals.

Ms. Luckett asked if she every does tours in the neighborhood.

Ms. Wallen answered that several of her students have brought people on tours on the street.

Ms. Wolf added that there are several residents who are on a list to get mosaic murals done on their houses. She stated that these community murals provide great experiential learning for students at MCG.

Mr. Brown stated that the commission will need to see the content of the commemorative plaques. He added that this project is called an art sign so that the City does not have to determine if pieces like this are part of the collection, but rather art signs where the neighborhood is responsible for the maintenance.

Mr. Indovina addressed the audience and invited them to comment on behalf, against, or in general about the project. Mr. Indovina asked for a motion regarding Conceptual and Final Approval on this project.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual Approval only for the Spring Hill Mural project.

MOVED: Haskell **SECONDED: Astorino**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

d. Restoration of the Caliguiri Map

Mr. Brown explained that the several concerned citizens had called the City regarding the condition of the map component of the Caliguiri sculpture on the City County building. He distributed several price quotes from conservators for restoration of the map and for creating a new map. He added that $6,000 has been allotted for this project. Mr. Brown stated that the three conservators who gave quotes were Matthews International, Vincent Allen Restoration, and McKay Lodge. He added that all three firms agreed that the map should be restored rather than replaced.

Mr. Brown stated that he discovered a second map in the Public Works offices and spoke with the artist's wife regarding the creation of the sculpture and the map. He added that what they've concluded is that the map was originally placed on the plinth without a covering for about a year until there was massive leaking from the portico above onto the sculpture and map causing oxidation. He stated that after the leaking, the sculpture was cleaned and the map was removed until a new map was put in its place with a covering.

Mr. Brown stated that the artist Mr. Berks requested that the map remain uncovered. He added that the map has been covered since 1992 and that the covering is badly scratched and oxidized. Mr. Brown stated that he hopes to restore both maps and replace the glass with the $6,000 budget.

Ms. Haskell asked if the maps are identical.

Mr. Brown answered that the maps are free of discrepancies and identical except for an wider 'border' on the one that was found in Public Works offices. He added that he suspects the first one was wider to cover the entire plinth, while the second was cut shorter to accommodate the covering.

Ms. Haskell asked if the maps are bronze.

Mr. Brown answered that they are a yellow bronze that does not match the color of the sculpture.

Mr. Astorino stated that he was involved with the original placement of the sculpture, along with a former Director of City Planning, Alan Schule. He added that the map was installed without the cover and stated that he likes it better without the covering.

Mr. Brown stated that there are markings on the cover causing concern about the possibility of skateboarders using the map cover as a skating surface. Mr. Brown stated that he hopes there is money left over to assess and clean the sculpture by a licensed conservator.

Mr. Indovina stated that he was surprised the map was in such bad shape even though it had a cover.

Mr. Cooper stated that the cover might be contributing to the problem by trapping air and moisture in there.

Mr. Brown explained that there are small air holes in the granite that might not be functioning correctly since there are pine needles inside. He added that pine needles are very acidic and might be contributing to the map's condition. He added that a conservator could assess the holes and gaskets for proper air.

Mr. Indovina asked if the idea is that the map will survive better without the cover, because it would look better aesthetically without the cover.

Mr. Brown answered that he agrees that it would look better uncovered, but the piece may become abraded over time from skateboarders and sitters. He asked the commission to consider some skateboard deterrents and directed the commission to some example options.

Mr. Indovina suggested finding alternative skateboard deterrents that would also allow the piece to be exposed.

Mr. Brown stated that this will be the sculpture's 20th anniversary year and they are hoping to have a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the unveiling.

Mr. Kaczorowski stated that Public Works would be willing to provide additional support for the project.

Ms. Haskell asked the commission to identify a discrete distraction on the surface of the base to deter skateboarders, sitting, etc.

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

Mr. Indovina asked for a motion regarding Conceptual Approval on this project.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual Approval of the restoration of the Caliguiri Map.

MOVED: Haskell **SECONDED: Cooper**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

Ms. Ismail asked Mr. Brown to give an update on the proposed Mellon Park sculpture garden.

Mr. Brown stated that he will be placing five pieces of the City's collection throughout the city this year. He stated that one has already been given Conceptual Approval to be installed in Grandview Park. He stated that the other four he intends to place in Mellon Park at the corner of Penn Ave and Fifth Ave.

Mr. Brown stated that the four sculptures left to place are of the same period: Aaronel deRoy Gruber "Steel Cityscape", Peter Calaboyias "Five Factors II", Thomas Morandi "Untitled", and Syl Damianos "Cubed Tension."

Ms. Haskell asked about a piece at the US Steel Building

Mr. Brown stated that he is scheduled to talk with the Shadyside Action Coalition board meeting on April 8th.

Ms. Haskell asked what portion of the park will be used for the sculpture.

Mr. Brown explained that the sculptures will be placed around the pedestrian path to conserve the central green space. He added that spreading the wealth of sculptures would be ideal, but claiming this land as a sculpture park is fitting now with Bakery Square coming in next door.

Ms. Haskell agreed that that side of the park is not as pretty as the other, so placing sculptures here will help it develop in the sculpture park concept like the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts side.

Mr. Brown added that the Clark Winter piece by Reizenstein School is of the same time period as the others, so will extend continuity of the park.

Ms. Luckett stated that, as a resident of that neighborhood, she appreciates the idea of sculpture park to claim some land for the residents amongst all the schools and businesses.

Ms. Ismail stated that this is an area where three neighborhoods converge. She added that a sculpture garden here connects to the Mayor's bigger vision of connecting public art and communities by public process.

Ms. Luckett added that there is more activity in this area now like walking, jogging, strolling.

Ms. Haskell asked if there was a safety problem here for these works.

Mr. Brown answered that he has looked at many locations with representatives of Public Works, and he does not perceive this area to be prone to graffiti, especially with all the use this park gets. He added that he hopes to present the park at April's Art Commission meeting.

Ms. Ismail mentioned that City Planning launched the SNAP program, that it won a national award, and that it includes the public art inventory. She added that when the Art Commission agenda is lighter, they would like to do a demonstration.

Mr. Brown stated that he made a site visit to Fowler Park, the site of the gymnasium proposed last month, to see the artwork present in the park. He stated that though the commission was shown pictures of the gazebo and amphitheatre, they did not see pictures of the cross that was erected there. Mr. Brown directed the commission to images of the cross at the amphitheatre. He stated that he contacted the law department about a religious piece permanently displayed on City property. He stated that the law department reviewed the situation and contacted the Pittsburgh Project to remove the cross. Mr. Brown directed the commission to images of the public art piece in that park that's part of the City's collection. He stated that it is in disrepair and that several stones have been moved out of place. Mr. Brown directed the commission to images of the temporary art in place in the peace garden. He stated that only one artists' work was present, and the other work that was presented was not in place. He added that some other elements like a wooden panel mural had been installed, but was not pictured in last year's presentation.

Ms. Luckett commented that it's possible that there is a lack of understanding as to which pieces are the City's and what is allowed on the property.

Mr. Brown agreed that there does seem to be a lack of understanding of public art materials and that the Myford stone piece is artwork. He added that they should be aware of the complications of installing religious symbols on City property.

Ms. Luckett stated that it is possible that, given the religious community, they may have just not thought about the implications of a permanent installation rather than temporary.

Mr. Brown stated that there are two options: either the Pittsburgh Project takes the artwork with them when the lease is up or the artwork is de-installed now.

Ms. Luckett stated if the artwork was taken down now it would likely have an effect in the community since people and children often go up there to pray or play.

Mr. Kaczorowski stated that his recommendation is not cross the bridge of de-installing the artwork now, just decide not to accession the work and have them take it down when they vacate the property.

Mr. Cooper stated that they should agree not to accept it into the City's collection, but stipulate that when it deteriorates it should be removed by the Pittsburgh Project.

Mr. Brown added that this is a precedent that may affect future applicants.

Ms. Haskell stated that situations like this make site visits necessary.

Mr. Cooper stated that a city should encourage and welcome this kind of artwork and this type of occupation and investment in parts of the city. He added that cities end up being bereft when they discourage this type of artistic creation.

Mr. Brown stated that he will tend to this situation in a gentle way.

Meeting Adjourned