

ART COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF March 25, 2009
BEGINNING AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION:

**Klavon, Indovina, Cooper, Astorino, Hall,
Serrao, Haskell**

PRESENT OF THE STAFF:

**Noor Ismail
Morton Brown**

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Klavon asked for approval of minutes. Indovina moved to accept. Astorino second. The minutes for February, 2009 were accepted and approved.

B. Correspondence

Mr. Brown noted no correspondence.

C. Items for Review

- a. Zone 3 Police Station Artwork
 - o Kim Graziani, Director of Neighborhood Initiatives,
Office of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl
 - o Judy Hackel, Allentown CDC
 - o Renee Piechocki, Office of Public Art

Kim Graziani, Director of Neighborhood Initiatives, introduced herself and noted that one of the most notable themes that has been recurring throughout her work in the hilltop communities of the Zone 3 section of the city is public safety.

Ms. Graziani went on to say that since the Zone 3 sector of the city is so broad (encompassing 15 communities) and spread topographically throughout the hilltop, it was decided that one creative step toward a solution would be to relocate the Zone 3 Police Station from its current location in the Strip District to a prominent location within the heart of the hilltop communities in Allentown, specifically at the corner of Arlington and Warrington Avenues (830 Warrington Avenue), occupying a building that was formerly a bank, then youth hostel.

Ms. Graziani stated that this prominent location not only forms a gateway into the heart of the Zone 3 sector and the Allentown community, it is also strategically (centrally) located to offer the optimum venue for deployment of officers into the sector.

Ms. Graziani noted that one particular functional challenge to this building, however, was that the ground floor windows needed to be covered with a bullet-proof material to protect officers in those areas. Mayor Ravenstahl charged Ms. Graziani and all City staff involved to find a creative solution to this was sought so that the Victorian architecture of the building could be preserved, the building would not be perceived as a closed-off fortress within the neighborhood, and that the building could also seem accessible, welcoming and connected to the community.

Ms. Graziani stated that it was at this point of the project that Renee Piechocki, Director of the Office of Public Art was contacted and brought in as a partner to advise on an artistic solution to the charge from Mayor Ravenstahl for this building. It was decided that a portion of the budget for renovation of this building and retro-fitting for the new Zone 3 Police Station would go toward metal panels that would encompass an artistic element that would cover the first floor windows, but offer an element of beauty and connectivity to the community and visitors of the neighborhood.

Ms. Graziani stated that the architect involved with renovation of the Police Station, the Bureau of Police, the Office of Public Art and the Department of Neighborhood Initiatives of the Office of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl, researched the appropriate materials for the artwork panels and decided upon anodized aluminum that could be etched in whatever design an artist chose.

Ms. Graziani stated that in January, 2009, representatives from the Office of Mayor Luke Ravenstahl and the Office of Public Art presented the project at the January Zone 3 Public Safety Council Meeting. Members were invited to sign-up to serve on an Artist Selection Panel. This panel was composed of five community stakeholders, four City department representatives, and three public art professionals. Residents of Zone 3 were kept apprised of the formation of the panel and its work through email communications to Public Safety Council members and other community groups within the Zone.

Ms. Graziani stated that in February-March the artist selection panel reviewed artist applicants, selected a finalist, held community meetings that discussed design iterations, and approved a final design. The fabrication of the panels would be completed offsite, then installed by mid-April by Department of Public Works so as to coincide with the grand opening of the Police station.

Ms. Graziani then introduced Renee Piechocki.

Ms. Piechocki stated that she was present to speak about the artist selection process of this project, but took a moment to underscore Ms. Graziani's comment on how expedited this project was: conceptualized in November, and completed in April.

Ms. Piechocki stated that normally, with an art project of this scale and level of community involvement one might have a region-wide call for artists, with potentially a review of qualifications component but due to the necessity of an expedited construction schedule for the Police station she offered an alternate solution to artist selection: an invitational competition. The Office of Public Art used the Pittsburgh Public Artist Registry (of GPAC) and identified eight artist applicants (local Pittsburgh artists) whose work seemed conducive to the pre-determined format of this project. The artist selection panel then narrowed list to three finalists at the end of January, who were interviewed and asked to present portfolios of their previous work. The panel unanimously decided upon local artist and CMU professor, Kim Beck as the artist to receive the award of the project.

Ms. Piechocki then mentioned that even though the City's percent for art ordinance has been dormant for many years, this project represents a model and potential opportunity to resurrect the practice of allocating one percent of municipal construction budgets for the commissioning of new public art.

Ms. Piechocki then introduced artist Kim Beck.

Ms. Beck stated that she hoped that the aforementioned percent for art program model continued as she is a local artist that would never have had an opportunity to work on this scale or with this budget had it not been for this project. This would go a long way to providing sustenance to artists in Pittsburgh if replicated in the future.

Ms. Beck noted that the only direction she was given initially for the project was that her designs would be contained within the five aluminum window panels, and that idea was to connect the station to the community.

Ms. Beck stated that the material for the panels is a bronze anodized aluminum in which the designs are etched directly into the aluminum, rendering a silver line drawing. The panels, once fabricated and etched, will be coated with a graffiti resistant clear coat prior to installation. The artwork panel sizes vary, but range in size from around 58 inches x 51 inches to 35 inches x 58 inches.

Ms. Beck stated that she first presented three different design concepts to the panel in March. One interesting coincidence that led to the formation of these designs is that she had led her CMU class through

her artistic process in which they photographed these very hilltop communities of this area as imagery for class art projects.

Usually, Ms. Beck stated, she first takes a photograph of a landscape or architectural structure, traces a minimal line drawing over the photograph, then presents some iteration of that line-work as a painting, drawing or installation. Since she had already gone through the first stage of her process with this very community, she came into this project a variety of photographs of stairs, homes and hillside vistas directly from the area that look up and down onto the community.

Ms. Beck stated that these up and down views were interesting and important as they are specific to this neighborhood, and cannot be seen anywhere else. The views of homes, churches and hillside vistas added another layer once installed. Installed upon a police station, these images become symbolic of the community members—citizens and homes—that these very police men and women serve and protect every day. In this way, these panels become a very poignant reminder of this creed.

Ms. Beck then passed around a 12 inch by 12 inch physical sample of a bronze anodized aluminum panel that had been etched with her design as a mock-up. Ms. Beck stated that a protective clear coat would be applied to each panel to guard against graffiti, weathering and scratches over time. Ms. Beck stated that the bronze anodized finish was chosen so as to aesthetically adhere to the colors inherent in the brick façade and green trim of the building, and for its fortitude over time. A bronze anodized finish should never fade due to sunlight.

Mr. Serrao asked the substrate.

Ms. Beck replied that it is aluminum panel but asked that Clint Myers, the architect in charge of the renovation project and art fabrication, answer further material and fabrication questions.

Mr. Serrao stated that he understood the art is aluminum, but asked about the material behind the art that actually covers the window sockets of the building.

Clint Myers responded by stating that the substrate would be an existing metal spandrel panel.

Ms. Haskell asked what the scale of the line (the line drawing) would be in the finished product, and would this piece be read from a distance.

Ms. Beck stated that there is a limitation as to the width of the etched line into the aluminum panel, and that she would work with the fabricator and architect to make the line as wide as possible. She estimated the finished line width to be somewhere between 1/8 of an inch and 1/4 of an inch.

Ms. Haskell asked if the lines were incised into the metal.

Ms. Beck stated that it was not incised, but etched using an acid—much like a silk screening/print-making process. The line would then be much more subtle in its depth.

Ms. Hall asked about lighting the artwork.

Ms. Beck stated that the community was interested in pursuing lighting and that they did discuss this in meetings prior to this.

Mr. Cooper asked if there is a reason as to why the drawing is straight rather than freehand.

Ms. Beck stated that it is her artistic process to use a straight, sometimes computer-generated line versus a hand-drawn line.

Ms. Haskell asked what would happen when dirt and grime get into these etched lines.

Ms. Beck stated that the etched lines are very shallow—almost imperceptible by touch—then clear-coated with a durable finish that would not allow dirt and grime to settle into those areas.

Mr. Serrao asked how it would hold up to a power washer.

Ms. Beck then introduced Clint Myers.

Mr. Myers stated that the panels will be coated in a clear acrylic primer and then a clear acrylic top coat that will act as a protective, cleanable surface that will also resist graffiti, markers, and other vandalistic activities to a certain degree.

Mr. Astorino asked about the scale of the physical sample provided at this meeting versus the finished product.

Ms. Beck stated that the actual panels will be about 58 inches square, with some variation in window sizes.

Mr. Astorino clarified to ask about the artwork itself, and how would it scale to actual size.

Ms. Beck stated that she designed the image to run to the edge of the panel almost exactly the way it appears on mock-up.

Mr. Serrao asked about the clear coat, and whether or not it was designed to be a sacrificial coating.

Mr. Myers stated he is proposing a two-stage coating: a clear primer and a clear top coat, and that it was not sacrificial, and that it would resist graffiti and graffiti removing chemicals, and could be re-furbished onsite when and if needed.

Ms. Klavon asked about the point of the screens, and whether or not they were bulletproof.

John Warren, Executive Assistant to the Chief of Police, asked to speak to this. Mr. Warren stated that these panels were a necessity for bulletproofing the first floor as there had been an incident in Squirrel Hill in 1999 where an officer working in an unprotected first floor office suffered injuries in a drive-by shooting engagement. It then became a policy of the Pittsburgh Police Bureau to fortify any first floor, street level office space making it bullet-resistant.

Mr. Warren stated that when the new Zone 3 police Station was being designed, the Bureau of Police wanted to protect its officers, but still retain the historic look and feel of the building, and as ideas for artwork to cover the windows arose the project leaders felt that public art would be a great way to involve and connect to the community and make the police station a little less imposing, and maybe a little inviting to the neighborhood.

Ms. Klavon asked whether or not this building was designated as historic.

The applicant group affirmed that it was not designated as historic.

Ms. Klavon stated that the artwork is very nice, but felt as if the Police Bureau was closing itself off from the community and visually turning its back on the street by creating an opaque first floor. Ms. Klavon asked why a bullet proof glass was not used instead of opaque metal panels.

Mr. Warren stated that the cost involved in bullet proof glass made it prohibitive, and that complete privacy was needed on the first floor level—no shadows or indication of personnel could be allowed through a semi-opaque or translucent material could be allowed.

Ms. Klavon expressed concern that the decision to cover the windows with a potentially dark bronze opaque material might seem to produce a more foreboding and imposing demeanor to the building and that it might be also be detrimental to the building's aesthetically historical façade.

Mr. Meyers agreed with Ms. Klavon, but stated that one of the other aspects, other than bullet-resistance, that they had to consider was privacy as mentioned before. The only way to ensure both safety and privacy was this opaque material.

Mr. Warren stated that the façade will also incorporate the light globes from the current Zone 3 station in the Strip District, flags (national and city), and a sculptural Police crest when finished, adding to the historic personality of the building.

Mr. Meyers described the façade also as being clad in 18 by 18 inch grey-flecked stone tile.

Ms. Haskell asked if the Police Department will occupy the entire building.

Mr. Warren confirmed that this was true.

Ms. Haskell asked why, if this true, the second and third story floors are not covered in opaque bullet-proof material.

Mr. Warren stated that the angle in which a drive-by interloper would need to enact a shooting could not be achieved from the street to these floors, thus negating the need for bullet-proof material on those floors.

Ms. Hall asked if the transom windows above the artwork were to be bullet-resistant material or left as is (regular, translucent glass).

Mr. Myers explained that behind the artwork and subsequent metal spandrel panel, there is a bullet-resistant fiberglass layer and the top transom windows would remain with regular glass for daylight infiltration and to preserve the architectural cues of the building. This would remain safe for office personnel as any bullet passing through these windows would come at an angle that could not inflict harm to anyone inside.

Mr. Astorino asked if the original corner (main) entrance to the building had been moved previously or was it moved within this project.

Mr. Myers stated that the current main (side) entrance was previously removed during the time in which the building served as a youth hostel.

Mr. Astorino asked if there were any thought given to reopening the original corner entrance.

Mr. Warren stated that the thought to keep the side entrance as a main entrance also offered a safer entrance vestibule so that visitors could be interred in that space before entering fully, giving office personnel another safety buffer against potential threatening behavior.

Judy Hackel introduced herself as President of the Allentown CDC stated that she and several Allentown community members had been a part of this project from the beginning and voiced strong support for this project on behalf of the community.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any present in the audience who would speak on behalf of this project.

Ken Wolf, President of Zone 3 Public Safety Council, Councilman Bruce Krauss' Chief of Staff, and resident of Allentown stated that initially he also objected to the blacked out first floor windows but finally accepted them as he understood the safety issue. He then voiced his enthusiastic support of the project, and stated that he was currently involved in increasing lighting capacity around the area of the new artwork to provide safety and visibility for the building.

Mr. Warren then spoke again in support as a resident of Allentown.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any present in the audience who would speak against this project.

Ms. Klavon started Commission discussion.

Ms. Hall asked about how maintenance would be funded and/or enacted on the piece if and when it becomes a piece of the City's collection.

Morton Brown answered that there currently is no maintenance fund for pieces in the City's collection, but that it was his task to create one and to take care of this piece. Mr. Brown also stated that an accession and maintenance agreement would be drafted if this piece were approved and installed.

Ms. Hall stated that there are several pieces in the City's collection that have fallen into disrepair over the years and asked what if anything can guarantee a better fate for this piece.

Mr. Brown stated that several policies were being developed over the next few months that would encompass maintenance, accessioning and deaccessioning of the City's collection and that this piece might become the first to go through this process.

Mr. Cooper asked if there were any plan to light the transom windows from the inside to glow at night, and whether or not the line width of the artwork would read at night without lighting.

Mr. Myers stated that all of the issues of lighting were being investigated, but that there were no plans to light the transom windows.

Ms. Hall asked to clarify that if this artwork were not in place, the police station would just have green metal panels covering the windows.

The applicant group confirmed this.

Mr. Astorino stated that this is a wonderful project and that he supports the Mayor's Office in this endeavor. He also stated that the momentum of this project should continue toward future projects—that the City has lost that momentum over the years.

Mr. Astorino stated that the safety question of the first floor windows supersedes any aesthetic or historic decision.

Ms. Haskell re-stated that lighting the works at night would greatly enhance the building and artwork.

Mr. Indovina agreed, and asked that (at least) pursuance of exterior lighting be a condition of approval.

Mr. Astorino stated that the budget for the project is probably already spent and asked how they might pay for lighting, if made a condition.

Mr. Warren stated that he would re-examine the budget as the project closes and if he can re-appropriate any of the contingency budget he will commit to paying for the exterior lighting out of the project budget.

Mr. Cooper re-stated that the reason he thinks exterior lighting is important is because the ambient light emanating from the transom windows will make it very difficult to see the artwork unless it is illuminated.

Ms. Klavon asked if they should consider blacking out the transoms as well.

Many Commissioners spoke that that would be too much, disallowing any natural light into the space.

Ms. Hall stated that she is very glad to see a project that has a clear cut process that has a distinct beginning, middle and end and applauded the applicants for their thorough work.

Ms. Klavon asked for a motion.

MOTION: Project as presented receive Conceptual and Final approval, with the condition that applicant pursue exterior lighting and follow up with that with Public Art Manager.

MOVED: Indovina

SECONDED: Astorino

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED

D. Phipps Conservatory Center for Sustainable Landscapes

Richard Piacentini, Executive Director, Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens introduced himself.

Chris Minnerly, Principal of The Design Alliance Architects, introduced himself.

Mr. Piacentini began by stating that the overall master plan for the renovation of Phipps Conservatory and the creation of the Center for Sustainable Landscapes was presented and approved by the Art Commission in 2003.

Mr. Piacentini stated that the plan involved three phases. The first phase was to replace the 1960's entrance to the facility. The second phase was to replace some old dilapidated greenhouses with new production greenhouses conservatory and special events area. The third phase was to create an educational, research and administration complex where the maintenance facility was. 2005 saw the completion of phase 1 and 2006 saw the completion of phase 2. Phase 3 will occur in 2009.

Sustainability and the development of green practices has become a priority to Phipps. The new welcome center was the first LEED certified building within a public garden in the world.

When the phase 3 initiative was begun, it was decided to approach its design with sustainability as a major priority, and attempt to accept the Living Building Challenge, which seeks to exceed LEED platinum requirements. The Design Alliance Architects were commissioned to design this new Center for Sustainable Landscapes. Mr. Piacentini then introduced Chris Minnerly.

Mr. Minnerly presented a site plan of the CSL within the powerpoint presentation. Mr. Minnerly explains that the back entrance of Phipps is the area where the CSL will inhabit. Mr. Minnerly walks through images of the interior and exterior of the proposed plans explaining vehicular and pedestrian flow, renewable facilities and green roof areas.

Mr. Minnerly shows Tropical Forest area in which an elevator will be provided for ADA accessibility. Mr. Minnerly shows and describes multiple views of lower plateau area where building and demolition will occur, visitor parking and several paths that move visitors through the planned space.

Mr. Minnerly shows several ideas of cladding and exterior shots of the building, stating that this portion of the building does not attempt to cling to the architecture of the old portion of the building, but rather is its own structure with its own design while remaining sensitive to the materials present in the landscape. Mr. Cooper asks to what degree does the designer and steward of this building regard it (the building) as didactic.

Mr. Piacentini states that a real reason why they are going to such lengths to make this building so transparent and full of environmentally friendly functions and amenities is so that it becomes an educational tool in and of itself—no visitor will pass through without some awareness of these issues being brought to bear.

Mr. Cooper asked about the bathroom fixtures.

Mr. Minnerly stated that the fixtures would include waterless urinals, and grey water reuse for the flushing of the toilets.

Ms. Haskell asked to clarify the landscaping photos of the broken retaining wall and whether or not that would remain as is.

Mr. Piacentini states that all of that area would be cleaned up.

Mr. Minnerly stated that he is looking to reuse those broken jersey barriers.

Mr. Indovina states that this is a nice first step and a good looking building.

Ms. Klavon asked whether the applicants were proposing the building or the site.

Morton Brown stated that he assumed that the building was the point of discussion as there was no information on the surrounding landscape.

Mr. Piacentini stated that everything is presented here, except the plantings.

Ms. Klavon stated that this was not enough to make a decision.

Mr. Minnerly stated that he could get any information needed.

Ms. Haskell asked if the Commission would be holding up the project if they tabled this decision until, next month's hearing.

Mr. Minnerly stated that they could do whatever the Commission needed.

Mr. Astorino stated that he was comfortable with conceptual approval with the condition that the applicants return with more landscaping data.

Ms. Hall stated that it might make more sense to table the decision.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any present in the audience who would speak on behalf of this project.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any present in the audience who would speak against this project.

MOTION: Decision on Conceptual approval tabled until applicant can return with more information on landscaping.

MOVED: Serrao

SECONDED: Indovina

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED

E. Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Downtown Planters

Judy Wagner, Senior Director for the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Community Gardens and Greenspace Program introduced herself and described the Downtown planter temporary project conceived of and funded by the Colcom Foundation as a gift of 400 planters to the City for its 250th birthday. The project proposed at this hearing would be a one year extension of that project for 2009.

Ms. Wagner walked through a powerpoint presentation that described the placement of the planters within the Golden Triangle of Downtown, the patterns and types of plants in each arrangement, the volunteers and staff that would manage the planters and routine maintenance that would occur throughout the year.

Ms. Wagner submitted a letter of support from Point Park University and stated an ongoing partnership with Point Park University, the Cultural Trust, and Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership.

Ms. Wagner walked through a description of the 2008 project, and explained additions to the project in 2009 including additional staff and variety of flowers.

Ms. Wagner described criteria for placement of planters, including ADA standards and respect to driveways, delivery areas, doorways and bus stops.

Ms. Wagner then showed examples of each seasonal arrangement scheme identified for the planters, a coordinated color scheme, light and shade receptive schemes and described a goal of creating a bounteous look in each arrangement.

Ms. Wagner stated that WPC installs each planter, or uses contactors and volunteers under supervision of WPC staff. Plants are watered daily and/or replaced as needed, and a 20% excess of plants are kept on hand for contingency/replacement. Maintenance and cases of vandalism have been very minimal over the past year and are expected to remain on that level.

Ms. Hall stated that she finds the bows on the winter baskets distracting and look terrible at certain points.

Ms. Wagner stated that they had trouble with the bows lasting through weather and theft.

Ms. Hall asked about seasonal plants that would last throughout the seasons so that the plants are not wasted.

Ms. Wagner stated that they do not know any plants that will bloom in 3 seasons and stay nice through winter, but the plants are composted and donated to Union Project and others.

Ms. Hall clarified that the proposed project was for a one year extension that would end at the end of 2009.

Ms. Wagner affirmed that this project is funder –dependent, and that they would not continue unless Colcom wanted to continue.

Ms. Hall stated that there is no funder signage.

Ms. Wagner stated that they were considering a small decal allowing a number to call if problems.

Ms. Haskell stated that the other WPC areas are identified with signage.

Ms. Wagner affirmed, but stated that the decal was probably going to be used.

Ms. Haskell asked if WPC intended to use planters from last year.

Ms. Wagner affirmed.

Ms. Haskell asked what the planters were made of.

Ms. Wagner stated that the planters were plastic, but were guaranteed for life by the American company that made them.

Ms. Klavon stated that the budget for 2008 was \$500,000 and 2009 was \$400,000, and that currently it is her belief that there are too many planters and that possibly they should be concentrated in certain areas. Ms. Klavon also asked that WPC consider utilizing certain existing City-owned planters and median areas such as the area on Grant street in Downtown—taking the large budget for these plants and applying greater care to City land, in places where the City may not currently keep maintained as well as they should.

Ms. Klavon stated that she believed that the planters added unnecessary visual clutter to the streetscape and that they do not work with existing architecture.

Ms. Hall stated that this was the second year of a temporary project, and asked if there were a long term plan. What would WPC do if or if not funding is available?

Ms. Wagner replied with some examples where the WPC had taken over some City maintained areas in Downtown and had done a good job of keeping them up, but that WPC would be interested in pursuing a comprehensive planting plan for Downtown. She would take these suggestions back to the WPC for consideration.

Ms. Klavon suggested that instead of continuing on this same path after the 2009 season, WPC readdress this project with Colcom or other funders to choose City property and plan a long term strategy that helps take care of areas that the City really needs maintained and beautified in Downtown.

Ms. Hall voiced agreement.

Ms. Wagner voiced agreement.

Ms. Hall suggested partnerships with non-profits such as Manchester Craftsmen's Guild greenhouses and asked if WPC has a self-evaluation mechanism.

Ms. Wagner stated that they took pictures and did survey some of the Downtown residents and businesses.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any present in the audience who would speak on behalf of this project.

Mike Edwards President and CEO of the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership spoke in support of the project.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any present in the audience who would speak against this project.

MOTION: Conceptual and Final approval as presented for 2009 season only.

MOVED: Serrao

SECONDED: Hall

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED

Meeting Adjourned