ART COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF August 26th, 2009
BEGINNING AT 2:00 P.M.

PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION: **Indovina, Cooper, Serrao, Haskell**

PRESENT OF THE STAFF: **Morton Brown**

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Indovina asked for approval of minutes. The minutes for April, 2009 were accepted and approved.

B. Correspondence

Mr. Brown noted no correspondence.

C. Items for Review

a. Briefing: Maintenance of *Unkillable Human* sculpture
- Morton Brown
- Tom Baxter, Director, Friends of the Riverfront

Mr. Brown stated that the City-owned sculpture entitled *Unkillable Human* was stolen on or around August 4th, 2009. He went on to say that he became aware of this by speaking with Tom Baxter, Director of Friends of the Riverfront who had contacted police and was quoted in a newspaper article regarding the theft.

Mr. Brown stated that the piece was recovered by police and returned to Mr. Baxter. Mr. Brown went on to say that Friends of the Riverfront have an existing agreement in place with the City that allows the group to hold monies for maintenance of the artwork and perform maintenance on the piece along with its surrounding lands of the Peace Park. Mr. Brown asked Mr. Baxter to come to the podium and elaborate on the license agreement and maintenance funds.

Mr. Baxter affirmed that the license and maintenance agreement between the City and Friends of the Riverfront has existed since 2002 and that a maintenance fund for the piece is maintained through FOR initially set up by private donations, foundation support and Pittsburgh Physicians for Compassion.

Mr. Baxter stated that police investigation is ongoing and they are uncertain about number of people involved in the theft.

Mr. Brown added that the licensing agreement was crafted in 2002 and it states that the Director of the Department of Public Work should be the sole arbitrator of any kind of decision. Mr. Brown stated that this is not the way that license agreements are currently crafted, and that future agreements would involve the Public Art Manager and the Art Commission in future approval processes regarding maintenance agreements.

Mr. Brown stated that Friends of the Riverfront has been doing very good job in holding funds for the sculpture. He also publicly commended Friends of the Riverfront for taking necessary steps to discover and inform his office about the missing of the sculpture. He went on to say that he would stay in contact with Mr. Baxter about the restoration and re-installation of the sculpture.

Ms. Haskell asked about the exact location of the sculpture.

Mr. Baxter explained that it is located in a grassy area at Allegheny Riverfront Park on the North Side.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any persons would like to give a comment.

Mr. Indovina and the Commission thanked Mr. Baxter and FOR for their time and diligence.

b. Mt. Washington Habitat and View Signage

- Vicki Crowley, Landesberg Design

NOTE: The areas below in *italic* are an estimation of the applicant's verbal presentation taken from the original application narrative and notes taken at the hearing. This was done due to a mechanical malfunction of the applicant's microphone and its connection to the recording system. All regular text was gleaned from actual recordings.

Vicki Crowley of Landesberg Design introduced herself as the designer of the Mt. Washington Habitat and View Signage.

Ms. Crowley stated that in the Fall of 2006, the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC), working in conjunction with the City of Pittsburgh and a variety of partners (Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Penn State Extension, Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.) began an innovative habitat and view restoration program along Grandview Avenue in the Grand View Scenic Byway Park.

She went on to say that the program seeks to replace tall and invasive trees with short stature native trees, shrubs and grasses in order to sustainably maintain the renowned view of downtown Pittsburgh from Grandview Avenue. Because this program has proven so successful, it has since been expanded to the remaining "problem" areas across the Park's view corridor. As the work proceeds across large swathes of hillside, it is becoming increasingly necessary to explain this sustainable and ecologically-friendly program to the 1 million plus visitors the sites receive every year.

Ms. Crowley explained that the MWCDC obtained foundation funding to design and install three signs, and has contracted with Landesberg Design, Strada Architects, and Karen Sandorf (artist) to bring this project to fruition. The MWCDC, working through its grassroots committee structure, has put together a restoration sign advisory committee that includes members of the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works, City Planning, restoration consultants, and the broader Mount Washington community. This committee reports to a standing committee of the MWCDC that advises upon open space issues. The design viewed in this application has been reviewed and accepted by both of these committees as well as by the MWCDC's partners in this effort.

Ms. Crowley stated that the target date for installation of the three signs is the week prior to the G-20. She went on to say that it is anticipated that the signs will be in place for approximately 15 years.

Ms. Crowley noted that signs will be installed in three Grand View Scenic Byway Park locations -- Point of View Bluff, Eastern Grandview near the first overlook, and Bigbee Field (off of Bailey Avenue). She noted a map of the approximate locations. She went on to say that the MWCDC and the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works will work together on sign maintenance via a formal agreement. The MWCDC's Community Sustainability Coordinator will check on the signs quarterly and either clean them or arrange to get them cleaned.

Ms. Crowley stated that the signs should require very little maintenance other than occasional cleaning. The concrete pad and welded steel frame structure would not need to be replaced unless they were to sustain a significant strike by a motor vehicle.

Mr. Brown asked to clarify that there would be three different signs or all three would have same images and text.

Ms. Crowley stated that the images and text would be the same, except for that text on each sign that states its location.

Ms. Haskell asked if the applicant was planning to change the content of the signs as the development of the hillside ensues.

Ms. Crowley stated that when the hillside restoration is complete, should the community want to change the content of the signs, the design of the sign structure would be such that it would be possible to do so without much cost or difficulty.

Mr. Serrao asked if there was a different mounting system from the free-standing sign to the railing-mounted sign.

Ms. Crowley stated that there were different systems for each application. Ms. Crowley noted the designs for each and also noted that they are ADA compliant and they are tilted so that children would not be endangered by sharp edges if they were to run along the sidewalk.

Ms. Crowley stated that they plan to have all three signs installed prior to the G20 summit of September 24th and 25th, but perhaps only one would be installed by that time.

Mr. Indovina asked about the images on the signs that describe the sequence of restoration and why there were three same images.

Ms. Crowley stated that the images are an artist rendering of the restorative change to the hillside slope and the second and third images are currently merely placeholder images that would be updated once that content has been created.

Mr. Cooper stated that he liked the signs very much and that he was familiar with the historical image used of the so-called "Indian Trail". He went to say that the contrast between that image and the other three is astonishing.

Mr. Indovina asked for other comments from the Commission.

Mr. Indovina asked for positive, negative or neutral comments from the audience.

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

MOVED: Cooper **SECONDED: Serrao**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

c. Mt. Washington Flower Baskets

- Christopher Beichner, Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation

NOTE: The areas below in *italic* are an estimation of the applicant's verbal presentation taken from the original application narrative and notes taken at the hearing. This was done due to a mechanical malfunction of the applicant's microphone and its connection to the recording system. All regular text was gleaned from actual recordings.

Christopher Beichner introduced himself as the Director of the Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation (MWCDC) and stated that he was presenting an application for 166 flower baskets to be placed along Grandview Avenue in Mt. Washington. *This project is the product of a partnership between MWCDC, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), and Colcom Foundation.*

Mr. Beichner stated that this is a temporary project—slated to exist throughout Fall 2009—to be installed in time for the G-20 summit on September 24-25th. However, there is intent for WPC to replace baskets in these locations in Spring of 2010 for the long term.

Ms. Haskell asked if the proposed flower baskets would be a double-basket configuration with one basket hanging on either side of the pole.

Mr. Beichner affirmed.

Mr. Brown asked to clarify that the baskets would be removed entirely from all poles over the Winter months.

Mr. Beichner stated that the baskets would be removed entirely this Fall due to the installation of new street lights in the area. The baskets with new plantings would be re-installed in the Spring.

Mr. Serrao asked about the brackets planned for these baskets. He noted that there are at least two types of brackets shown as examples: One is more of a simple bracket, and the other is more elaborate, such as those found on the Clemente Bridge in the example. He asked which of these would be used for the Mt. Washington installation.

Mr. Beichner stated that under the new street lights, they would be using the more elaborate bracket that encompasses the Conservancy medallion. He went on to say that the temporary solution was to use the simpler bracket.

Mr. Cooper asked about maintenance costs.

Mr. Beichner stated that the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy would do regular daily watering and re-plantings during seasonal changes. He went on to say that one figure he was given by the WPC was about $230 per basket per year was a fair assessment.

Mr. Cooper asked who covers the cost of maintenance.

Mr. Beichner stated that all maintenance would be done by WPC, paid for by a Colcom Foundation grant.

Ms. Haskell asked if the plantings would have to be replaced after the Winter months, or would they be hearty enough to withstand the cold weather.

Mr. Beichner stated that they would be replaced.

Mr. Indovina asked if the baskets would be consistent.

Mr. Beichner stated that they would be consistent.

Mr. Indovina asked that since the applicant is stating that the baskets would be placed temporarily at these locations for this Fall, would they need to come back when the new poles are in place and a new set of flowers were planned.

Mr. Brown stated that since the locations would remain the same from Fall to Spring, and although there would be a different type of plant, this should be considered as a permanent installation.

Mr. Cooper asked if the Foundation would continue to pay for the maintenance.

Mr. Beichner stated that there are several options being considered to accommodate this, but no real plans are in place.

Mr. Indovina asked to clarify that the bracket with the medallion is the same bracket that would be used next year when and if new baskets were placed.

Mr. Beichner affirmed.

Mr. Indovina asked if the new light poles would be the city-standard shoebox type lights.

Mr. Beichner stated that they would acorn-type lights that he believes are city-standard on one side of the street and city standard drop lights on the other.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any questions of the Commission.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any comments from the audience.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual and Final approval of the project as submitted.

MOVED: Serrao **SECONDED: Haskell**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

d. Oakland Flower Baskets

- Patrick Donohue, Oakland Business Improvement District
- Ron Levick, Oakland Business Improvement District

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Patrick Donohue introduced himself as a board member of the Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID). He went on to say that this project is very similar to the Mt. Washington flower basket project just presented.

Mr. Donohue stated that in this past year, Oakland has received 60 new light poles. It is the intent now to place a maximum of 16 flower baskets along Forbes Avenue between McKee Place and Bouquet Street, but perhaps 3 to 4 of these poles will not be used due to other existing signage that might prohibit the installation of baskets.

Mr. Donohue stated that the OBID is requesting approval of all 16 pole locations, with the understanding that they will not place baskets where there is already too much visual and physical clutter.

Mr. Donohue stated that the OBID has hired the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to install the baskets prior to the G-20 Summit on September 24-25, 2009 and maintain them through the Fall of 2010. The OBID anticipates that the baskets will be able to receive additional funding to allow them to remain at least through the fall of 2014.

Mr. Indovina asked if these baskets retain the same brackets, plantings, etc. as the Mt. Washington application.

Mr. Donohue stated that he was unsure of the brackets from the previous applicant, but though that the Oakland ones were different.

Mr. Serrao stated that he could see in the application where these baskets were affixed to the pole by a clamp—different than those in Mt. Washington—these were more like sconces.

Mr. Donohue stated that the WPC will install the baskets, take them down in the Fall and store them in the Winter. He went on to say that there will be a heartier mix of flowers in the Fall time and a different Spring mix during that season.

Mr. Indovina asked to clarify that the WPC would change the flowers out in any case—that, next year WPC would take Summer flowers out and replace them with Fall flowers.

Mr. Donohue stated that this was correct.

Ms. Haskell asked if the whole basket was removed during the Winter.

Mr. Donohue stated that they would be removed.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any questions of the Commission.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any comments from the audience.

Ron Levick from the audience stood and introduced himself as a building owner in the Oakland (Forbes Avenue) community and stated that he was in full support of this initiative.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual and Final approval of this project as submitted.

MOVED: Haskell **SECONDED: Serrao**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

e. WWII Memorial Informational Update/Donor Recognition

- Megan Murphy, WWII Veterans of Allegheny County Memorial Fund

Mr. Brown stated for the record that the WWII Memorial Project was presenting as an informational update only, requesting critique and suggestion on its donor recognition signage currently under development.

Mark Schneider of the WWII Fund Board introduced himself and stated that the project is in the process of finalizing designs for use in an upcoming presentation to the Commission for Final review and beginning the private fundraising campaign. He stated that they have $2.5 million raised to date—primarily from the State--$2million of this came from the Four Caucuses.

He went on to say that the design team has reconvened to finalize. The project convened Larry Kirkland, sculptor on the project, in a design workshop about a month ago and have finished a donor recognition policy. Before the project moves forward with this portion of the design, however, the group though it prudent to come before the Commission and ask for critique of the donor recognition designs for the memorial.

Megan Murphy introduced herself and stated that the design for the donor recognition signage can be seen in the granite plinths and seating wall located away from the inner sanctum of the memorial so that it would not detract from the central portion of the piece.
She went on to note an aerial view of the site and the placement of the plinths and seating wall and an up-close mock up of how the recognition would look. Ms. Murphy then noted the differentiation of donors by size on the recognition area relative to the amount of the gift.

Ms. Murphy went on to re-iterate that this is the system of donor recognition that Larry Kirkland and the group have come up with, and would like the Commission's assessment before finalizing.

Mr. Indovina asked to clarify that there would only be two of the granite tablets.

Ms. Murphy affirmed that this was the current idea. She went on to say that it appears that the project will be able to raise the money necessary to complete the project by utilizing the amount of funders that would occupy the space in the design.

Ms. Haskell stated that she particularly liked the inscription running horizontally down the wall. She went on to say that it appears that vertical plinth of the donor inscription would be about at the level of a person's shoulders while standing in front.

Ms. Murphy stated that this is correct—the seat wall is about 2 feet and the donor wall is about 3 feet higher than that.

Ms. Haskell asked if that would look intrusive.

Mr. Schneider stated that if the Commission would look at the overall design of the memorial and note the 20 foot tall spires, these walls would be much diminished by proximate scale.

Ms. Haskell asked if the plinths would be recessed into the seating wall.

Mr. Schneider affirmed that this was true.

Mr. Indovina asked to clarify that the front of the plinth was to be flush with the front of the seating wall.

Ms. Murphy affirmed.

Mr. Indovina asked how thickness of the plinths.

Ms. Murphy stated that the plinth should be the same thickness of the wall.

Mr. Indovina then stated that these were more like piers than tablets.

Ms. Murphy affirmed.

Mr. Indovina asked to clarify that the plaques inside the memorial are also black granite.

Mr. Schneider affirmed.

Ms. Haskell asked if the height of the plinth would change due to a change in number of donors.

Mr. Schneider stated that it would not change, as they believe that they can achieve the funds necessary for the project within this projected donor configuration, in that the space would be limited by the levels of support necessary to be named on the piece.

Mr. Indovina asked if the letters were incised in the granite, would they also be colored in any way.

Mr. Schneider stated that he believed that the letters would not be colored, but just be chiseled out of the granite. He went to say that this would be a detail that would be confirmed when the project comes back for Final approval.
Mr. Schneider stated that it was clearly an issue when they were last before the Commission that in some other memorials they might be intrusive, but it was this group's feeling that this design integrates well into the landscape of the North Shore.

Mr. Brown stated that he had met with the WWII Memorial project managers and the artist prior to their coming to the Art Commission at this time, and he was asked by them if there were any guidelines or regulations on donor recognition that the Commission imposes on projects such as this. He stated that he told them that there were no guidelines, but Department of Public Works and City Planning were currently working on guidelines such as this for sponsorship and signage in city parks, specifically. He went on to say that when he reviewed these designs, he felt that they were minimal and in good taste.

Mr. Indovina stated that he believed that the designs presented are very subtle and tasteful and appropriate for a memorial of this sort.

Mr. Serrao agreed.

Mr. Schneider stated that the project hoped to be back in November or December for Final review.

Mr. Serrao asked to clarify that the project was still slated for completion in 2010.

Ms. Murphy affirmed that Veteran's Day, 2010 was the planned ribbon-cutting.

Mr. Indovina asked for comments from the Commission.

Mr. Indovina and Mr. Serrao thanked the applicants for coming.

No motion made as this was informational update only.

e. Born Learning Trails

- Wendy Etheridge Smith, Director of Community Initiatives and Partnerships of United Way of Allegheny County, United Way of Allegheny County

Wendy Etheridge Smith introduced herself as the Director of Community Initiatives and Partnerships of United Way of Allegheny County.

Ms. Etheridge Smith noted that aside from her position at the United Way, she is also a Developmental Psychologist which lends itself to child development, a skill-set that she utilized in developing this project.

Ms. Etheridge Smith went on to say that the United Way has an initiative underway right now that seeks to help kids succeed in school. Within the Motivating Kids to Succeed in School Initiative, there are four primary strategies: Early Childhood Education, After School, Mentoring and Tutoring, and School-to-Work Programs. The project presented at this hearing, Born Learning Trails is a part of the Early Childhood Education program. The Born Learning Trail system is part of the United Way worldwide strategy of Born Learning which is a national campaign that focuses on taking everyday teachable moments and infusing these into activities that teachers, parents and caregivers do with their young children on a daily basis.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that the point of the Born Learning Trail is to infuse learning in everyday life in children 3-5 years of age so that when they enter school, they are used to the learning experience. She went on to say that prior to bringing the Born Learning Trail to Pittsburgh, she had consulted with colleagues in Dayton and Indianapolis—other cities that had adopted the Trail.

She went on to note images of the signs located within Frick Park (Forbes and Braddock Playground), Highland Park Farmhouse Playground, Riverview Park Activity Center Playground, Schenley Park Anderson Playground. Ms. Etheridge Smith noted that there are 10 signs planned for this area. The signs are placed so that when a child and parent are involved in gross motor activities such as swings or slide, the signs would suggest ways to include language, social and emotional, and perceptual development.

She went on to note that of the 10 signs, the first is a welcome sign introducing parents and children to the system. She then noted mockups of the signs and described the color schemes and the content of each: Look at shapes, Stand inside and outside (learning prepositions), etc..

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that she installed the signs last Fall on the United Way Day of Caring, a day in which corporate sponsors would send employees to volunteer for different projects. She had agreements for the County Parks and Bayer as a sponsor for Settlers Park and the North Park Pool. Last year, she walked through the four regional city parks with Mike Gable of Public Works in order to determine the correct signage for each location. She then noted the planned sites for each sign in each of the four Regional Parks: Frick, Schenley, Highland, and Riverview.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that the Commission should have already received a letter of support from Susan Rademacher of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, as well as approval from Public Works. She then noted that they have reached out to Region Square Civic Association, Observatory Hill, and the Brighton Heights Citizens Federation, and the Highland Park CDC.

She noted that the Highland Park CDC has not yet confirmed support as they asked for more information, and she has not received endorsement from any of the others noted other than Observatory Hill.

Mr. Brown stated that just for the record, he had not received letters of support from Observatory Hill, but had received an email from Brighton Heights Citizens Federation stating support.

Ms. Etheridge Smith noted that the City parks are a destination point and the Born Learning Trails are a way to augment this and serve families in an educational enhancement fashion.

Mr. Serrao asked if these were the only four parks in which the signs would installed at this time.

Ms. Etheridge Smith affirmed.

Mr. Serrao asked to clarify the sign entitled "Describe, Compare, Learn", that the graphics of the sign presented at the hearing differ from that in the original application—he like both—but wondered which one was the actual one planned for installation. He noted that one had bands of color, and the other one was more free-form.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that signs presented at the hearing—the type with more open and more contrasting letters and less color—were to be used. She noted that the signs will be mounted to a 12" x 2" x 2" backer board, which then is mounted to a 4" x 4" post into the ground.

Mr. Serrao stated that both were attractive, he was just clarifying which were to be approved today.

Mr. Brown asked to clarify that the Welcome sign would have colored bands, but the rest of the signs would not.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that this was correct.

Mr. Brown noted that in locations such as Riverview Park, there are existing artistic elements on the ground of the playground area such as stars, moons and script in cast concrete. He questioned how the signs and the proposed painted hopscotch areas would integrate into the park without imposing on these design elements.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that they do not inter-relate—the signs and hopscotch areas were planned to be placed a distance away from those areas so that they do not conflict.
Mr. Brown asked to clarify where the stenciled hopscotch area was on the map of Riverview.

Ms. Etheridge Smith noted that the hopscotch area would be near the entrance to the playground along an asphalt path where there are no existing art elements.

Mr. Brown asked how the painted hopscotch areas on the asphalt path be maintained over time.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that as soon as the City tells the United Way that the painted portions are not in good repair, they will send a crew out to repaint, and/or repair graffiti on the signs and posts. She noted that they would have a contact person at the parks connected to a contact person at United Way that could communicate on these matters over time.

Mr. Brown stated that maintenance is always a huge concern, and that perhaps the United Way could build into the license and maintenance agreement with the city a system for notification of disrepair—perhaps identifying a 311 system that would allow users of the park to call when graffiti or disrepair occurs. This

would work if the community were involved in the implementation of the project and developed a sense of ownership of it.

Mr. Indovina asked when the signs were slated to be installed.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that Duquesne Light is the sponsor for Riverview Park and their Day of Caring is September 15th. Post-Gazette is the sponsor for Schenley, and their Day of Caring is October 12th. These are the only sponsors with parks arranged at this time. United Way is involved currently in trying to find sponsors for the others.

Ms. Haskell asked if the hopscotch painted element will be included in all of the parks.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that all of the parks would be the same—only the locations of the signs might differ slightly, to avoid conflict with existing elements of each park.

Mr. Brown stated that when this application came in and he spoke with Ms. Ms. Etheridge Smith on the phone, he thought this was a pretty good project, but he has some concerns. Specifically, playgrounds such as Riverview Park are currently in need of some refurbishment in paint and equipment and graffiti removal. He went on to say that it would be a nice amenity to have new signs and hopscotch areas in these parks, but it might seem inappropriate to add new elements without first refurbishing the area. He asked if there was any interest of United Way working with a sponsor or Public Works in applying some refurbishment to the playgrounds as they implement this project.

Ms. Etheridge Smith stated that this could be a possibility in that on the Settler's Cabin project in which Bayer was the sponsor, they did refurbish that playground as similar concerns with its state of repair were voiced at that time.

Mr. Brown stated that he would like to request that Ms. Etheridge Smith follow up with her sponsors and try to make that happen—if possible-- for any of the four parks where needed--- Riverview and potentially Highland Park Farmhouse Playground were two that Mr. Brown noted might need some refurbishment. Mr. Brown noted that if the community were to become involved in those "clean up days" for those parks, they will feel a sense of ownership and help watch and maintain those parks.

Mr. Brown noted that the ADA Coordinator of City Planning had a concern with this application in that the signs did not seem ADA compliant. The Coordinator noted that the signs did not appear that they had enough contrast to be seen by the visually impaired.

Mr. Brown stated that now that he has seen the actual signs in person—and especially with the change from colored bands and bold text—he did not believe that these signs would pose a problem with ADA. He stated that he would consult with the ADA Coordinator on this and if there were any additional concerns, he would follow up with the applicant and reach a solution.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any questions of the Commission.

Mr. Indovina asked if there were any comments from the audience.

MOTION: To grant Conceptual and Final approval of this project as submitted.

MOVED: Serrao **SECONDED: Cooper**

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None **CARRIED**

Meeting Adjourned