

**ART COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 21, 2008
BEGINNING AT 2:00 P.M.**

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

PRESENT OF THE STAFF: **Martz, Ismail**

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. Indovina asked for approval of meeting minutes for September. Ms. Hall asked for further time to review the minutes. The minutes for both September and July are tabled. The minutes for October have not been finished at this time.

B. Correspondence

Ms. Martz provided the group with letters from Allegheny West and the Allegheny Commons regarding the National Aviary improvement plans. The Commission had requested that the Aviary demonstrate support from neighborhood groups in the way of letters of support. The letters addressed the Aviary expansion plans, noting suggestions or requirements for support from each group. The correspondence was acknowledged by the Commission.

C. Items for Review

a. Banners for Carlow University, Conceptual and Final Approval

- **Lauren Fatica, Marketing and Communications
Carlow University**

Ms. Fatica showed a concept banner that the University would like to place along Fifth and Terrace Avenues. The banners would be placed in honor of Carlow University's 80th anniversary. Ms. Fatica noted that the packet provided to the commission included maps of the area with locations marked and mock ups of each light pole with a banner in place. There would be a total of thirteen banners. Ms. Fatica also included a copy of the bracket system being used for installation as well as the budget and proof of insurance. The banner sizes meet the requirements of the city.

Ms. Hall asked if they already talked to DPW. Ms. Fatica stated that they had.

Ms. Hall asked if they were temporary or permanent. Ms. Fatica stated that they would like to hang the banners until September of 2009 to celebrate the anniversary.

Mr. Indovina asked if the banners would be replaced with something else. Ms. Fatica said that there were no plans at this time to replace the banners with anything else after removal in the fall.

Ms. Haskell asked if some banners were already in place. Ms. Fatica stated that there were banners in place, but they were only in place on Carlow property at this time.

Mr. Indovina noted that it was nice to see the mock up sites with the banners in place.

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

Ms. Hall stated that she had no problem with approving the banners, but she was concerned with banners taking over in the City. As an example if you looked at the light poles where these banners will be placed you can see such a clutter of signs it becomes distracting.

Mr. Indovina agreed stating that there may be a time when there is not a light pole in the City of Pittsburgh that does not have a banner. It was discussed that the banners should be discussed at the retreat.

Mr. Indovina asked a motion.

MOTION: To grant conceptual and final approval to Carlow University for the temporary placement of banners along Fifth and Terrace Avenues.

MOVED: Hall

SECONDED: Serrao

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED

b. Washburn Square Park, Conceptual and Final Review

- **Joe Hackett, Principle, LaQuatra Associates**
- **David Howe, Manager, Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation**
URA

Mr. Howe stated that he was representing the Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation, which is the non-profit housing development arm of the Urban Redevelopment Authority. They have been working with the Brightwood Civic Group in Marshall Shadeland on a project which has been ongoing for about seven years. The site

in question was originally about 46 units of dilapidated rental housing that the community group purchased in 2001 from an absentee landlord. Initially the Northside Leadership Conference was working with them on a housing redevelopment strategy and now PHDC. Following the work to demolish the existing housing and asbestos remediation the budget did not allow for complete redevelopment. In addition it was determined that another 20 units of housing in the neighborhood was not needed. After some discussion with the director and the community they came up with a plan of three new houses and an open space park area.

Mr. Hackett explained that the site was located in the Brightwood community between Superior, Hodgkiss, and Bartold streets. It was 46 townhouses until about 2001 until the recent demolition. The site sits on about an acre of land, sloping down away from Superior Street. It is currently completely empty. Through the past summer the PHDC and LaQuatra Associates have worked with the community groups to determine what would best fit in the area. Initially the land was purchased for a much more extensive project, somewhere between 20-30 housing units. Given the community and the economy it was determined that this was likely not the best use and the community would like to see some sustainable green planning happen in the area.

Mr. Hackett referred to the report provided detailing the work with the community group. He noted that there were several plans submitted with a varying number of housing units proposed. He explained that the community was interested in a central communal place that they could gather, such as a park. They settled on rebuilding only three houses and turning the rest of the area into a park. The houses will face the park area and the back will face Hodgkiss Way which is little more than an alleyway. This would allow eyes on the park and additional lighting for security. The park space will be very simple and usable. They will be planting some additional trees, but the area will remain largely untouched. Each house will have a small garden area that they may plant in and the grass will be a species that requires very minimal maintenance.

Mr. Indovina asked how they came to the three house solution. Mr. Hackett referred to the study included in the packet on the fifth page. This green solution was really the most sensible solution based on the market demand for housing in the area. Mr. Hackett stated that there was no “magic number” for the houses. This was really just the best use and the best way to get as large a park space as possible.

Mr. Indovina asked what the rationale was for facing the property into the park. Mr. Hackett explained that all of the houses on Hodgkiss and Superior currently face the park so it was really just aesthetics.

Ms. Haskell asked what the market was and whether these homes would sell. Mr. Hackett explained that the neighborhood was getting younger and they did see a lot of potential for these units. He explained that the units would likely sell for about 100,000-150,000 per unit and with the URA’s second mortgage program they would be affordable for most people in the area. The concern with the market was the reason that they are only working on three units.

Ms. Haskell asked if the three houses would satisfy the needs of the neighborhood. Mr. Hackett explained that it would and the park would add an amenity to the area. The funding must be used for housing, which is why the development needed to be concerned with housing of some kind.

Ms. Haskell asked for clarification on whether LaQuatra was the landscape designer or the architect. They are the landscape designer.

Mr. Cooper asked about the interaction on Hodgkiss Way. He stated that he had concerns with the only human interaction being the cars pulling into and out of the garage. It was explained that there will be an entrance to the house on Hodgkiss Way as well.

Ms. Haskell asked for an orientation to the area with a major intersection that she might be more familiar with. Mr. Hackett explained that the area was about two miles from Brighton Avenue.

Mr. Indovina asked what was across the street on Superior. Mr. Hackett explained that it was the Holy Ghost Community Center. It belongs to the orthodox church located across the street.

Mr. Serrao asked if the Holy Ghost was an active parish. MR. Hackett stated that they have had reductions in parishioners, but they are still fairly active. They were the host for the community meetings.

Mr. Cooper asked if there was a wall or something between the property and the park. Mr. Hackett pointed out that there was a public sidewalk in front of the property before the park.

Ms. Hall asked if the community was happy with the end result/design. She asked if there was any discussion on who would be utilizing the new housing with the understanding that it would ultimately fall to who ever could afford it. She stated that they feel far away from the rest of the neighborhood, how does that impact the integration? Mr. Hackett stated that the area is more compact than it appears in the plans. There were not any concerns about the housing value as opposed to what is currently in place.

Ms. Hall asked if the city has the resources to maintain this park. Ms. Ismail stated that there is some money set aside to take care of open space and park areas. Mr. Hackett stated that they were looking into possibilities of leaving some money for maintenance of the park.

Ms. Hall stated that they had said earlier that some of the land could be used as a public, shared garden. Mr. Howe stated that they were looking into assistance from the parks conservancy and Penn State. He explained that the community group in the area was an

older group that had been around for ages. In this way they are fortunate to have a community that cares.

Ms. Hall asked if they will be adding lights. Mr. Howe answered that no new lights will be added.

Mr. Cooper asked if the wrap around porches pictured in some illustrations will be included in this final design. Mr. Howe explained that the idea had been dropped due to budget constraints.

Mr. Cooper stated that he felt that the plan worked well and also gave something back to the community.

Mr. Indovino asked if there were any additional questions from the commission or from the audience.

Mr. Indovina stated that he thought this was a great example of less is more and it seems great and easy to maintain. It will be an asset rather than a burden.

Mr. Cooper stated that he agreed and thought it was wonderful that the area get more use without burdening the city.

Ms. Hall stated that the simplicity was great, however there are lighting concerns. This should be more announced. The dark open space can be a safety hazard.

Mr. Indovina stated that he agreed with both Ms. Hall and Mr. Serrao and would like to see more lighting.

Mr. Serrao asked what currently happens there now. Mr. Howe stated that the residents have been great with maintenance so far. They currently use the area for recreation.

Mr. Indovino asked a motion.

MOTION: To grant conceptual and final approval as submitted to the Pittsburgh Housing Development Corporation Washburn Square Park with consideration for additional lighting along the park edge by the proposed housing units.

MOVED: Serrao

SECONDED: Cooper

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED

c. National Aviary: Phase I Improvements, Conceptual and Final Review
○ **William Szustak, Associate
Springboard**

The National Aviary is located on the Northside of Pittsburgh within the Allegheny Commons. As the building currently stands it is fairly non-descript and hard to identify and find. For instance, it is difficult to find the entrance to the building. The positioning of the building just isn't suitable as it now stands. The Aviary was built in the 1950's and underwent its first expansion in the 1960's in an area which is known as the Marsh Room. The Aviary building was owned by the City until 1992 when the Aviary took over the lease. In 1994, the Aviary added a dome to the atrium area of the building and added some temporary expansion over the last few years. This will be the first major development and reconfiguration of the Aviary since inception.

Mr. Mangus showed the 2002 Allegheny Commons Master Plan and how the Aviary plans looked at the time. The Aviary plans were completed shortly before the Master Plan for the Commons and inserted into the overall park plan. This projected change was endorsed by the Commons, but the changes did not happen at the time due to funding issues. The plan remains much the same though, but it has developed over time.

As the plan was reworked the Aviary used the Allegheny Commons Master Plan as a guide and further involved the Northside community in two community meetings. In the meetings the Allegheny Commons Initiative created a subcommittee made up of three architects that would assist in developing the plan. The footprint will not take any more land than the original plan would. The Commons had requested that the Aviary restrict expansion to original footprint. The Aviary will need to add offices, classrooms, food service, a theatre, and additional parking in this space. In addition there is currently not a great connection between the Aviary and the park space. The Aviary will include a rose garden in the park area and a section of the Aviary where park visitors may walk through the Aviary without paying admission and viewing the entire site. The park patrons may enjoy parts of the Aviary as well as the proposed terrace site, café, rest rooms, and rose garden.

In the Aviary's second presentation to the Art Commission they provided a slide show detailing much of the design. The presentation outlined elevations on all sides of the proposed expansion. The front will be more open and accessible to the public. It will be transparent in nature.

Ms. Hall asked if they were building into the design alternative forms of transportation. Mr. Mangus stated that they were including alternative transit as many employees ride bicycles they will be including bike racks. Mr. Szustak stated that they were also including special parking accommodations for zip cars and alternative fuel cars.

Mr. Cooper asked what was happening to the current outdoor exhibition space as it will be lost to parking. Mr. Mangus answered that it goes to the roof. There will be an outdoor exhibition on the roof of the theatre.

Ms. Haskell asked what became of the pull up and drop off driveway. Mr. Mangus stated that they did not want to force patrons to pass through traffic when entering the building so they've eliminated the driveway. The thought now is to explore eliminating some metered parking for buses and shuttles to use.

Mr. Cooper asked what the extent of the rooftop activity would be. Mr. Mangus stated that you would be able to see the birds flying from the ground. Mr. Cooper asked if they flew to targets. Mr. Mangus stated that all of the birds were trained with lures and hand signals. Mr. Szustak stated that the portion of the roof housing the theatre would be green.

Ms. Hall stated that the Aviary had mentioned that this was a 10-12 year plan. What portion of the plan would be taking 10-12 years? Mr. Mangus stated that the 10-12 year plan was put into phases. This plan is phase one. Within the next 10-12 years they would be looking to expand and move the hospital and change some of the classroom space into exhibition. Ms. Hall asked if this expansion would always be within the current footprint. Mr. Mangus stated that all expansion would be within the current footprint.

Ms. Hall asked how park patrons would have access to the café. Mr. Mangus explained that the café was accessible from the park without entering the Aviary at all.

Ms. Hall asked if the Aviary would run the café. Mr. Mangus stated that they are currently looking through options at this time.

Mr. Indovina asked that they clarify the masonry being used on the project. They will be using a ground face block in the largest size available at this time. Traditional brick is the fallback if it is too expensive, but all of the plans are currently based on this. A good example of the block used is the current Whole Foods building in East Liberty.

Ms. Hall asked what the timeline was for the project. Mr. Mangus stated that they are currently planning to begin construction this summer.

Ms. Hall asked if the final façade was in the plans that were currently passed out to the Commission. Mr. Mangus stated that they were apt to change a little as construction happened, but that is the desired design.

Ms. Hall asked if the current proposed signage would be the only sign on the building. Mr. Mangus stated that at this time that was the plan. It would be discussed with the community if it was determined that they may wish to move or add signage.

Mr. Mangus stated that they may rebuild a rose garden present in the Northside in the 1930's. They will be working with the City and the community on the historic, native vegetation of the area in the finalized landscape plans and the final decision on the rose garden. It has been decided that the Aviary will maintain any garden or landscaping occurring as a result of this plan.

Ms. Hall asked if the trees shown in the parking lot diagram were currently there. Mr. Mangus stated that they were not. Mr. Szustak stated that there were a number of trees required as per the city code that was reflected in the current plans.

Ms. Ismail asked if they had been working with the City's Urban Forester. Mr. Mangus stated that they had been.

Ms. Hall asked how they were planning on dealing with storm water runoff. Mr. Mangus explained that they were planning on building a rain garden as per their LEED goals. They stated that they were also exploring a permeable surface for the parking lot, but price may be a problem. Ms. Hall asked that they push to make the building as green as possible.

Mr. Indovina pointed out that there was a letter addressed to the Historic Review Commission, also sent to the Art Commission urging the Commission to only review and approve as a complete submission. Mr. Indovina asked if there were any further discussions with Allegheny West. Mr. Mangus stated that Allegheny West requested that they come back after going to the HRC which they did. Mr. Szustak stated that the plans reflected the final elevations.

Ms. Hall asked if the middle of the façade would be all glass as it is rendered in the picture. Mr. Szustak stated that it would be.

Mr. Indovina asked at what stage they believed the drawings to be at. They are 100% schematic.

Ms. Hall stated that they had mentioned before issues with glass and birds and wondered if birds would be flying in the open glass area with people. Mr. Szustak mentioned a product called inter net that will be in place at the Aviary. This material is about 2 inches away from the glass and is the most reliable product available to protect birds by springing them back from the glass. Ms. Hall asked if the netting was visible. Mr. Szustak stated that it is not.

Mr. Indovina asked for questions or comments from the audience.

Alida Baker, the Project Director for the Allegheny Commons is present to show support of the project and read a prepared statement. The Allegheny Commons is a community based organization with representatives from four neighborhood organizations as well as several area business' and nonprofits. Ms. Baker would like to draw attention to the qualifications of the support that the Allegheny Commons are providing in the letter. Ms.

Baker asked if it was necessary for her to verbally cover the points presented in the letter or if it will be taken into consideration as is. The Commission stated that it was not necessary.

Mr. Indovina stated that working in the field he is aware of changes that sometimes have to happen within the process of development. He would like to know what kind of permissions they needed for building permits. Mr. Mangus stated that some things would change. For instance they are obligated to design the landscape with native vegetation. At this time they do not have all of that information. Mr. Szustak explained that as they were building within an historical park they had many mandates and considerations they were held to. Some things used in historical building and planting were not sustainable and will have to change.

Ms. Hall asked if the landscaping was part of phase I. Mr. Mangus stated that it was and that they would design this to what everyone agrees is the correct standard. Mr. Szustak further stated that it would be in conjunction with the master plan for the park.

Ms. Hall asked Ms. Baker what type of review process the Allegheny Commons went through in the master planning. Ms. Baker stated that they were not at Art Commission and she does not know why as she was not here at the time. It was reviewed by the Historic Review Commission who has also reviewed this plan.

Mr. Cooper asked were the Aviary was at with their fundraising for this project. Mr. Mangus stated that they were about 70% done. The approvals from the Commissions will most likely help the process along.

Mr. Indovina asked for final questions or comments from the commission.

Mr. Cooper stated that in general he was in support, but would like to see the outdoor show more visible and narrowness in the north face.

Ms. Hall stated that she liked the green roof and LEED goals. She thought perhaps technology could be used to enhance the experiences.

Ms. Haskell stated that she recently completed a site visit and was very impressed. She stated that she is very excited about the changes and feels that they are worthwhile.

Mr. Serrao stated that he thinks the overall project is wonderful and worthwhile. He is concerned about budget constraints and some compromises in the overall plan in the end. He stated that he would not hold up the project, but felt that conceptual approval would be best right now. Mr. Szustak stated that not getting final approval from the Art Commission will hold the project up.

Ms. Haskell asked if they could grant approval with conditions.

Ms. Hall stated that she would like to see them back to see landscaping.

Ms. Ismail stated that this is not the only review. They will need to approval from HRC, the Planning Commission, and CDAP.

Mr. Indovina stated that he would like to see final drawings, materials, all final products for final approval. Mr. Szustak stated that the contractor does not want to commit to final drawings without approval.

Mr. Indovina asked a motion.

MOTION: The National Aviary has been granted conceptual and final approval Phase I improvements contingent on final drawings, landscape plans, and materials are brought to the commission for a presentation.

MOVED: Serrao

SECONDED: Cooper

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED