

**ART COMMISSION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF DECEMBER 10, 2008
BEGINNING AT 2:00 P.M.**

PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION: Klavon, Indovina, Cooper,
Astorino, Hall, Serrao

PRESENT OF THE STAFF: Martz

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Ms. Klavon asked for approval of minutes. The minutes for July, September, and October have been accepted and approved.

B. Correspondence

Ms. Martz provided the group with letters of support from the community groups in the area. Ms. Rademacher presented the letters at the start of the meeting. The correspondence was acknowledged by the Commission.

C. Items for Review

a. Ann Catherine Seaman's Memorial Garden, Conceptual Review

- **Lea Donatelli , Program Manager
Office of Public Art**
- **Susan Rademacher, Parks Curator
Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy**
- **Natalie Bird, Associate
LaQuatra Bonci Associates**
- **Janet Zwyde, Artist**

Ms. Rademacher began with a brief background of Mellon Park and introductions for the remaining speakers. Ms. Rademacher explained that Mellon Park is a 35 acre park serving the immediate neighborhoods of Shadyside and Point Breeze. It straddles Fifth Avenue between Shady Avenue and Penn Avenue. The park is typically divided into two sections, the north and south. This presentation is concerned with the south end of the park. This area is typically used for passive recreation as opposed to active. This is the original site of the Richard Mellon Estate.

Ms. Rademacher stated that Joe and Elizabeth Seamans searched for several years for a way to memorialize their daughter Annie, who died tragically at the age of nineteen, prior to selecting this site. It was determined that they would work to restore the Mellon's original walled garden in a thoughtful and artful way. They requested that the Pittsburgh

Parks Conservancy assist with the development, fundraising, and realization of this idea. It is the job of the Conservancy to restore and revitalize city parks for the enjoyment of the community.

Ms. Rademacher went on to show historical photos of the original private walled garden as well as the general state of the grounds. Several years later the estate was demolished and the land came under control of the City of Pittsburgh's Department of Public Works. No plan was completed to deal with the landscape or gardens at the time. Ms. Rademacher introduced Ms. Bird of LaQuatra Bonci to cover much of the presentation.

Ms. Bird stated that the challenge in creating this piece was in transitioning the garden from a private use to a public use. At this time they are looking to continue with the restoration progress that has already been made in the flagstone path and the wall. They would like to add items and color such as a line of trees, cozy seating areas, and lawn restoration similar to what occurred in Schenley Plaza. In addition they would be creating a shrub border on the right and restoring the flagstone to the octagon at the center. There will be planting beds to scale with the lawn as per the master plan for the park and no concrete decisions have been made on what the seating will ultimately look like.

Ms. Donatelli explained the role of the Office of Public Art (OPA) and the artist selection process. The OPA was hired by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to assist in finding an artist to work with the landscape architects hired to begin restoration processes. The OPA first released a national call for artists, mandating that each respondent answer a request for qualifications. They received 85 responses all of which were reviewed by a committee. The committee consisted of representation from the Seaman family, the Parks Conservancy, the City of Pittsburgh, the OPA, representatives from LaQuatra Bonci, community members, and local subject matter experts in the arts field. The committee followed up with a series of interviews with qualified artists before selecting and narrowing the choices down to four. In the end it was determined that Janet Zwyde best fit the requirements based upon past performance and experience in such work.

Ms. Donatelli stated that the design process began after the selection through a series of meetings with the design team, family and friends of Annie's, and the community. The final decision is what is being presented today. The OPA is in full support of this project and very proud of the open and detailed process used to create this final concept. Mr. Indovina asked a motion. Ms. Donatelli introduced Janet Zwyde to discuss the artistic element of the project.

Ms. Zwyde explained that the artistic component of this piece was to reflect the star scape in the sky on the day of Ann Catherine's birth. It was a favorite past time of Annie's to lie on her back and look up at the night sky. In addition it was important to have an area that the public could go and enjoy and also incorporate the family and friends need for a beautiful place to remember Annie. The stars will be two inch circles of stone implanted in the ground with a light source at the center. Each stone will feature some sort of fact about the star it is reflecting. The lights will be fiber optic and therefore require very

little maintenance. They can be mowed over in the same way as a sprinkler. The fiber optic lights will actually be stored elsewhere, with cable running through the ground to a central box where most maintenance will occur.

Ms. Klavon asked if there were any comments concerning the project from the audience.

Ms. Martz asked to speak on behalf of Noor Ismail, Director of City Planning, in her absence. Ms. Martz stated that the City of Pittsburgh and City Planning are very much in favor of this project and behind the efforts of all parties. The City feels that the design team has really gone above and beyond the requirements with the city and community to gain acceptance and approval.

Ms. Klavon asked the Commission for comments or questions on the project.

Ms. Hall stated that she was very impressed with the project in both the process and end product. Ms. Hall explained that the process brought before the commission has been very thorough and wonderful. Ms. Hall asked if there was any ambient light source incorporated in this project. Ms. Bird explained that there would be new lights in the area where the estate once stood and some gentle up lighting on the trees, but nothing would compete with the stars.

Mr. Astorino asked if any of the short listed artists were local. Ms. Donatelli explained that two of the artists were local and two were out of state.

Mr. Astorino stated that the project was likely to garnish quite a bit of interest and would the current parking handle this. Ms. Rademacher stated that there were currently two dedicated lots with adequate space.

Mr. Astorino asked if the two lions currently located where the wall will be restored would remain a part of this process. Ms. Bird stated that they were hoping to relocate the lions elsewhere in the park. Mr. Astorino stated that there was not money in the current budget to accommodate this. Ms. Bird stated that the thought was that there would be enough money in the garden improvements to relocate the lions.

Mr. Serrao asked what the garden improvement money covered. Ms. Rademacher stated that the money would be used for the removal of asphalt, restoration, and plantings. She stated that some of the improvements they would like to see happen are still on a kind of wish list and as the project gets moving they will have a better idea of what all they can accomplish.

Mr. Astorino asked how the stones were set. If someone were to step on the stone would the stones move or were they anchored in some way. LaQuatra explained that there would be a cement casing preventing such movement.

Mr. Astorino asked if the lighting pattern was to reflect the star pattern on the day of Ann Catherine's birth. Ms. Zwyde stated that it was.

Mr. Indovina stated that he really applauded the concept of the memorial garden. It is nice to see a memorial that is more than a piece of stone and has a nice poetic feel.

Mr. Indovina asked how many lights there would be in the garden. Ms. Zwyde explained that there would be approximately 150 stars represented in this space. She stated that the lights will be different levels of brightness.

Mr. Indovina asked how many light illuminators would be required for that many lights. The LaQuatra associate answered that there would be four boxes required with two on either side of the lawn. At this time they are still in deliberation concerning how far from the lawn the illuminators can be placed and still work.

Mr. Indovina asked how this will affect other activities in the park. How will it impact food sales? Ms. Rademacher stated that they made a real effort to identify all of the organizers of the major events in Mellon Park and have met with all of them at least twice. All organizers have stated that they would be happy to move operations outside of this area provided that there is an electricity source somewhere else in the park. Part of the budget is to provide such a source. The master plan calls for this area to be an area without sales and more passive activity. For instance, this is the area where people might take their food to eat. As far as wedding rentals go, the new requirement would be that tents could not be staked and must use water barrels or sandbags instead.

Mr. Indovina stated that it seems that to really appreciate this you would need to be in the park in the evening. He asked if there were any limitations to night access to the park. Ms. Rademacher stated that the park officially closes at 11pm and the plan was to extinguish the lights at 10 to signal the park was closing soon.

Mr. Cooper stated that he thought the proposal was incredibly beautiful and appropriate in its offering.

Mr. Cooper stated that he felt that the budget of \$50,000 for the garden art seemed rather low. Ms. Zwyde stated that she was confident that it can be done and it has been scrutinized.

Mr. Cooper stated that his only concern is that there is a determination that the budget is not large enough and some aspect of the artwork suffers.

Mr. Serrao asked what you would be walking on in regards to the light stick. The LaQuatra associate showed an example of the fiber optic light.

Mr. Serrao asked if the light can be broken. It was stated that it is incredibly difficult to break this item and the maintenance is incredibly low.

Mr. Indovina asked how much a light stick costs. It was stated that the cost is about six dollars per piece and is quite reasonable considering the effect.

Mr. Serrao asked what the design of the illuminators would be. Ms. Bird stated that they have become quite adept at hiding them as they have had cause to do such in several other projects.

Ms. Klavon stated that for process this has been the best presentation they have had since starting.

Ms. Klavon asked a motion

MOTION: The Ann Catherine Seaman's Memorial Garden will be granted conceptual approval.

MOVED: Cooper

SECONDED: Serrao, Hall

IN FAVOR: All

OPPOSED: None

CARRIED