

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**

Minutes of the Meeting of November 4, 2014  
Beginning at 2:29 p.m.

**PRESENT OF THE COMMISSION:** Chairwoman Christine Mondor,  
Brown, Askey, Burton-Faulk, Blackwell

**PRESENT OF THE STAFF:** Gastil, Layman, Hanna, Rakus, O'Neill, Ray

**AGENDA ITEMS COVERED IN THESE MINUTES**

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Ms. Mondor chaired today's meeting and called the meeting to order. In the absence of Mr. Gitnik, Mr. Brown was appointed Acting Secretary.

**A. ACTION ON THE MINUTES**

On a motion duly moved by Ms. Blackwell and seconded by Mr. Brown the minutes from the October 21, 2014 meeting were approved with corrections, as submitted.

**B. CORRESPONDENCE (See Attachment A for staff reports.)**

Ms. Mondor stated that the Commission was in receipt of correspondence from the Hill CDC dated November 4, 2014 regarding the Lower Hill Briefing held prior to this meeting.

**C. DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS (See Attachment B for staff reports.)**

Ms. Mondor requested that she be recused from this motion.

On motion by Ms. Burton-Faulk seconded by Ms. Blackwell approved Ms. Askey as Temporary Chairwoman for this PDP #14-95. All ayes. Motion carried.

1. Hearing and Action: Project Development Plan #14-95, 4800 Forbes Avenue, Hamburg Hall, Carnegie Mellon, EMI

Ms. Rakus made a presentation in accord with the attached staff report. Ms. Rakus recommended approval of the proposal.

Bob Reppe, Director of Design for Carnegie Mellon University stated the University is before the commission requesting approval for renovations to Hamburg Hall. Hamburg Hall for the Heinz College host both the School for Public Policy as well as School for Information Management both programs have grown over the 10-15 years. They are requesting approval for phases 2 and 2.5 of a 4 phase renovation to support the academic programs for Heinz College. This is all part of the 2012 Institutional Master Plan approved by City Council in April 2012. He presented detailed information on all phases of this project with emphasis on Phase 2 and 2.5 that are on the agenda today.

Ms. Askey called for comments from the Public.

There being no comments from the Public, Ms. Askey called for questions and comments from the Commissioners.

Mr. Brown asked for information regarding energy savings. The University participates in the consortium with the University of Pittsburgh and The Carnegie Museums which was converted over to low emission gas and that will continue to be our source for energy use in the University.

There being no more questions or comments from the Commissioners, Ms. Askey called for the motion.

**MOTION:** That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh approves Project Development Plan #14-63 for a one-story, 3,600 square foot expansion with other improvements to an existing three-story structure, Hamburg Hall, located at 4800 Forbes Avenue; based on the application and drawings filed by Carnegie Mellon University, with the following conditions:

1. The final construction drawings plans including site plans, elevations, and materials shall be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Administrator prior to approval of an application for a building permit.
2. A final landscape plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Administrator prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.

MOVED BY Ms. Blackwell;                      SECONDED BY Ms. Burton-Faulk.

IN FAVOR:                      Valaw, Brown, Askey, Burton-Faulk, Blackwell

OPPOSED:

None

**CARRIED**

2. Hearing & Action: Project Development Plan #14-80, 912 Fort Duquesne Blvd., High Wall Signs, GT

Mr. Layman made a presentation in accord with the attached staff report. Mr. Layman recommended approval of the proposal.

In correspondence submitted dated October 1, 2014, CDAP has made the following recommendations:

- The Panel recognized that option “B” showing the sign affixed against the black glass for both the north and west facades, is a good compromise of required standards, branding guidelines, and integration with the architecture.
- The Panel suggests that you continue to explore options to space the two signs further apart to create a distinction between them. This could be achieved by locating the north facing sign closer to the northeast corner of the building.

Mr. Robert Daily CEO of Co-Founder of 4MOMS provided background information on the company founded in 2005. There are 170 employees in the Pittsburgh Office revenue exceeds \$50 million dollars and have outgrown there current space in the Strip District.

Mike Shell, Shamrock Building Associates stated that the 2 signs that are within the City of Pittsburgh of Pittsburgh Zoning Code. The sign will be white acrylic at night and only be lit from sundown to sunup. He showed the Commissioners illustrations of all views of the proposed signage.

The Chairwoman called for comments from the Public.

David Demko, Assistant Director of Scenic Pittsburgh made the following statement: I live on the Northside in the Mexican War Street area. We are Scenic Pittsburgh, the region’s only organization dedicated to preserving, protecting and promoting our region’s scenic assets.

Scenic Pittsburgh is opposed to highwall signs. The Downtown is the jewel of our city. Its iconic skyline, rivers and buildings are our most valuable scenic assets and part of our shared commons. This advertising sign, this billboard, will be visible from all of the Downtown Allegheny river shorelines, to everyone who travels our scenic rivers and from much of the Northside.

Highwall signs are advertising billboards on our skyline. These signs are there to brand and advertise commercial products while diminishing the beauty of our city while paying nothing in return. The majority of those who enjoy the benefits of advertising on our skyline, are not Pittsburgh residents. They only see these signs as another income opportunity for themselves. Also, I don’t buy the argument that businesses will not locate in Pittsburgh if they can’t have these signs. Business locate to Pittsburgh because it is a great place to live and work.

Advertising signs on the tops of our monumental buildings are not good for our skyline or our image. The citizens and residents of Pittsburgh are opposed to these signs.

I don't know everyone on the Planning Commission but I am willing to bet that most of you, that a majority of you are in agreement with me on this issue. We are here now at a public hearing where you will vote on whether to allow this sign or not. These highwall sign proposals require public hearings so we can decide, each and every time one is proposed if we want these really want to allow these signs. If we can't do that, if we can't vote no to highwall signs, then why are we here?

This is a new administration and new planning commission. This is an opportunity to stop the practice of highwall advertising signs that are blight on our downtown jewel. Please vote no to the proposed highwall sign and thank you for listening.

Ms. Mondor said the Planning Commission is not to vote on the ordinance itself. They cannot vote against something that is an ordinance.

There being no more comments from the Public, the Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Commission members.

There being no questions or comments from the Commission, the Chairwoman called for the motion.

**MOTION:** That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh approves Project Development Plan #14-80, for the erection of two new high wall building identification signs on the existing office building located at 912 Fort Duquesne Boulevard, based on the application and drawings filed by Shamrock Building Services on behalf of Elmhurst Group, property owner, with the following condition:

1. The applicant shall submit to the Zoning Administrator in writing that it will be operated within the current zoning code lighting standards, not to exceed a luminance of two thousand five hundred (2,500) nits during daylight hours between sunrise and sunset, and not to exceed a luminance of two hundred fifty (250) nits at all other times.

MOVED BY Ms. Askey;                      SECONDED BY Mr. Brown

IN FAVOR:                      Mondor, Brown, Askey, Spruill, Burton-Faulk, Blackwell

OPPOSED:                      None

**CARRIED**



Magladene Jension CEO of the YWCA of Greater Pittsburgh presented in proposal for the sign. The building has been in the City since 1964 and believes that the signage will help promote the facility and help people find the agency. The agency holds the 2 contracts with the Allegheny County for the Child Care Information Systems program and last year we funded over 13,000 children in Allegheny County. We count the number of people coming into our building. With accuracy I can report that in the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014 we have had 20,779 visitors. The sign is attractive and communicates a message that the YWCA is here and easy to find.

Nathaniel Orr, Lami Grubb Architects presented information to explain the details of the signage.

The Chairwoman called for comments from the Public.

David Demko, Assistant Director of Scenic Pittsburgh made the following comment:

I live on the Northside in the Mexican War Street area. We are Scenic Pittsburgh, the region's only organization dedicated to preserving, protecting and promoting our region's scenic assets.

I have two points I would like to make regarding this proposal.

First, I do not believe the building owner is at this time eligible to submit this application. The owner has a glaring and obvious building code violation in regards to the projecting sign for the now defunct Nathan's Hotdog business. I am not a lawyer but zoning code is pretty clear on this. Zoning ordinance 919.01.J says "All signs relating to a product no longer available for purchase and all signs relating to a business which is terminated shall be removed. If the tenant terminating the business fails to remove the sign within thirty days following the date of obsolescence, the owner of the premises then shall be held responsible for such removal within sixty days.

The hotdog sign is an oversized projection sign that was non-conforming to begin with but Nathan's had to have it or their business could not be successful. Nathans has been closed since January.

My second point is "What's up with the need for these giant signs? Apparently it is a long established business principle that the larger the sign the better the product or service. The bigger the sign the more successful the business. Why is it that every building owner and developer finds our long established zoning laws unacceptable to them?

I would ask the commission to recommend to the applicant that they reconsider the need for a giant sign and come back with something more in line with zoning ordinances.

Mr. Layman responded the issue relating to the Hotdog Shop what Mr. Demco cited is absolutely in the code. After 60 days The Bureau of Building and Inspection is the enforcement arm and there is a process and it is a legal process

that he cannot speak on that is a different bureau. This is not a variance request; it is within the zoning code allowance.

There being no more comments from the Public, the Chairwoman called for questions and comments from the Commission members.

Ms. Mondor wanted to know do you do any comparison and why does the lettering need to be so big.

Ms. Jenson: The other one we looked at was similar but it was off to the side and we thought it did not look geometrically pleasing. We thought it would modernize our 50 year old building and we had not look at other options.

Mr. Brown wanted to know about the storm water drain off and where is that water going?

Mr. Orr: It will be day lit at the curb into the street. There will be a downspout and once it hits the grade. At the face to curb there will be a 4 inch outlet on the curb.

Can you mitigate some of the water going into the drain?

Mr. Orr: It will be the same water it will just mitigate hitting the people.

There being no more questions or comments from the Commission, the Chairwoman called for the motion.

**MOTION:** That the Planning Commission of the City of Pittsburgh approve Project Development Plan NO. #14-93 for the exterior renovation of the existing structure and a new identification sign, located at 305 Wood Street based on the application filed by the Young Women’s Christian Association of Pittsburgh, property owner, and accompanying drawings submitted by Lami Grubb Architects, with the following condition:

1. Final drawings including site plan and elevation drawing shall be reviewed and approved by the Zoning Administrator prior to approval of an application for building and sign permits.

MOVED BY Ms. Burton-Faulk;                      SECONDED BY Ms. Askey

IN FAVOR:                      Mondor, Brown, Askey, Burton-Faulk, Blackwell

OPPOSED:                      None

**CARRIED**





