January 27, 2021 at 2:00 P.M., Meeting called to order by Vice-Chair Moss

In Attendance
Moss
Goulatia
Parsakian
Quintanilla
Newman (DPW)
Martinez (DOMI)

Staff Present
Dash
Minnaert
Cavalline

Agenda Items Covered in These Minutes

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A. Approval of Minutes

Roll call. Moss asks Commissioners to review and comment on minutes from November 2020. Parsakian motions to approve the minutes, seconded by Goulatia. All ayes. Motion carries.

B. Items for Review

1. Mellon Park Fountain Restoration – Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Briefing

Brandon Riley of Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy briefs the Commission on Phase 1 of a restoration project for the historic fountain in Mellon Park. The entire restoration will cost $370,000 and include stabilizing the foundation, rebuilding the plumbing, and restoring parts of the stone. The fountain will not be moved or aesthetically changed.

Goulatia asks about the color of the middle of the fountain as it appears different from the fountain base and surrounding walls. Riley says that he believes the middle of the fountain is a pink westerly granite, and the lower portion is limestone, so the color difference is inherent to the design and any repairs will try to match the existing stone as much as possible.

Parsakian says he lives near Mellon Park and it is one of his favorite parks and he is very familiar with the art installation in the garden. He says he is glad that they will be taking care not to disturb that installation. He asks if they have budgeted in for any possible cost overruns. Riley says that the
conservator they have hired has contingency built into the budget. He says the only real unknown element at this stage is the depth of the concrete foundation.

Parsakian asks if they have thought about restoring the original landscaping around the fountain. Riley says not yet, and right now they are focusing just on the fountain. He says that following this they have discussed the need for work on the walls behind the fountain.

Quintanilla thanks Riley for the work that PPC is doing. He mentions the tiles surrounding the fountain and asks if they will all be protected during the fountain restoration. Riley says yes, and that the lawn and tiles will be protected with matting throughout the work.

Moss clarifies that this briefing does not require a motion. Minnaert says that is correct and thanks PPC for this update and their work on the project. Moss asks if it is City property. Minnaert says it is. Moss asks why it wouldn’t come through as a review. Minnaert says there is no change being proposed and it is more in line with an in-kind restoration. She says that this kind of conservation work on City assets does not involve any relocation, removal, or alteration and so does not come to the Commission for approval, per the City Code.

Moss asks if construction fencing will be erected for the public’s safety. He also asks if the lighting scheme of the park is changing. Riley says they will be putting up fencing to close the area off, although they are not sure exactly where that will be going yet. He says they are only replacing the light fixtures which are currently there and keeping the illumination levels the same or possibly raising them to give better visibility.

Moss says this seems to be a very thoughtful restoration project and he looks forward to its completion.

MOTION: n/a

2. South Side Park Phase 1 – Department of Public Works
   Conceptual/Final Review

Andrea Ketzel of the Department of Public Works introduces this project, which is the first phase of a large renovation to South Side Park.

Sara Thompson of Pashek + MTR further describes the proposed park improvements, which include accessible walkways, storm water infrastructure, renovated entrances, signage, parking, and recreational amenities. A Percent For Art project will be included, which will be presented at a future Commission hearing.

Goulatia asks if the signage will also be in Braille, and if the signage will be only in English. Thompson says they have not made decisions about the signage yet, but they can consider it. She says it would require reducing the amount of text or duplicating the signs, because the interpretive signs are very small. Goulatia suggests they could make the signs double-sided, and says that it is important to be inclusive, especially for a City project. Ketzel says that is an important consideration especially as the signs will be located along the ADA accessible boardwalk.

Parsakian agrees with the statement about Braille. He also asks if they have considered giving information on earlier eras with the historic signage, specifically the history of indigenous people. Thompson says there was an archaeological study done and it was determined that there were no previous occupants on the site, probably due to its distance from the river. Parsakian says he appreciates this.

Parsakian asks if there are bike paths. Thompson says that there is a bike path that goes along the storm water garden and will connect to the serpentine steps, and that the serpentine steps will be part of a future phase of the project.
Parsakian asks if there are any water features in the playground. He also asks if the rock outcropping area is meant for children to play on. Thompson says they are allowing children to get close to the outcropping, but not creating ways for them to climb it. The discovery garden is called such as it is focused more on the idea of exploration and being in nature than being a playground. Ketzel says there are not water features other than a water fountain.

Parsakian asks when they will decide on the construction materials for the walking path. Thompson says it will be decided during bidding and will be based on what they can afford. They would prefer fiberglass grating, but may need to stick with pressure-treated wood.

Quintanilla thanks them for the presentation and asks if there will be lighting for safety in the evening. Ketzel says that City-standard light poles are included in the design. There is also lighting for the parking lot and basketball court that is contingent on funding, but they will be running conduits for this lighting to be implemented later if they cannot do it immediately. Quintanilla asks if the City standard for lighting allows for dark sky requirements. Ketzel says that the existing standard for pedestrian lighting does not include that, but they have been discussing it. The current standard is an open acorn light.

Quintanilla asks if there are emergency call boxes in City parks. Ketzel says that this project does not include those but they have been engaging with the Public Safety Department and EMS regarding safety especially in areas that will have events. Quintanilla says a lot of parks in California are doing this.

Quintanilla asks about the materials for the sidewalks and parking lot. Thompson says the parking lots are pervious gravel held in place with a geoweb, with r-tanks under some areas with additional gravel storage. There will be some concrete sidewalks, but most paths, the bike paths, and the driveways will be asphalt. The discovery garden trails will be a trail surface aggregate for higher accessibility and a more natural feel.

Quintanilla says that it looks like some of the signage will be on the railing and will become worn due to a lot of contact. Thompson says they haven’t experienced issues before with this kind of signage on railings due to the process of embedding and the protective coating. The reason for it being put on the railings is so it will not be obstructive to the view from the railing.

Goulatia asks if there will be places for people to charge their cell phones in case of emergencies. Thompson says that is not part of the scope. Ketzel says that did not come up as part of the Master Plan process. She says that has been included with some parks but it is not part of the current standard for parks.

Moss asks if there is a Percent For Art component. Ketzel says they are working with the Public Art & Civic Design Division and have issued an RFP and selected an artist for the project using a selection committee. They are currently in the process of getting a legal agreement in place in order to begin community engagement.

Parsakian asks if there will be tech support for festival staging and access for vehicles. Thompson says their scope did not originally include the festival green but they are grading the site to accommodate a future pavilion and an amphitheater. They are setting up conduits for future electrical connections. The parking lot in that area will have an accessible path that will usually have bollards, leading up to the festival green area so that food trucks, maintenance, and fire trucks can access the space. Parsakian says he appreciates the level of detail in this project.

Goulatia encourages the applicants to make sure the art is included in the project planning as soon as possible, to ensure that the art component is integrated into the park design.

**MOTION:** Conceptual/Final Approval, with the understanding that the art component returns for separate Art Commission review and approval.

MOVED BY: Goulatia  
SECONDED BY: Parsakian  
IN FAVOR: All  
OPPOSED: None
3. Fire Station 19 Addition – Department of Public Works
   Conceptual/Final Review

Claire Mastroberardino of the Department of Public Works and Gerrod Winston of Winston Design &
Development describe this project. The applicants propose to demolish an existing 80 sq ft room and
build a new 360 sq ft addition to the fire station. The proposed addition will provide adequate space for
locker rooms, showers, and ventilation systems. A Percent For Art component will be included and
brought to the Commission for a future review.

Goulatia asks if the brick for the new addition will match the older brick. She also says that she likes
the idea of the decorative fencing but it would be good to keep the neighborhood in mind when selecting
an artist, and to really make the fence look like a work of art. She says that it could be a template for
future fire stations that will receive Percent For Art projects (mentioned by Mastroberardino in her
presentation). Mastroberardino says that the plan is to match the brick, but it may not be possible to
match exactly as the existing brick is very old. She also says she has been in conversation with the Public
Art & Civic Design Division regarding the art project and that their aim is to capture the spirit of the
neighborhood in each art installation.

Moss agrees with the concern about the brick matching, and says the mortar can be important as
well. He suggests they have a mock-up done to ensure they have the right brick and the right mortar.

Moss draws attention to a detail of the renderings where the existing wall is set back about a foot and
suggests that the new addition follow this line. Winston says they had that idea but they have a need for
as much square footage as possible, so they could not afford to lose that space by setting the wall back.
Winston says they are looking at brick styles to get as close as possible to the original.

Quintanilla says that they have done great work on the proposed doors for the building. He says that
for an art piece the decorative fencing will not be evident enough in the back of the building, and if it is
approached it will be sad that it is seen to be concealing a generator. He suggests a simple brick wall to
hide the generator so as not to call attention to it. Mastroberardino asks if he has another suggestion for
the art project. Goulatia says she agrees that the artwork should not be secondary and shouldn't be used
to disguise the generator or garbage bins. Quintanilla suggests an art piece that references the current
moment and first responders, like a bench with a statue of a fireman. Mastroberardino says they can
start looking at these options. Moss suggests the railing at the front of the building. Mastroberardino notes
that the Coke machine in the front of the building needs to remain. Winston says that the same idea they
had for the decorative fencing could be introduced for the front railing. He notes that the generator itself is
self-enclosed.

Parsakian asks about the use of the new addition, how many people will be using this space at the
same time, and what happens to their contaminated clothing when they use the new shower space.
Mastroberardino says there are four firemen assigned to the space, and they are usually staggered
coming in and out. She says that they each have two sets of turn-out gear and that the lockers need to
accommodate both sets.

Parsakian says that the building is a beautiful Arts and Crafts building. He asks if they will be updating
the air conditioning. Winston says yes, it will be more efficient and there will not be any apparent window
units on the outside of the building. Parsakian asks if there will be an external unit next to the new
generator. Winston says yes. Parsakian says that they might consider an Arts and Crafts style fencing in
the back to lessen the amount of brick needed. He says that the public art could be some kind of entrance
sign.

Goulatia says that the art could also be quotes from the community about first responders. She says
it doesn’t need to be a sculpture or an object, it could just be words, because words have a lot of power.

Teresa Duff speaks from the audience. She says that she likes the idea of the decorative screens for
the generators and says that there is a lot of precedent for functional art such as this. She says that some
of the best design is received unconsciously and adds to the overall experience. She supports the idea of the decorative fencing, although she says that she sees the need to explore other options.

**MOTION:** Conceptual/Final Approval, with the understanding that the art component returns for separate Art Commission review and approval.

MOVED BY: Parsakian  
SECONDED BY: Goulatia  
IN FAVOR: All  
OPPOSED: None

4. **Fire Station 8 Renovation – Department of Public Works Conceptual/Final Review**

Claire Mastroberardino of the Department of Public Works and Beth Eckenrode of Auros Group describe this project, which is for metal cladding on the façade of the building as part of a passive house renovation. This is being done to comply with Net Zero energy goals that have been adopted into the City Code. The project came before the Commission previously in October of 2020, at which time the Commission denied the application and asked the applicant to return after rethinking the proposal. The renovation includes a Percent For Art component, which would be brought to the Commission at a future hearing.

Goulatia says she loves the idea of a three-dimensional work of art on the building but says the art needs to elevate the people of East Liberty who have experienced such a high level of displacement. She says that she is for energy-saving measures and if this is the approach we need to take then she is in favor of it.

Moss says he finds this a challenging project for the Art Commission to review. He says he understands the new Code requirements that need to be met and notes that it is the first project that has come before the Art Commission under these new requirements. Moss says that this building is architecturally significant in a way that the other stations (mentioned in the presentation as being up for future renovations) are not.

Moss says that the Code requirements provide a way to exempt projects, and cites 19.5.8d5 of the City Code which recognizes that there may be instances where full compliance may not be feasible. He says that this may be the way to approach this, and wrapping this building would be accomplishing something good but with a negative impact as well. He encourages the project team to look at ways to achieve the most they can toward energy objectives without compromising the building’s architectural integrity. He says he is glad they are reusing the building instead of tearing it down and building a new one, but the aluminum cladding would be using a lot of new material, and that could be considered unsustainable. He asks that they not let adherence to the Code requirement cause them to damage this significant building.

Mastroberardino agrees that it is a difficult conversation, but to reach the goals that they need to reach, they need to utilize this method. They do not have another large building that uses this much energy that they can use to get these results.

Moss asks why meeting this goal is the most important thing rather than preserving the architectural quality of this building. Mastroberardino says that they have made a public agreement to meet Climate Action goals within nine years and this building’s renovation is necessary to do so.

Eckenrode says that Pittsburgh is leading the U.S. in these goals but the U.S. is behind many other nations. She says that the City needs to be able to teach people and other building developers that it is possible to achieve these energy results.

Moss says the requirement in the Code is a good move for the City but questions its application to this building. He says they can go a long way toward improving the energy efficiency of this building
without cladding it. He says as Art Commissioners they need to maintain their focus on beautifying and preserving aesthetic quality.

Quintanilla says that when he saw the application he thought it looked like a whole new building, and says that if they go this route they might as well tear down the building and build a new one because the history is gone. He says there is a simplicity to the building and the cladding with different colors makes it look like a McDonald’s. He says that buildings do not have to do so much, they can be simpler. He says he understands Passive House design and its limitations, but in this case they need to decide whether it is more important to achieve these goals or to keep this historical building.

Eckenrode says that there are sets of priorities that need to be managed. She says the approach of wrapping the building also gives them the chance to improve the indoor air quality, which is as important as energy in many regards. She says accountability for energy efficiency is only going to get more rigorous.

Quintanilla says that the stone on the outside of the building will not contribute to the air quality indoors, the natural stone is probably better than manmade materials in this regard. He says that improving the windows may not meet the Code threshold but would make an improvement without losing their history.

Goulatia asks if there is a way to clad it from the inside. Mastroberardino says they have looked at that solution, but it would lose space inside the building and they would also be unable to meet code for staircases and other features. Quintanilla says that they would be talking about around six inches if they removed the drywall. Mastroberardino says twelve. Moss confirms that the main issue would be staircases and egress width. He says that he believes that they should forego the Code requirement for this building and do as much as they can to improve the energy use without disturbing the outside.

Parsakian says there is a fourth wall that is nondescript, so perhaps they could create a green wall or another solution using that wall. He says that they are not cladding Fire Station 19, and so asks why they are cladding this station. Mastroberardino says Fire Station 19 is too small to make the needed difference. That project also started before the Code requirement came into play. Parsakian asks if this cladding will be done on the three stations mentioned as being up for future renovations in the presentation. He says that it all adds up, and if the Code requires it to be done to all buildings, then it should be done to small ones as well. Mastroberardino says that they can only do about one station per year, as it requires the firefighters to be moved out of the building.

Parsakian says that the location and use of this building is politically charged, and he questions the creation of an artwork for a building like this that is having community issues. Mastroberardino says that this is not something she can speak to.

Melissa McSwiggin speaks from the audience. She commends the Art Commission’s comments and says that she appreciates that they are sensitive to the historic fabric of the neighborhood in preserving this building. She says she is a proponent of building reuse but suggests in this case using the Code exemption and not cladding this building.

Chris Hornstein, Acting Director of the Department of Public Works, thanks the Commission and the applicant for their comments and hard work. He says he has had a lot of conversations regarding this structure and that cases of energy efficiency need to be taken on a case-by-case basis. He says that this building has significant air quality and conditional issues that require a major renovation not only to meet code but to keep the users of the building safe. He says these renovations trigger the Net Zero code requirement. He says they’ve looked at various options and it is virtually impossible to meet the code goal in any other way. Hornstein asks if they can consider an architectural cladding that allows them to meet their goal but honors the historic architecture in some way.

Goulatia asks if they can figure out another solution for the stairs and elevators so that the building can be cladded from the inside. She says this may not meet the goal but would be an improvement. Moss says that he agrees, there can be a significant improvement even if the Code goals can’t be met. He says the Code was written to allow for an exemption, and says that there are divergent goals for this building, in terms of energy efficiency and historic integrity.
Mastroberardino says that the stairwells are not the only issue with cladding from the interior, the use of internal space is also a concern.

Goulatia says that she is not in favor of cladding it in aluminum and if they cannot reach the Net Zero goals they can still reach an improvement in efficiency. She says they cannot compromise the historic quality of the building.

Moss says that although he does not support the cladding in any form, the previous proposal for cladding was better than today’s proposal. He says the building has a quiet elegance so even if it were to be cladded, they should approach it in a way to maintain that.

Mastroberardino says that they would welcome more discussion on this. Goulatia says that discussion would only be fruitful if they can come to a solution where they do not compromise and can explore options to clad from the inside. Moss says this likely would require the exemption from the Code requirement.

**MOTION:** Table the current proposal. The applicant is encouraged to return with a redesign and for additional discussion on how a compromise may be reached.

MOVED BY: Parsakian  
SECONDED BY: Goulatia  
IN FAVOR: All  
OPPOSED: None

Quintanilla notes that DPW has a hard job with this project. Mastroberardino says that this is their toughest project. Quintanilla says there must be a way to get them where they need to be while retaining the historic character. Mastroberardino says that many buildings in the City are historic, many more so even than this one, so they will need to start choosing which historic buildings they can do this cladding on in order to meet any part of the energy goals.

Moss says that although DPW may not be happy with the outcome of the hearing, it is a success of the City’s systems in terms of checks and balances.

Mastroberardino says there will be some buildings with historic nominations such as the City-County Building that cannot have this done to them, and so there will need to be some kind of trade-off.

C. **Correspondence**

None.

D. **Public Comment**

None.

E. **Director & Staff Report**

Minnaert gives an update on the Artist Engagement Survey, which was up on the City’s website and ran for a month. Minnaert describes some of the feedback received from the 89 responses.

Minnaert says that there are a number of upcoming commissions for new pieces of public art, totaling more than $800,000 in nearly twenty neighborhoods.

Goulatia asks how they sent the survey out to artists, as she never received it. Minnaert says it was on Engage PGH, as well as being sent to the division’s email list, posted on the City’s social media accounts through the Office of Community Affairs and the Mayor’s office, and shared through the Office of
Public Art and other organizations. Moss says he saw it shared at least two or three times. Parsakian says he shared it with his network as well.

Minnaert discusses the collection assessment that was started last year. She says they had a cohort of volunteers helping to come up with a framework and criteria for a first pass at assessing the pieces in the collection. She says that they are currently waiting on the results of this initial research to be shared. She says that it has highlighted the need to dedicate resources to a comprehensive collection assessment done by an individual with a steering committee to oversee. She says this will be a multi-step process.

Goulatia asks about the Chapter 175 revisions. Minnaert says there is still a draft of the changes, and in her opinion the first order of business once there is a full Art Commission is to do an update to the bylaws to make them consistent with the Code. Minnaert says that there needs to be some conversation with the Commission as some of the Chapter 175 revisions with regard to financials were not consistent with City protocol and need to be rethought.

Parsakian asks about the new Commissioner appointments, and Minnaert says that they do not have any update on that.

F. Adjournment

MOTION: Adjourn

MOVED BY: Quintanilla
SECONDED BY: Parsakian
IN FAVOR: All
OPPOSED: None

The meeting adjourned at 4:41 P.M.