City of Pittsburgh
Art Commission

March 24, 2021 at 2:00 P.M., Meeting called to order by President Moss

In Attendance
Moss
Goulatia
Leach
Parsakian
Quintanilla
Young
Hornstein (DPW)
Lucas (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 January 2021. Parsakian motions to approve the minutes, seconded by Goulatia. All ayes. Motion carries.

B. Items for Review

1. Homewood Banners – Neighborhood Allies
   Conceptual/Final Review

Demi Kolke goes over the project, which is for a series of 14 banners to be installed on sidewalk poles along North Homewood Ave. The banners honor prominent Homewood figures who represent the neighborhood culture through art, music, sports, and community.

Moss questions if there is a typo on two banners that seem to have the wrong dates. Kolke confirms this and says they will correct it. Moss asks how many banners there are. Kolke says fourteen. Moss asks if they are evenly distributed, and Kolke says yes, there are seven on each side of the street and are spaced in accordance with City standards.

Quintanilla says it is a great project. He says the contrast between the red background and black text make the text get a bit lost. He also says that the word “Homewood” may appear too stretched when printed. He says the QR code is a fantastic idea.
Parsakian says he is very familiar with Homewood and loves the idea. He says he would like to call it “Heroes and Sheroes” after a recent exhibit at the History Center. He asks if the photographs are high resolution and will print well when enlarged for the banners. Kolke says they attained the pictures from a variety of sources and points out that there is one picture they are concerned about printing, but says they have received a better alternative for that photo. Kolke says the banners’ designer is aware of the resolutions and is making sure the banners print right.

Parsakian points out the discrepancy with the dates, and Kolke confirms those will be corrected. Parsakian says that the pictures of musicians should contain the instruments they played. He says he doesn’t understand some of the words that are matched up with the figures, like “generous”. He says he’d like to see more iconic photographs that would explain more about who they are. Kolke says they did outreach to the families and only three were not able to be reached. She says that “generous” was specifically chosen by the family of that person. Parsakian says that is more important than what he thinks.

Parsakian asks if they have estate permission for all of these. Kolke says they do.

Leach mentions the figures that she knew and says she is excited that the project is coming to fruition. She asks if the banners can deal with wind. Kolke says yes, the material is vinyl and they are weighted and have wind slits. Leach asks if they will be able to see where the wind slits are. Leach reiterates that the photos should be high resolution. She asks if it is possible to have different photos on each side, with one side showing a headshot and the other side showing them in context of their achievements. Leach asks if it’s possible to put the info from the QR code on the pole so that everything doesn’t have to go through phones. She also asks if this program will grow into the future. She also asks if the dates of their death are important.

Kolke says the banner team felt the death dates were important to memorialize the individuals. She says that their goal is to continue the momentum of the project, but that they are currently using all of the poles at their disposal. Kolke says that finding photographs that they could legally use was at times challenging.

Parsakian says he doesn’t think they need wind slits but says they should double up the cable ties holding them in place. He notes that the company producing the banners will be able to address this.

Goulatia says she loves the project. She asks if they have thought of a more permanent way to honor these individuals instead of using vinyl banners, which are not sustainable. Kolke says the materials they are using are meant to be pretty durable and should have a 5-10 year lifespan, and they are fundraising to be able to replace the banners if any should need it. She says this is part of the larger “Homewood Experience” program that includes mural installations and other architectural and artistic features of the neighborhood, and they can consider how to make things more permanent as they move into Phase 2 of that program.

Young says she really loves the project overall. She says the QR code is a great idea and asks if it will be on the banner or separate from it. Kolke says the QR code would be on the light pole. Young asks if it would lead to the Homewood Experience website. Kolke says yes, and that scanning one QR code will allow a user to access all the bios. Young says to be sure to think about the presentation of the mobile website.

Elwin Green, Homewood community member, gives his support. Technical difficulties prevent him from being heard clearly, but his prepared statement is shared through email with all Commissioners.

Sadik Roberts, co-facilitator of the Homewood Experience, thanks the Commission for their feedback and highlights the community collaboration that took place during the progress of the program.

Dawn Webb-Turner, project partner, gives a brief history of her involvement with the Homewood community and the banner project. She also speaks of the curriculum she is developing for the local school community and the support of the students there for the banners.
Leach asks Webb-Turner if the curriculum she is working on will be a part of the website. Webb-Turner says that she is developing a way to bring both projects together.

Quintanilla reiterates that the applicant should look at the contrast of colors on the banners to ensure visibility.

**MOTION: Conceptual/Final Approval**

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

2. **Pro Bike + Run Street Bike Racks – Pfaffmann + Associates**  
   **Conceptual/Final Review**

Rob Pfaffman of Pfaffmann + Associates describes the project, which is for a series of 21 bike racks in two designs at the corner of Smallman St and 24th St. The bike racks will support the Pro Bike + Run store as well as a fitness studio, pub, café, and events room.

Moss says it looks like a great addition to the neighborhood and the bike racks are an elegant design. Pfaffmann says that sometimes City bike racks pull out from the ground and they will be paying special attention to make sure that the proposed bike racks will be secured.

Parsakian acknowledges that anchoring systems can have issues and is glad they are addressing that. He says the design is very sleek and futuristic, and that the facility will elevate how they look at transportation in the City.

Lucas acknowledges DOMI’s support. She says a challenge with the narrower racks of this project are that they do not support the bike in two places and so bikes may tip over more easily. She says that all bike racks may have installation problems but that these are cut down when they attach in more than one place to the pavement. She says that the proposed under-the-deck rack is similar to ones she has worked with before and notes that they require annual maintenance, and asks if they will be exposed to precipitation. Pfaffmann says that the deck is solid so it should not drip through. He notes they will have a variety of bike parking options.

Goulatia asks if they considered bike racks that are artist-designed. Pfaffmann says there will be a lot of opportunities for artists in the interior of the facility and so the project partners went with an off-the-shelf product for the bike racks. Goulatia says it would have been a great opportunity to use an artist for the bike racks. Pfaffmann notes that in this case the owner has chosen to utilize artists elsewhere in the project.

Parsakian asks if there is street parking for cars around the building. Pfaffmann says no, but that there is a Healthy Ride station right across the street. Leach asks what the capacity of the space is, and if there will be enough racks. Pfaffmann says that is part of the normal calculations in Zoning and has been reviewed. He says it exceeds the requirements for the retail use. Leach asks if the bikes will be locked up. Pfaffmann says that is up to those using the racks and explains the different parking options.

Quintanilla says he appreciates the rack design.

**MOTION: Conceptual/Final Approval**

MOVED BY: Quintanilla  
SECONDED BY: Parsakian  
IN FAVOR: All  
OPPOSED: None
3. 3213 Penn Ave Apartments Sidewalk Enhancements – Oxide Real Estate Development Conceptual/Final Review

Shawn Kichline of Oxide Real Estate Development presents the proposal for sidewalk enhancements consisting of planters and bike racks outside of a new multifamily residential building.

Moss clarifies that what is before them are the non-standard street furnishings, which are the bike racks, planters, and benches. Cavalline says that the application is for non-standard bike racks and planters, but that the other elements follow City standards.

Moss asks about the planters, as it looks like there were two different planters in the presentation. Kichline says that to his understanding the planter beds do not require approval. He says there may be different planter dimensions. Moss asks how the metal of the planters are finished.

Ryan Indovina, architect of the project, clarifies what is non-standard in the project. He says the planters would be painted aluminum pre-fabricated planter boxes. He also mentions the benches as needing the Commission’s review. He explains the different dimensions of the planters on review. Moss asks if the planters are irrigated. Indovina says there would be fenestrations at the bottom but not fixed irrigation.

Goulatia asks if the bench is a City standard bench. Moss also asks for clarification on whether the bench is City standard. Cavalline asks Lucas to address this. He also asks whether DOMI supports the current proposal.

Lucas says she does not think the bench is a standard design. Lucas says that the benches are fine and have DOMM’s support as long as they are maintained by the applicant, and the same for the bike racks. Moss recommends including the benches in their current review. Cavalline confirms that DOMI supports the planters as well. Lucas says yes.

Goulatia asks about the materials of the bike racks and benches and the planters are black. Kichline says that the planters are painted aluminum, and the bike racks are aluminum.

Parsakian asks for clarifications of the dimensions of the planters. Kichline says he doesn’t have the lengths off the top of his head. Parsakian asks if the planters are intended to act as a wall and also to direct pedestrians to the entrance. Kichline says it does create somewhat of a barrier to mask the view into the garage.

Quintanilla asks if the planters will be on the sidewalk. Kichline says partially. Quintanilla asks how much of the sidewalk will be left to pedestrians. Indovina says that the sidewalk is 12’2” wide from the building face to the curb. He says between the planter boxes and the planter beds there will be 8’2” left for pedestrians. Moss says this is plenty. Quintanilla asks if there is any drainage for the planters or if they drain onto the sidewalk. Indovina says they would have drainage holes on the bottom.

Quintanilla asks why all three items can’t be the same color. Kichline says they could be all black. Quintanilla encourages them to all be cohesive.

Lucas says the use of bike racks may not be immediately apparent and recommends a little sign to indicate their use.

Quintanilla asks if there could be vines in the planters that could grow up the lattice that encloses the garage. Moss says that is an interesting idea but it is going a bit outside of their purview. Quintanilla says that the plants should be higher. Moss says that with a higher planter, headlights from inside the garage could be blocked. Goulatia asks if it would be a traffic hazard not to see the headlights. Moss says that the headlights would not be blocked when the cars are leaving the garage, but could be blocked through the screens that let light into the garage. Moss says that 36” should be sufficient or possibly a bit higher.

Minnaert asks if DPW has any thoughts, since these matters concern City standards. Hornstein says that the project is fairly consistent with City standards.
MOTION: Conceptual/Final Approval, with the conditions that 1) the benches, planters, and bike racks should be of a consistent finish; 2) the bike racks should have signage indicating their use; and 3) the planters should be of an appropriate height to shield headlights inside the garage.

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

4. Invisible Ecologies - Riverlife
Conceptual/Final Review

Anna Leisher of Riverlife and David Seiter of Future Green Studios describe the project, which is an artistic installation including clusters of birdhouses in the greenspace between the riverwalk and the 10th Street Bypass between the Fort Duquesne Bridge and the Roberto Clemente Bridges on the southern bank of the Allegheny River. This project previously received Art Commission approval in February 2020 in a different iteration titled “After the Storm”. Due to intervening circumstances during the pandemic, the project has changed its scope and is now presented for approval in altered form.

Goulatia says the project is fantastic and a lot of thought has gone into it. She asks for clarification on where the light elements are located. Seiter says the lighting elements are incorporated into the birdhouses with perches. He says they glow with ambient light from the inside. He says roughly 30% have lights, which are powered by a small solar panel embedded in the top of the birdhouses.

Quintanilla confirms that the material is concrete. He asks how thick the boxes are. Seiter says they have tried to minimize the weight as much as possible. The birdhouses have a wooden frame inside with foam surrounding, then a layer of concrete. Quintanilla asks how thick the concrete on the boxes are, as it may create a hot interior to the boxes. Seiter says the foam insulation buffers the heat transfer and notes that there are ventilation holes. Quintanilla says that it is really a wooden box with a concrete interior. Seiter says that the wood was essential because they want to have the appearance of urban materials but still be habitable by birds. Quintanilla says in the area where the project will be implemented it feels like there is too much concrete. He says the birdhouses will feel very heavy. Seiter agrees and says that was the intention. Moss notes it will cut down the noise from the highway. Seiter says they spoke to ornithologists who did not think that the noise would be a limiting factor but that it may affect which birds come.

Goulatia asks what the intention behind the color on the boxes was. Seiter says they were going for a look of “urban confetti”, so there would be about 70% grey with splashes of color. Goulatia says the color shouldn’t look forced but should instead look like it was reused material from another building. Seiter agrees that they want them to appear similar to found objects.

Goulatia asks if there is an intention to do something on the walking path to tie into the nearby Ann Hamilton design. Seiter says they are not touching the sidewalk but they hope to incorporate plantings which will be a reference to the Hamilton work. Goulatia confirms that there is no mural in this project. Seiter says that is correct.

Parsakian asks if any found objects from the river will be incorporated. Seiter says that’s a great point and they could consider that. Parsakian compares it to a project in Montreal called “Habitat”.

Young asks if there was any reasoning for the number of birdhouses in the clusters. Seiter says they experimented with different variations and decided this arrangement worked best formally. There was also some consideration of the necessary range between certain birdhouses.

Quintanilla asks if there is rebar used to add to the construction feel. Seiter says some boxes terminate in a small perch stand but none use rebar. Seiter says perches aren’t recommended anymore outside of the opening of a birdhouse. Quintanilla asks where the lighting is. Seiter shows the lighting in the presentation. The light will glow from the inside of the box.
Goulatia asks if the color is painted onto the concrete or intrinsic to it. Seiter says he’d like to do both but so far they have mixed the color into the concrete. Goulatia agrees that they could embed found objects from the river.

Leach asks if there will be an effect of the heat on the birds. She asks if the light will upset the patterns of the birds. She asks if there is a way to use natural color instead of paint. Seiter notes that the goal isn’t to create the perfect natural habitat for birds but to show ideas of creating an ecology out of the remains of urban infrastructure that could still support the birds. He says there should not be a negative interaction to the birds from any of the materials used.

Leach asks how safe they are and if they can be pulled down. Seiter explains how they will be anchored and stabilized.

Rob Long from Clear Story describes the lights and notes the output is very visually quiet and should not have the potential for negative impact. He also gives additional details about the stability of the structures.

Leach asks if there will be information given to the public regarding the types of birds. Leisher says they are working on ideas for that and would like to include it. Long says there was a lot of research done by Future Green Studios and it should be shared with the public in some way.

Quintanilla notes that the boxes stand at different heights and asks if the lower ones are further from the sidewalk. Seiter says that the nestable boxes are five feet or higher but that their arrangement was determined by the sculptural quality. They are at least three feet from the sidewalk. Quintanilla asks if there will be anything at ground level to limit kids walking up to it. Seiter says there is a planting area that hopefully doesn’t not invite people to walk into it.

Cavalline asks whether DPW supports the project. Hornstein gives DPW’s support.

**MOTION: Conceptual/Final Review**

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

C. **Correspondence**

None.

D. **Public Comment**

None.

E. **Director & Staff Report**

Minnaert notes that PACD has been working on the Art in Parks Call For Artists including artist info sessions and an extended deadline of March 30. They have been investing a lot of effort into getting the word out about this opportunity and making sure that artists can access the application. She describes the Art in Parks grant and program. Goulatia says that the application process is difficult and wonders if the Commission is able to help in some way. Minnaert says this is an ongoing conversation and they are currently focusing on trying to help artists register and apply using the required City procurement system. Leach asks about a video for the artist info sessions. Minnaert says the presentation from the artist info session is included in the FAQ for the Call For Artists but they are not able to put up the recording.
Minnaert says there will be a number of Percent For Art projects coming up throughout the rest of the year.

Parsakian asks about current art projects involving Port Authority. Minnaert says the Bus Rapid Transit Project came in the fall for preliminary review. She says this project will have a Percent For Art component. She notes there was recently an article about the Port Authority’s Public Art Policy but this is separate from the City.

Minnaert says they do not have any news about the open Commissioner seat.

Moss asks about the newest draft of the Art Commission Bylaws. A draft was circulated to bring the bylaws into alignment with City Code. Moss notes the bylaws can be revisited again after the future Code update.

**MOTION: Approval of Bylaws**

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

Moss notes that according to these bylaws, the officers of the Commission are a President and a Secretary. Goulatia notes the previous positions were called Chair and Vice-Chair. Minnaert says these are essentially the same positions but are named in accordance with the Code, and that the positions should be elected on an annual basis.

**MOTION: Andrew Moss as Art Commission President**

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

**MOTION: Sarika Goulatia as Art Commission Secretary**

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

F. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 P.M.