In Attendance
Moss
Goulatia
Leach
Parsakian
Quintanilla
Lucas (DOMI)

Staff Present
Minnaert
Cavalline

Agenda Items Covered in These Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Friendship Asphalt Art</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Highland Park Super Playground</td>
<td>3-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A. Approval of Minutes

Roll call. Moss asks Commissioners to review and comment on minutes from May 2021. Leach motions to approve the minutes, seconded by Goulatia. All ayes. Motion carries.

B. Items for Review

1. Friendship Asphalt Art – Friendship Community Group Conceptual/Final Review

Jennifer Haven of Friendship Community Group introduces the project, which is a hardscape mural to be installed in pedestrian bumpouts at the intersection of Roup Ave, S Fairmount St, and Harriet St in the Friendship neighborhood. The mural is being done in coordination with the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure’s planned traffic-calming improvements to the intersection. Funds for the installation have been provided by a grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies with support from the City.

Project artists Tim Engelhardt and Randi Stewart give additional details on the proposed design and the community process.

Goulatia asks for clarification on the alignment of the images and what portions of the street will be painted, which Haven explains. Moss asks if the City is extending curbs or if the painted area can be driven over. Haven says the City will be putting up flex post bollards and that an emergency vehicle could drive over them.

Quintanilla says this is a scary intersection and the amount of thought put into this is awesome. Haven says that they are thankful to DOMI and to Bloomberg Philanthropies for the opportunity to improve the area. Quintanilla asks if holes and cracks in the street will be fixed before painting. Haven
says that they are using a special primer and a grip coat, and the artists have been working with a nationally-known asphalt painter. Haven says that PWSA just did a project at the northwest corner of the intersection and so flattened that section out. Haven says they do not expect any repaving or pothole filling, but that she doesn’t think the area has significant potholes.

Goulatia says it looks beautiful. She asks for further clarification of the layout and alignment of the artwork.

Goulatia asks about the timeline. Haven says after Art Commission approval the artists will be ordering the product. Elly Fisher of Friendship Community Group says they plan on installing the project over a weekend, probably July 25-26.

Leach asks how the project addresses the safety of the intersection. Haven explains that narrowing the lanes and extending the curbs will slow the traffic down. She says they have been doing traffic counts and studying the speeding of the traffic and the compliance with the stop bars. She says that the placement of the stop bars currently does not allow full visibility of all other lanes, and so cars do not comply with them. She also says that pedestrian safety is very important, and currently there are not crosswalks at every crossing. The project will provide crosswalks at each crossing of the intersection, and make crossings shorter than they currently are. Leach asks if you could still drive over the painting. Haven says that you could if you drove over the bollards. Leach says she doesn’t understand if that makes it safer. She says she has no sense of how it will look with the bollards.

Lucas acknowledges that some people do not respect the traffic controlling devices, but those being proposed are standard and the combination of the art with the flex posts will provide a greater sense of where not to drive. She says the measures being proposed will improve the pedestrian experience.

Goulatia says near where she lives there is an intersection with multiple stop signs and it causes confusion. She asks if DOMI thought of putting in a traffic light. Goulatia says she isn’t a fan of the bollards and they destroy the visual impact. Lucas says they try to use every tool they have available, and some tools like a traffic light can represent several hundred thousand dollars of investment, so they are not always able to use that option. She says that the options being utilized at this intersection are good for what is currently possible.

Goulatia asks what color the bollards are. Haven says they have to use the style of bollards that DOMI provides, which are solid white flex posts. She says the flex posts will not go on the art itself. She says that if the project is successful perhaps in the future they can do something more permanent.

Quintanilla agrees that the bollards can be hideous, but that they do the needed job. He says that hopefully with this being a residential street and the geometry of the intersection being narrower, they will not have issues with people driving over them. He says he is excited for the project and that it should be a huge improvement.

Leach says she defers to the architects on the Commission, but asks if it would be preferable to have a large circle in the middle of the intersection as opposed to extending the curbs. Haven says they explored that, but that fire trucks would not be able to make that angle going around a circle. She says they are working within the spaces that have been engineered by DOMI.

Parsakian says that this is a nightmare intersection. He says he likes the Victorian nature of the artwork. He says that in the future a bumpout with a concrete sidewalk extension would be ideal, but that this is a good shorter-term solution. He compliments them on their detailed and thoughtful community engagement and design process work.

**MOTION: Conceptual/Final Approval**

MOVED BY: Goulatia  
SECONDED BY: Parsakian  
IN FAVOR: All  
OPPOSED: None
2. Highland Park Super Playground – Department of Public Works
Conceptual/Final Review

Andrea Ketzel of the Department of Public Works and Nina Chase of Merritt Chase introduce the project, which is the full renovation of an existing playground. The renovation is grant-funded and includes the replacement of all play structures, play surfacing, and the addition of new site improvements including site furniture, entrance, trees, planting and public art. They are joined by Sabrina Culyba, a Highland Park resident and member of the Playground Committee. Culyba describes the public art projects, which would be done in collaboration with the Pittsburgh Glass Center and which would come for Final Approval at a future review.

Goulatia applauds the attention that they have given to the materials and the reuse of the trees. She says it is a beautiful project. She suggests that they use the drawings the children made during the planning process for the small mosaics.

Quintanilla agrees and says that it would be great to incorporate the kids’ ideas in the art. He says the fencing feels very rectilinear and asks if they’ve thought of a more organic feel. He says he loves the theme with the ships and that it could be made to be more like a fantasy map. Chase says that’s a great idea and that they went through different ideas with the play surface and ended up with this design so as to avoid being too prescriptive with how it would be interpreted.

Goulatia asks if it is wheelchair accessible. Chase says yes, that the current park has mulch which is not accessible and this play surface will be. She says they have utilized an inclusive play consultant in the design process. Goulatia says the signage could have Braille elements or audio features.

Leach asks if it has to be castles and ships, as it feels very colonial. She asks if there are other playgrounds that use skyscrapers and spaceships. Chase says that options were presented to the community in other themes or with no theme, but that the community wanted to maintain the original castle theme. She says they wanted to expand beyond it and so brought in the water and ship elements. Culyba says that the playground is very loved and the community thinks of the castle silhouette as iconic to the neighborhood.

Goulatia says she now sees the ships in a very dark way, like slave ships. Chase says they presented more architecturally abstract designs and looked at six or seven equipment manufacturers. Goulatia asks if they could have a conversation with the community about this, and whether that would change what they want to see. She says she can’t see the park in any other way and it’s an opportunity to change this narrative. Leach says she does not mean to put it in a dark light but this is what it looks like to her. She asks if there are other options. She says there are other beautiful places around the world that could be used in the design, but she realizes they are on a schedule.

Ketzel says they have limited budgets for these types of projects, and for this project they even have about three times the budget that they normally do. She says they have tried to go beyond the normal plastic playground and that the wooden aspect is very important to the community. She says that what has been brought up is a very valid thought and that it did not come up in their community process. She says that there are different ways to look at the elements. She says that the theme of this design has had an overwhelming positive response and it is late in the process to change it.

Leach says that in the world they live in there is one overwhelming narrative that drowns out the others. She says she is not deliberately trying to be negative but that is what she sees and she felt a need to say that. Ketzel says she appreciates that and it is important to discuss. Moss says if it is too late to change this design, then this project should have been brought to the Art Commission earlier. Ketzel says it was her understanding that they were to present the non-standard amenities to the Commission, not necessarily the municipal design.

Moss says the question of the theme is an important question and the community may not have been given this perspective. He says it should be taken back to the community group. Culyba says it could be taken back to the community or put on the EngagePGH platform. She says they can ask the community if
they still want the castles and ships, given the knowledge that others may see them in a different light. Chase suggests that this could be taken back to the playground committee, and they could discuss removing the ships.

Goulatia says that she would not have seen the ships in this light until it was brought up, but now it is how she sees them. She says that it is not too late to change the design and the narrative. Leach asks if they are considering how all children may see this. She says that castles can mean magic and mystery, but that it should be considered that playgrounds are for all. Ketzel confirms that they should take this back to the community and then return with those results. Moss says that would be appropriate.

Moss asks about relocating the toilets, and asks how that's being addressed. Ketzel says they are just relocating the existing portable toilets away from the entrance. Moss says it would be preferable to have a permanent restroom. Ketzel says she agrees, and that is a Citywide resource and maintenance issue. Goulatia asks if the maintenance of a permanent toilet is harder than a portable one. Ketzel says yes, and that the portable toilets are handled by a third party. She says there are also some issues concerning those larger spaces being open at night.

Monica Watt, former president of Highland Park Community Council, speaks from the audience. She says she has worked on the maintenance of the playground for the past twenty-five years and has been working with DPW on the redesign. She says she appreciates Leach sharing her perspective. She says they were thinking more of fairy tales and explorers and a broader perspective of ships, albeit a white perspective. She says these ships are pirate ships and have pirate flags on them. She says that Highland Park was 26% minority at the 2010 census and so considering how affluent it is, it is a diverse neighborhood. She speaks of how well-loved the playground is and that they chose the castle theme because of how important that aspect was to the community. She says they tried to be inclusive with their outreach and make sure everyone was aware of the design before construction.

Moss says a project of this size should probably come first for a conceptual review earlier in the process. Goulatia says she does not understand the comment about the neighborhood being affluent but diverse.

The Commission discusses possible approval options.

Chase asks if there is concern with the castles in addition to the ships, or if it is just the ships. Leach says it is how it looks together, and there are different ways to approach it. Culyba asks what ways they can move away from that narrative. Goulatia says that this narrative is a reality so if that is what the community wants, there could be a placard telling that history, but no one will want that in a playground. She says they have a chance to really look at this design and rethink it, even though that will be a lot of effort. Chase asks about the extent of change that would need to be made. Leach says the castles looking different from each other would be an option. Goulatia says that instead of ships they could have boats.

Ketzel says that they do need to think about some practical concerns, and that at this point they are at the end of their design funds and this would be pushing construction into the spring of 2022. She wants everyone to have realistic expectations about what that means.

Parsakian asks if the playground pieces are custom made or if they are essentially from a catalogue. Ketzel says they work with designers and are generally choosing from a catalogue but then making minor tweaks. She says that for instance, making each castle different could be very complicated. Parsakian suggests they could choose completely different options. Chase says yes, but that would require going back to the community and explaining that they were not going with the design they had chosen. Chase says that if it was just the ships that were problematic, that would be a simpler change. Parsakian asks if they can call the castles skyscrapers. Chase describes that they had referred to them as architectural elements and had modeled the lines somewhat from the roof lines of the existing playground. They simplified the aesthetic to give it less of a fort feel.

Goulatia says that the beauty of the project is that it has a cohesive feel to it, so if they are rethinking one element they need to rethink all of it. She says that it is more important that they do the right thing even if it pushes the project forward until next year.
MOTION: Conceptual/Final Approval of the site plan for the Highland Park Super Playground, with the exception of the playground equipment, which should be thematically reconsidered and return to a future hearing.

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

C. Correspondence

None.

D. Public Comment

None.

E. Director & Staff Report

Minnaert says that the Art in Parks program is underway and they will be bringing on the Program Coordinator shortly. The Public Art & Civic Design Division is also working on the South Side Park public art project, which will be starting community engagement soon. She says the division has also recently completed a collection assessment to help them evaluate conservation priorities.

Minnaert says they are nearing the end of the reconceptualization phase for the Cantini mosaic. They have been working with EHoldings and during the last month they have been having meeting with local stakeholders and community groups. They will soon be narrowing down potential sites and the project will come to Art Commission in the future.

Goulatia says that she is not sure the Highland Park playground project understood all of the Commissioner's comments and asks the division to help them with feedback if needed. Leach says that she wasn’t aware of the potential fallout of communicating the lens of what the project looks like. Moss says that there was previously an application for a sculpture honoring Dr. Martin Luther King that could potentially have been considered very offensive, and so the Art Commission's role saved them that embarrassment. Goulatia thanks Leach for mentioning it and says that if the project comes back she won’t vote in favor of it. She says that if it disrupts the timeline of the project then that is what will have to happen. Parsakian says it is important that they all voice their perspectives to educate the community on how they need to rethink their biases. Quintanilla says that he has done a lot of community engagement and says that it is a hard balance to hit. Goulatia says that what the community member said was problematic. Leach agrees. Quintanilla says that it is important for the public to see how much thought goes into these decisions. Leach says this is the difficult work and it might push timelines back. It is important to communicate how things can be seen, and if the community still wants the castles and ships, then it has at least been communicated.

Goulatia says if there is a catalogue, then it is easier for them to change their theme. Parsakian says they could also have gone to the wrong vendor, and there could be other vendors that have more enlightened thinking.

F. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:19 P.M.