

Squirrel Hill Urban Coalition
Board Meeting
7:00 p.m., May 23, 2017
The Children's Institute
1405 Shady Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

MINUTES

Attendees:

Board: Rita Botts, Vivian Didomenico, Rich Feder, Barb Grover, Michael Henderson, Marshall Hershberg, Mardi Isler, Lois Liberman, Cindy Morelock, Lisa Murphy, Eric Wagner

Staff: Marian Lien, Executive Director; Britt Reints, Magazine Editor

Guests: Curt Conrad, Councilman O'Connor's office; Shelley Danko-Day, Dept. of City Planning; Jamie Glasser, Sen. Jay Costa's office; Anne Jackson, Squirrel Hill Resident; Damen Johnson, Councilman O'Connor Intern; Alex Phillips, Dept. of City Planning; Suella Pipal, SHUC Committee member

Meeting began at 7:02 pm. Rich moved and Mardi seconded a motion to approve the April minutes; Unanimously approved.

O'Connor Golf Clubhouse update –

Representatives from the City of Pittsburgh and First Tee of Pittsburgh heard proposals for the new design for the clubhouse from 4 architectural firms. One firm was eliminated from consideration because it did not address community input. The RFP required that the building be LEED certified. Design phase will last 2-4 months depending on community meetings and input. A decision on the chosen firm should occur by June 2.

Adopt-A-Lot Program –

Shelly Danko-Day, Open Space Specialist, from the Department of City Planning is the contact person for the Adopt-A-Lot program. The purpose of the program is to develop/revitalize vacant lots. Over 7000 vacant lots are the responsibility of the city, although the city does not own the properties. Property owners simply abandoned many of these properties in the 1970s. Maintaining the properties costs the city about \$600 a year per property. City has prepared a Vacant Lot Tool Kit for any individual or organization interested in revitalizing a lot (e.g., vegetable garden, flower garden). G-tech has a map of all the lots on its website (Click on LotsToLove). Sixty-six have been adopted so far. Contact Shelly for the Tool Kit.

Financial Report – 2016-2017:

Gina noted that when we compare this year April to last year April, there is a lesser amount. Our cash on hand was \$20,000 at the end of April, with about an \$8000 lessor difference comparing last fiscal year to date to this year. This can be a number of reasons including grants deposited prior to the fiscal year in which it needs to be used. We are solvent right now. The Board needs to continue to focus on long-term financial efforts since income and expenses greatly fluctuate month to month.

Commercial Development and Residential Quality: (See Committee Updates at end of these minutes for details)

a. Forward-Murray (Gateway District) proposed medical marijuana dispensary:

Rich had created a summary of comments from the Community meeting about a Medical Marijuana Dispensary proposed by Keystone Relief Centers being housed in the Buncher Building at the corner of Forward and Beechwood Blvd. (See attached.) Traffic, ped/bike path, landscaping, and safety were some of the main issues.

Anne Jackson,,a resident, spoke to the Board to express her opposition to the dispensary being located in the Buncher Building. Her main concerns were the close proximity to neighborhood schools, traffic congestion, the potential impact on increasing high school dropout rates & decreasing educational ambitions to attend college, and whether such a dispensary is reflective of our neighborhood. She argued that she is not opposed to such dispensaries, just that other locations with less dense populations would be more suitable.

Discussion ensued with some members of the board attempting to allay her concerns by clarifying some of the details of the proposal that will be in compliance with state law and rules that will govern the dispensary; and that Keystone has written that they will address all of SHUC's concerns (and those of Greenfield Community Association).

b. Five-street intersection (Forward-Murray-Pocusset):

Mardi, Rich, Ray, and Gateway Committee members toured the intersection with a traffic engineer for the City. The City will be looking at ways to improve the intersection from the standpoint of cars, bicyclists and pedestrians, taking into account capacity and safety.

c. Development at the intersection:

The smokestack at the corner of Murray and Forward is a threat to health, especially to those Allerdice students who use the bus stop on that corner. Action Housing has conducted an inspection that shows significant amounts of lead and asbestos and the paint is chipping. Removal with public dollars is problematic since it sits on private property. Also as private land, the property owner needs to be the one to request removal. Estimates of costs are: \$50,000 to remove the asbestos and lead; \$100,000 to remove the stack, which is structurally sound.

Mardi moved and Barb seconded a motion to support Keystone Relief Centers application for zoning approval scheduled for the Zoning Board meeting on Thursday, May 25. Motion approved with 9 in favor, 0 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

Report-out on business district walk through with City Planning (No report)

Update on Downtown-Oakland-East End BRT project (email canvassing of SHUC Board):

A Public workshop on the BRT project proposal is scheduled for June 27. The current approved route through Squirrel Hill is along Forbes and Murray toward Homestead to Greenfield (the 61D Bus Route).

Development Committee (Treasures Dinner, Challenge Grant):

Treasures Dinner will be held Nov 2, 2017.

The Challenge Grant campaign has netted \$7600 so far. This amount includes the Board members contributions and other resident donations.

June 1 to be SHUC Day of Giving Social Media Campaign. Pittsburgh Foundation has moved away from its usual Day of Giving profiling for all non-profits in the area. Instead, we will focus on our own Day of Giving. Marian is creating a message about this campaign. Every Board member should post this announcement and share it on their Facebook wall to encourage additional donations.

Marian was contacted by Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to write a letter of support for their 4 Mile Run Watershed work. Marshall moved and Michael seconded a motion to give Marian permission to support this grant application. Unanimously approved.

Gateway Committee:

Board member participation was disappointing in helping Mardi and Chris with the planting of the Memory Garden. No other Board members participated.

Pedestrian-Bicycle Committee: (See Committee Updates at end of these minutes for details)

Two new members attended the recent meeting. The committee is reaching out to Churchill and Braddock to find out more about their efforts to promote bicycling and walkability. The 5-street intersection (Forward, Murray, Pocusset) needs significant improvement on behalf of walking and bicycling, and there are different ways for the proposed ped/bike path to traverse the intersection.

Plans are being made to sponsor a Sunday morning bike ride through Squirrel Hill – with 3 miles in length. They probably will begin with a 3mile route starting and ending at the Farmers Market. June 11, 8:30-9:30am is a potential date for the first ride. The ride is free and open to the public. Liability waivers issue needs to be addressed prior to the first ride.

The committee is brainstorming ideas for giving recognition to those residents and businesses who have improved their sidewalks.

Contract with Morris Grossman

A Settlement & Release Agreement has been agreed to by Mr. Grossman and SHUC. Copies of the Agreement were distributed to the Board to review and then were collected. A ¼ page ad for Mr. Grossman's company will be placed in the Squirrel Hill Magazine free of charge as long as Mr. Grossman owns the business Dalmo Optical. This Agreement is not transferrable. This agreement will end a long running dispute.

Mardi moved and Lois seconded a motion to approve the Settlement & Release Agreement Draft by Ray Baum, our attorney. Unanimously approved.

Magazine Report Spring-Summer Issues: (See Committee Updates at end of these minutes for details)

The Summer Issue of the magazine is going to the publisher tomorrow (5/24) and should be distributed around the first week in June. Committee Chairs should provide Britt with updates for the magazine as well as in between issues for the website.

We are \$2000 short of budget for Summer issue. Four new advertisers were gotten for the summer issue. About \$2000 has already been collected from invoices sent. To facilitate a more stable revenue stream for the magazine, additional year-long contracts are being sought rather than issue to issue. Board members are encouraged to contact business owners they know and encourage them to advertise in the magazine.

Executive Director's Report: (See Committee Updates at end of these minutes for details)

Final article featuring Squirrel Hill as case study for the New American Economy policy think tank and its immigrant population is slated for this fall.

Eric Marchbein, a member of the Squirrel Hill Historical Society is seeking financial support (\$500) for a marker to honor Simon Girty, a Revolutionary period figure. Mr. Marchbein has gotten approval for this marker from the PA Commonwealth. The full cost to install the marker is \$2000. Britt will ask Helen to write an article about it for the magazine.

It is felt that this is a positive thing to do and is an additional tourist attraction for Squirrel Hill. Rich moved and Michael seconded a motion to support this effort with a \$500 donation. Unanimously approved

June 18 Bach, Beethoven, and Brunch starts in Mellon Park, 10:30am to noon.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm
Respectfully submitted,
Barb Grover, Secretary

SHUC Chair Committee Updates for 5/23/2017

Commercial Development and Residential Quality Committee,
as submitted by Richard Feder, president

Addressing Keystone Relief Centers' proposal for Medical Marijuana Dispensary on 3885 Forward Ave/ Buncher Property

A list of concerns that need to be addressed as conditions of SHUC support is as follows. To the extent possible, accommodating these requests shall be part of the zoning approval action taken by the ZBA

Overall

- The proposed use shall be subject to the site plan review procedures of Section 922.04. This includes building design, landscape, and lighting standards.
- That the zoning approval shall be limited to dispensary of medical marijuana only, and not include recreational drugs

Traffic and parking

- The estimated 50 customer visits a day seems to be understating the number that will be experienced. More info on the traffic study and the underlying trip generation needs to be provided, in order to address concerns regarding traffic and the economic viability of the proposed dispensary
- More info is needed on the parking spaces being provided The stated need of 38 spaces seems to be inconsistent with the 50 daily customer visits, because if 50 translates to a peak-hour load of, say, 10 customers, that translates to 10 parking spaces needed assuming there is no carpooling nor access via foot or transit (for purposes of stating the maximum assumed usage)
- As part of the site plan review of Section 922.04, a Transportation Analysis shall be submitted to the Zoning Administrator which shall analyze the proposed use in relation to street capacity, intersection classification, existing and projected traffic volumes and reasonable alternatives that will enable increased traffic to be directed away from residential areas and congested areas. The costs for constructing and implementing all required mitigation measures shall be the responsibility of the Applicant.

Sidewalk/pathway

- We appreciate Keystone Relief's commitment to implement a sidewalk/pathway through the site. We would like to see engineering-type drawings of the sidewalk/pathway, and how it would connect to the adjacent city-owned property and thence to Monitor St.

- We are asking that commitment of the sidewalk/pathway be a condition of the zoning approval, and that the approval address other aspects of the design including width, paving material, access, and pathway maintenance
- We were asked to indicate the width of the sidewalk/pathway; the recommended minimum width is 12 feet. We understand that on existing trails, a lesser width is sometimes provided. We would like City Public Works and the Planning Department to approve the design, as shown on the engineering-level drawings, of the sidewalk/pathway
- The Buncher Co. needs to be party to the agreement on the sidewalk/pathway

Design of the site and building

- Based on the Squirrel Hill Master Plan, developments in general need to utilize good urban design and be designed at a pedestrian scale. Although the site design of the dispensary is more of an automobile scale with parking in front and on one side of (and also possibly behind) the building, we accept the site layout that has been proposed because there is an existing sidewalk along Forward Avenue that will be retained, and the developer's commitment to implement the sidewalk/pathway along the north face of Beechwood Blvd. through the site
- We note that the size of the building is nearly 7000 square feet. This is substantially larger than what we understand to be the sizing need of a dispensary. Can you tell us more about how the building will be used, and how that relates to the indicated 50 trips per day and 7-10 employees who will be on site?

Lighting

- Through shielding and height of lighting standards, the impact of light pollution on neighbors and vehicles turning left onto Forward Avenue should be minimized.
- Lighting needs to be sufficient for sidewalk/pathway users

Signage

- The size of the identifying sign shall be no larger than is implied or indicated in the rendering
- The signage shall be done in compliance with the zoning code section 919.03.M.5, applicable to LNC, UNC, CP and AP

Other

- We would like to see "nuisance bar" requirements be placed on the development [with further consideration we decided to drop this specific request]

Litter Patrol Report

Submitted by Barb Grover, chair

The April 23 Community Clean Up was a success. The weather cooperated very nicely by NOT raining. An excellent group of volunteers staffed the tables, registering residents, distributing supplies and food. About 105 people participated (50 community volunteers, 33 from Community Day School, 6 from a Girl Scout Troop, 7 from Cub Scout Troop 1818, 9 from the 6th Presbyterian Church and 2 from CMU). We collected about 150 grocery bags of trash and 20 blue grocery bags of recyclables.

A visit from Mr. Murray, the Squirrel, added to the enjoyment of all who participated. Students from Minadeo and Community Day were cited for their wonderful environmentally designed coffee mugs. The winners received prizes for their efforts. Color Me Mine, Classic Line Books and Cold Stone Creamery donated Gift Cards as prizes. Cold Stone Creamery also provided coupons, which were distributed to the volunteers. European Wax Center provided 100 Lunches (sandwiches, snacks, cookies) for the volunteers. Starbucks provided coffee and Dunkin Donuts provided donuts. Giant Eagle donated the blue bags. Squirrel Hill Wine and Spirits donated the trash bags. Allegheny Clean Ways provided gloves and vests. The City of Pittsburgh through our Beautify Our 'Burgh program provided brooms, dustpans, grabbers, and vests. The JAA Center for Rehabilitation provided a van to transport volunteers to areas that were fairly distant from the registration area. Michael Jehn took photographs, which can be viewed on the Litter Patrol Facebook page.

Pittsburgh Healthy Ride staffed a table to engage residents in conversations about the possibility of having bike rental stations in Squirrel Hill. A table was also designated for a City sponsored project, Belonging, Volunteers were encouraged to use the paper, crayons, and colored markers to create 'posters' reflecting the fact that our neighborhood and Pittsburgh welcomes ALL people, no matter their religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.

Love Your [Resilient] Block Grant Our Video Competition **Every Litter Bit Matters!** was launched on May 1. All details are on the SHUC website—click on Litter Patrol under the Projects Tab. We encourage the Board to promote the competition by encouraging friends, neighbors, relatives, to check out the details at the website. We are seeking 9 judges (3 for each category). If you know anyone who might be a knowledgeable and a willing judge, please contact Barb (barbgrover1@gmail.com) or Rita (ritabotts@yahoo.com) with names and contact information.

On May 21, a group from the First Unitarian Church will be doing a litter clean up somewhere in the neighborhood. Details are being worked out now.

Natural Environment,
Submitted by Marian Lien

Letter of support is sought by Parks Conservancy for two state grants that would allow the PPC to continue the design work they've been pursuing in Four Mile Run. After a year of initial concept development for integrated green infrastructure throughout the watershed, we are ready to move to the next stage. We are seeking funding to further develop designs for Phase 1 of the project, which includes improvements to Panther Hollow Lake, the development of large-scale green infrastructure in Junction Hollow, and multi-modal and trail connections between the park and the surrounding areas.

Ped-Bike Committee Board Report.

As submitted by Marshall Hershberg, co-chair

At its May 11th meeting, the SHUC Bike-Ped Committee covered the following topics:

1. Updated the members, including two new attendees, about contacts made with bicycle activists/advocates in Eastern communities: Mayor Pergamat of Churchill Borough; Borough Manager Brown of Braddock. Both appreciated our outreach and look forward to follow-up contacts with the Committee.
2. Discussed Rich Feder's and Marshall Hershberg's exploratory walks to get a better idea of the actual "lay of the land" of our proposed Forward/Murray/Pocussett/Saline bike trail. We concluded that, we could identify specific, potentially feasible places where the trail could go, despite significant challenges. The walks and challenges made the engineering study we have requested from the City even more imperative.
3. Determined that the idea of organizing an interesting, but relatively mild, Committee-sponsored and publicized group ride through key parts of Squirrel Hill was an idea we should pursue. Several members volunteered to suggest routes of moderate length for a Sunday-morning ride. (Since the meeting, I have received a couple of good suggestions and am following up on them. One tentative date is Sunday morning, June 11th.
4. Further discussion of pedestrian concerns – this included the idea of initiating action by offering some form of positive notice to individual homeowners, or several on a given block, who have improved the safety of their sidewalks. This notice could be publicized, with permission, and would set an example for other homeowners to meet their responsibilities. It would also provide occasion to emphasize the Committee's commitment to pedestrian safety, access, etc., as well as to bicycling interests.
5. Next meeting scheduled for Thursday, June 8th.

Magazine Committee.

Submitted by Britt Reints, editor

Outstanding:

\$2,400 from Spring issue
\$1,895 from Holiday issue
\$485 Fall

Collected:

\$2130 in last month

Summer Issue Ads:

\$12,055
8 new annual contracts

Already sold for fall:

\$10,130

Summer issue goes to bed Wednesday 5/24 and should be on the streets first week of June. (May be a couple days delay because of holiday weekend.)

Executive Director's Report
Submitted by Marian Lien

Final article for the New American Economy slated for this Fall.

Proposal from Squirrel Hill Historical Society: asking SHUC support for \$500 of \$2000 for historical marker to be placed near the intersection of Beechwood Blvd and Federal Hill street (application approved by the Commonwealth in April) describing the birthplace of Simon Girty, a Revolutionary period figure with demonstrated importance to regional history from the earliest white settler days. The history of the family predates and informs the racial, economic, and political situation on the Indian frontier when American Independence was declared in 1776.

Whole day proposed in September celebrating the unveiling of marker.

Night Market begins June 17th, August 26th, September 23rd, need volunteers for SHUC table.

BB&B begins June 18th to August 13th

Treasure Dinner will be on November 2nd.