

# SQUIRREL HILL URBAN COALITION



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Board Meeting, June 20, 2023, 6:30 PM,  
In-Person - Room 220 JCC  
Amended Meeting Minutes

SHUC Board Members: Ray Baum, Dalia Belinkoff, Justin Berk, Guy Costa, Lori Fitzgerald, Heather Graham, Barbara Grover, Marshall Hershberg, Melissa Hiller, Mardi Isler, Paul Katz, Lisa Murphy, Joseph Ott, Jon Prince, Mary Shaw, Lisa Steindel, Erik Wagner Staff: Maria Cohen

Guests: Scott McMurtry, Councilmember Barbara Warwick, Sean Harrington, Chris Zurawsky, Margaret Fischer, Andrei Karsh, Jon Salmans, Justin (5616 Marlborough Rd.), Michele Feingold, Kelsey Leonard, Vlad Kaplin, David Auth, Ron Gaydos, McWasko (7533 Graymore Rd.), SB Campbell, Liz Healey, Marcie Ideghat, Lawrence M. Huyherzt (614 Cascade Rd.), Stephanie Bruninghaus, Nicholas Izzo, Sarah Fisher-Barthlomeus, Sean Crist, John Katz, Bill Isler, Hal Coffey, Anna Fisher

Welcome

1. Roll Call - Maria
  - a. Announce Guests
2. Action Items
  - a. Approval of New Board Member. Lisa Steindel motioned to approve David Vatz for the SHUC Board, Paul Katz seconded the motion. The Motion Carried.
  - b. Approval of May board meeting minutes: Dalia Belinkoff motioned to approve the May minutes, Erik Wagner seconded the motion. The motion carried.
3. President's Report
  - a. JAA Support Letter Request – Ray Baum – JAA owns a campus of approximately 15 acres behind the Riverview Apartments. The JAA sold to Continental Senior Communities. Continental is proposing to demolish the unused buildings. Current residents will not be affected. Continental agreed to set up a task force during construction. The group is requesting a special exception for two assisted living facilities next to each other. Jon motioned to approve the variance allowing two assisted living facilities be within 800 feet of each other with the addition of a task force including DCP, Summerset. Councilmember Warwick's team and SHUC. Lisa Steindel seconded the motion, the motion carried.
  - b. Irish Center Support Letter Request – Ray Baum recused himself from the discussion and removed himself from the room.

- i. Zoning Variance Requests: Type of request: variance code section: 911.02 multi-unit residential is not permitted in the parks (p) zoning district.
- ii. Type of request: variance code section: 915.02.a.1.e retaining walls must be 10' or less, retaining wall greater than 10' proposed.
- iii. Type of request: variance code section: 905.01.c maximum building height of 40' (3 stories) permitted), 87'-10" (8 stories) proposed.
- iv. Type of request: variance code section: 905.01.c maximum floor area ratio permitted is 1:1, far of 1.33:1 proposed.

Speakers were called on by the chair based on their position of pro or con of the variances.

Pro: Kelsey Leonard (Squirrel Hill resident) – support multi-unit development. The more housing options the better. She doesn't feel that there will be a big increase in traffic. Our community should easily support the increase.

Con: Ron Gatos (Squirrel Hill resident) – The height is excessive. The floor area ratio is debatable. It could set a precedence. This should not be built in a Parks district. The environmental impact study is not complete.

Pro: Vlad Kaplan – The Walnut Capital building is 10 stories and located in the park near by, this is OK.

Con: Resident – There are empty units in the Walnut Capital building. A building like this should not be built in a pristine park.

Pro: Nick Smith – We do not have high quality housing in the East End. Nick supports this with 162 units. All groups can live next to the Park. This should not increase traffic. We need more diversity in the East End and to make it affordable.

Con: Resident: Not sure how the complex will increase diversity. When you see the 3D model, you can see how large the development is, too large for the site.

Pro: David Ott – David is very interested in the environment concerns and is very supportive of this project.

Con: Sarah – This is not part of the park but it is zoned park. There are 182 parking spaces for 162 units. Concern that this will have an impact on parking in the park and the park in general. Suggestion that there be single family homes in the park instead.

Councilmember Barb Warwick: All written comments are being forwarded to zoning.

Craft is deciding whether or not to purchase the space based upon the outcome. There is concern about traffic gaps. The community is divided.

Question: Can we request a 3D view from the developer to see the impact from different points of reference in the park?

Discussion on the variances: Apartments and higher density homes are the best way to ensure low environmental impact. The vitality of our neighborhood relies on having good housing.

Concern about pedestrian safety is legitimate. The task force should work with the developer going forward to ensure safety. DOMI will not spend time on a traffic study until after zoning is approved.

Most likely there would be a need for an increased retaining wall.

A number of board members were split on variances. Willing to support the multi unit permit but not the large physical size. It will require residence to have a car. Some could see a smaller scale project. Some members are supportive of high-density housing but believe this park space should be preserved. There is a lack of sidewalks and pedestrian safety.

Concerns voiced included integrity of park, safety, access, lack of affordability?

Councilmember Barb Warwick – Arriving at a community benefit program would be challenging given all of the petitions going around. There has not been a task force established going forward. If there is a yes at the zoning board, then we would need a task force for community input.

Built Committee Chair: It is an inherently a more difficult to build on this site. Will it just sit there and be an eye soar or will there be another development? Most concerns come from the scale and size of the proposed project. There is also an access concern.

Lori Fitzgerald moved to support for multiuse residential in the park zoning district. David Vatz seconded the motion. The motion carried, 7 in favor; 5 opposed.

David motioned to approve Variance 2: Increase building height from 3 ft are 8 ft. Lori Fitzgerald seconded the motion. The motion failed, 5 in favor; 7 opposed.

David Vatz motion to approve Variance 3: Increase in the floor size by 1/3; floor ratios Lori Fitzgerald seconded the motion, the motion failed, 5 in favor; 7 opposed.

Lori motioned to approve Variance 4: Motion to support a larger than 10 ft retaining wall David seconded the motion, the motion carried, 11 in favor ; 1 opposed.

The Chair, Mardi Isler, adjourned the meeting