



SQUIRREL HILL URBAN COALITION BOARD MEETING

May 20, 2025 Minutes

JCC Room 318

Board Members: Ray Baum, Dalia Belinkoff, Jacquelyn Cynkar, Melissa Hiller, Mardi Isler, Rachel Lecrone, Lisa Murphy, Vida Passero, Karen Oosterhouse, Mary Shaw, Lisa Steindel, Erik Wagner

Guests: Nolan Grimes, Khlood Salmon, Helen Wilson, Tony Indovina, Councilmember Barbara Warwick

Welcome

1. Roll Call
 - a. Announce guests
2. Action Items
 - a. Approve March 2025 minutes of Board meeting - Motion to approve Martha Isler; Seconded Lisa Steindel, All in favor
 - b. Acknowledge lack of April 2025 minutes
3. President's Report
 - a. Children's Institute - Children's Institute wanted to expand approx. 30 years ago. There were 2 houses left. They decided that the House on Deniston was in disrepair, and they wanted to tear it down. At the time the compromise was to keep the two homes and that local neighborhood children could use the playground. The Children's Institute went through the process with the city but did not notify neighbors in a way that the neighbors understood what was happening. The house has been torn down. The Children's Institute is planning to meet with the neighbors about what will happen with space. They shared that the plan is for it to be a green space.
 - b. Neighborhood Grant - Unfortunately we did not secure the Neighborhood Planning grant in this round. There was \$20 Million in funding and there were very compelling requests for over \$40 Million. Although our SW

representative went to bat for us and thought that our request was very compelling, we did not receive funding she highly suggested that we reapply when the application reopens in July. We are planning to meet in the next few weeks to go over ways to improve the application.

- c. PRT- PRT intends to reduce its routes, increase the fair and more.
- d. Wightman Traffic Safety Project - Wightman, Beacon and Darlington Traffic Calming. There was a plan in 2010 to put a boulevard tree plan. The closure of two bridges has increased traffic.

4. Financials/Treasurer's Report
Beginning Balance: \$31,237.86

Deposits: Lunar NY refund, Magazine ads and winter donor

Expenses: \$6k layout and editing

Ending Balance: \$20,046.68

5. Executive Director's Report

- a. PRT comment period - PRT is facing a severe budget deficit of \$100 M for 2026. They are requesting funding from the state for support prior to sharing this with the public PRT started a bus line redesign initiative. Even with the proposed changes that will greatly impact service for neighboring communities including Hazelwood and Greenfield and a proposed rate increase, PRT is still facing a huge loss without this funding support. The public comment period has been from May - June. There is a final meeting at the Convention Center on Thursday, June 12th. We are drafting a letter of support for funding, and I signed up for public comment at 10:15 am that day. You are also welcome to comment on your own. You can sign up through the PRT website to make comments. Send letters to Rep Frankel and Senator Costa. We can also contact the 4 Republican reps. The case could be made for the business district and economic impact. It should be a non-partisan issue. Transit needs to be fast, frequent and easy to use. Airport flyer is the other route that we might lose which will make it much more challenging for students. The new buses are very big and can't fit on all roads. The larger buses caused the waves on Murray Ave.
- b. Resource Fair - As some might be aware by the suggestion of Commander Vinansky, SHUC is planning to partner with our local Squirrel Hill Library to host a resource fair for our underserved and homeless community members. A lot of thoughtful questions that we want to make sure that we work on so

According to Pittsburgh's Light of Life Rescue Mission website:

Of Allegheny county's homeless population has increased by 24% since 2022

Of the vulnerable men, women and children in Allegheny County:

32% have been diagnosed with a mental health condition

23% are chronically homeless

34% is made up by women

3,122 homeless children were reported for the 2020-2021 school year

38% of domestic violence victims become homeless at some point in their lives

1,300 evictions per month on average are reported

Fortunately, Taylor Lee, who is our new head librarian, has set up many similar programs and service fairs, making this an easier lift for all of us. The Main Library in Oakland has a neighborhood employment hub.

- c. Neighborhood Planning Grant Update - Unfortunately we did not secure the Neighborhood Planning grant in this round. There was \$20 Million in funding and there were very compelling requests for over \$40 Million. Although our SW representative went to bat for us and thought that our request was very compelling, we did not receive funding she highly suggested that we reapply when the application reopens in July. We are planning to meet in the next few weeks to go over ways to improve the application.
- d. Bloomerang Volunteer platform - Bloomerang our CRM/Donor Management platform offers an incredible platform for volunteer management. It offers ways to contact volunteers, send reminders, categorize the type of volunteer activities a volunteer enjoys and much more. This would be an incredibly streamlined approach to getting to know our volunteers, managing them well and having the best possible experiences for volunteers. The cost is 1400 annually for 250 and \$1900 for 500. It is something worth investing in.

e. Website Designer Update - SHUC put out an RFP for an updated website. The cost has gone up significantly since the last time we updated our site in 2020. We were also able to get that site pro bono. The cost will most likely be \$15 - \$20k. There are ways to look at going through a more step by step process and breaking the cost out step by step. My favorite team is Benjamin Kostenbader and Dot Foundry. I recommend that we have more in-depth conversations with this group.

6. Old Business

7. New Business

- a. Emails
- b. Councilmember Warwick spoke with the businesses about becoming a BID. They will organize a meeting of all of the businesses to get the thoughts of the businesses and business improvement options.

There are two upcoming budget meetings.

8. Special Presentation: Jan Raether – Wightman Traffic Safety Project

Motion to Adjourn Dalia Belinkoff