



The Philadelphia Art
Commission
Established 1911

Minutes The Philadelphia Art Commission Wednesday, March 4, 2020 - 9:30 a.m. 1515 Arch Street – Room 18-029

Alan Greenberger
Chair

José Almiñana

Carmen Febo San Miguel

Members present: Alan Greenberger, Jose Alminana, Carmen Febo-San Miguel, Steven Hartner, **Joe Laragione?**, Raed Nasser, Natalie Nixon, Robert Roesch, Mario Zacharjasz

Meeting of the Philadelphia Art Commission

These meeting minutes were written in June 2020 due to the Stay at Home Order that was issued by the City in response to the COVID-19 health crisis. The minutes are based on an audio recording of the meeting's proceedings.

Chairperson Greenberger called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. He acknowledged that the February 5, 2020 meeting minutes were just being circulated, and therefore began with the Sign Committee Report.

Sign Committee Report

There were 8 sign recommendations given by the Sign Committee from their February 19, 2020 review.

1. 23-20

Masala Kitchen

1220 Walnut Street

2. 24-20

Masala Kitchen

2004 Chestnut Street

3. 25-20

CVS

1201 Walnut Street

4. 26-20

Industrious

907 (833) Market Street

5. 2-20

Miles Mac Recreation Center

736 North 36th Street

One Parkway Building
1515 Arch St.
13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

215-683-4674
artcommission@phila.gov

6. 27-20
Corepower Yoga
1616 Walnut Street

7. 28-20
Sugar Bar Salon
214 S. 20th Street (2000 Walnut Street)

8. 29-20
The Union League Garage
1415 Sansom Street (1416 Chestnut Street)

Chairperson Greenberger asked if there was a motion to accept the recommendations. Upon the motion made by Commissioner Nasser and seconded by Commissioner Zacharjasz, the Commission voted to approve by unanimous vote (9-0).

Administrative Approval

1. 38-20
Retaining Wall Replacement
Mastery Charter Mann Elementary School
5376 West Berks Street

Staff Director Bill Burke presented details concerning the school's retaining wall repairs. The original field stone wall needed replacement and concrete was used for the repair work. However, the wall cannot be seen from street.

Chairperson Greenberger asked if there was a motion to accept the recommendation. Upon the motion made by Commissioner Nasser and seconded by Commissioner Zacharjasz, the Commission voted to endorse the administrative approval by unanimous vote (9-0).

Presentations

1. 256-19
ADA Improvements
Tasker Morris Station
Broad Street Line

Project representative Kevin R. from Sowinski Sullivan begins presentation.

The speaker summarized the review process thus far, which included conceptual approval previously from the Art Commission and then Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) approval followed. The proposal now incorporates comments from both meetings. Presentation slides were referenced as the presenter described the station location at the northeast corner of Broad and Morris Streets. The new elevator's relationship to Broad Street, and specifically the sightlines down Broad Street, and its proximity to the crosswalk are critical. There are many site constraints for placement of the new headhouse and options were explored for different elevator types to find the best size and fit for the given location. A structural column was eliminated in response to comments at the conceptual review, and the Streets Department has no objections

to the proposed location. SEPTA has agreed to stainless steel and clear glass for some of the materials. In terms of materials, there is a need to balance a visual connection through the headhouse with screening from the elements.

Commissioner Nixon asked for clarity about how much distance is between the headhouse base and street curb line. There is about 18" which allows for 6' of clearance for the walking zone on the sidewalk. In terms of placement on the sidewalk, the distance between residential stoops and the new headhouse and the distance between cars on the street and the headhouse were both considered.

There were additional questions from commissioners about the details of the glass block, which will be mortar-less and held in place with gaskets. Also, the height of the structure's base was reduced based on previous comments. Commissioner Greenberger asked for clarity about how far east the structure moved since the conceptual presentation. The response was about two feet. Its placement is now limited by the existing tunnel structure.

There was discussion regarding the structure's panels. The design team will work with the PHC for restoration and painting of the historic cast iron guardrail. Also, the granite curb color will match the historic materials as best as possible.

Hearing no more questions, Commissioner Greenberger stated that he appreciates the modifications that were made and recognizes that placing the headhouse any farther east is not feasible. He acknowledged that the team is working with a difficult situation and called for a motion.

Upon motion by Mr. Roesch, seconded by Ms. Febo-San Miguel the members of the commission voted to recommend final approval of the proposed infrastructure as presented by unanimous vote (9-0).

2. 237-17
Bridge Design Changes
Penn Medicine Tower
1 Convention Avenue

Project attorney Ron Patterson and Chris West, a representative from the design team, were present to speak to the project.

Ron P. introduced the presentation, stating that the project timeline is getting closer for replacing the temporary pedestrian bridges with the final bridges. Today the team will be presenting design changes to two bridges, where the 34th Street bridge meets the HUP building face as well as where the SEPTA bridge meets the station.

Chris W. continued the presentation and reminded the commission that the bridges proposal had been before the Art Commission previously, about two years ago. Presentation slides were then referred to as existing views were shared.

The bridge changes across 34th Street were then discussed. Views of the previously approved bridge plans were compared to the design changes. Changes were necessary due to technical and code reasons. Architecturally the bridge continues the language of the new pavilion building but becomes more neutral and simpler when it becomes an extension on the face of HUP. The overhead extension encloses a circulation ramp. One structural support column for the new extension piece is within the street right-of-way on the sidewalk. Overall, 26' of the overhead extension encroaches over the right-of-way. The height above the sidewalk of the new arcade that is being created is about 12'. Commissioner Greenberger clarified that the reason the proposal is coming before the Art Commission is due to the right-of-way encroachments. Ron P. added that there is also a need to amend encroachment ordinance.

The presenter continued to discuss changes to the SEPTA bridge. He compared the previously approved design with the new design changes. While the design team had hoped to better integrate the bridge with existing station, this turned out not to be possible. Some of SEPTA station is already in the right-of-way, and sections of the new bridge are also in the right-of-way. Elements are generally farther out into the street than the design team would have preferred. Similar to the 34th Street bridge, this is being heard at the Art Commission because it is in the right-of-way. For clarification, the sidewalk width is not changing and the pedestrian path remains continuous. The architectural language of the SEPTA station architecture is being used for the new elevator and stair elements. There is an expectation that the SEPTA station itself will change in the future, which impacts new bridge design. The goal is to be able to have the bridge remain when station improvements occur in the future (however, there are no current plans for improvements).

Hearing no more questions, Commissioner Greenberger called for a motion. Upon motion by Ms. Nixon, seconded by Commissioner Zacharjasz, the members of the commission voted to recommend final approval of the proposed infrastructure as presented by unanimous vote (9-0).

3. 40-20
New Building
1701 Race Street

Project attorney Stephanie Boggs and Kelly Somers, a representative from the design team, were present to speak to the project. There was a small delay while technical difficulties with the presentation were resolved.

Ms. Boggs introduced the project as a phased development that requires adjusting lot lines and is being heard at the Art Commission because it is within the Benjamin Franklin Parkway Buffer Area. The developer spoke briefly about some of the zoning processes and leases needed for the entire development. He clarified that only Phase I of the development is being presented and reviewed today. Commissioner Greenberger asked the development team if the Phase I design would or would not remain as proposed today should the intent of future phases change. The developer confirmed that Phase I is independent from any future phases and the intent is for the design of Phase I to remain as presented.

Ms. Sommers then proceeded with the presentation. The project site is on a surface parking lot behind the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. The Parkway Buffer Area has a height

limit of 245'. In terms of site context, the existing high-rise towers nearby on 17th Street create a "street canyon" effect and multiple surface parking lots degrade the pedestrian environment. Within this context, the proposal aims to knit together the vibrancy of Center City with the Logan Square neighborhood community and create a better pedestrian experience for this end of the Parkway. Massing organization began with placing the tower as far as possible from the cathedral, and its form shifted in order to open up views and provide relief from the street canyon condition.

The landscape plan was referred to as the site design was detailed. The site design holds the urban edge at the corner of Race and 17th Streets. The plaza includes landscaping to soften the building edges and to create a quiet arrival point for future residents. There is a retail anchor towards the more public edge of the project along Race Street which will also help to activate the plaza. Back of house services are located towards the northeast of the site. 273 units are included in the tower and the amenity level is located on the top floor. There is one level of below-grade parking for the project. Finally, a mid-block connection to the plaza is created and the massing of the tower steps back at the upper amenity level. The project's architecture is not meant to compete with the cathedral, but rather to provide a neutral background for it. The "pleats" in tower's elevation are intended to break down the scale of the building so not to present a single sheet of glass behind the cathedral.

The presentation continued to the podium design. Scale and activity are key components for creating a vibrant public realm while the masonry materials and punched openings relate to the cathedral's architecture. Roman brick with a linear expression and a subtle mix of colors will be used.

Commissioners then began questions and comments. Commissioner Greenberger asked and received confirmation that the tower slab edges were covered with aluminum panels. Commissioner Roesch remarked that the retail edge could be softened to give more to the pedestrian realm.

Commissioner Almiñana began a discussion about the tower's elevations. He requested that sun studies for this project be provided. Commissioner Zacharjasz inquired about how reflective the type of glass is that is being proposed. The design team responded that it is not highly reflective but does provide some reflectivity to conceal interior activity and should be neutral in terms of color. Commissioner Nixon stated that the relationship of the proposal to the cathedral is unclear and more of the warm vocabulary of the cathedral should be incorporated. She specifically asked if the plaza paving material could relate more to the masonry base. Commissioner Almiñana built on this comment, stating that there is little continuity between the cathedral and the proposal and reiterated that more of the warmth of cathedral is needed in proposal. Commissioner Almiñana continued observing that the tower reads as an office tower, partly because of the "coolness" of the materials pallet. He commented that the building's four elevations should respond to their environmental orientation appropriately, further explaining that the western façade will get full sun and there may be energy performance concerns. Lastly, he inquired about how the building's elevation design helps to prevent bird strikes.

Commissioner Greenberger summarized comments by stating that the proposal makes some good urbanistic decisions and the general distribution of the massing and various building

components is strong. He asked about the project's parking obligations, and the development team responded that the existing surface parking lot will be used until Phase II and then additional underground parking will be built in phase II. Further clarification was then needed that today's review does not include any future phases. He continued to summarize that oftentimes new construction located near historic buildings tends to be too neutral, too slick, too deferential. Reinforcing previous comments, the western wall may be too deferential and in addition is going to receive intense, low-angled sunlight down the Parkway. Therefore, more texture on western elevation could benefit the project both in terms of environmental concerns and towards achieving a more residential and "warm" architectural gesture.

Hearing no more questions or comments, Commissioner Greenberger called for a motion. Upon motion by Mr. Roesch, seconded by Ms. Febo-San Miguel, the members of the commission voted for conceptual approval of the proposed building by unanimous vote (8-0). Commissioner Nasser abstained from this item.

4. 41-20
New Building
Chamounix Equestrian Center
98 Chamounix Drive

Kareem Rosser and Alex Rice were present to speak to the project.

Mr. Rosser introduced the project and explained the program's goals to expand to serve Philadelphia youth year-round and therefore his organization is seeking to build a new arena facility.

Mr. Rice then described the location of the new facility in West Fairmount Park in greater detail. The proposal is for a new indoor riding facility adjacent to the existing outdoor arena, doubling the program's capacity. The new facility includes restroom facilities, covered tack area, and spectator viewing area. Materials include a corrugated aluminum siding and roofing for an agricultural appearance. There is a horizontal wood base in the tack area under the canopy.

Commissioner Roesch asked about the ground material, which will be sand and will need to be watered down to control dust. Commissioner Zacharjasz asked if the spectator space was conditioned. Ideally it would be, but details about the area are still being confirmed including ADA accessibility. Clarity in the plan drawings is needed. Commissioner Nixon asked about the yellow color of the exterior material, as the existing color pallet of the facility is more subtle. Rendering may read too bright, but color should be more earth-toned and material samples should be provided at the next review.

Commissioner Roesch began a discussion about sustainability efforts and asked about the potential for solar panels, which will be investigated as the project is further developed. Stormwater management was discussed.

Commissioner Nixon asked about the lighting scheme and if there were any security concerns. There were additional cautionary remarks about the ventilation system not being too loud or distracting.

A discussion about funding followed. Some capital is already secured, and a capital campaign will launch this summer.

Commissioner Almiñana asked about replacing existing trees, and the next review should include a tree report. The civil engineering component needs more details and should try to integrate stormwater into the landscape design. An educational component to any sustainability measures could also be incorporated. These elements could translate into fundraising opportunities.

Commissioner Febo-San Miguel asked for more details about their youth programming, and specifically if it's open to all Philadelphians.

The project's timeline was discussed. The design team stated that they will need a few more months before returning to the Art Commission for their next review. They hope to break ground in the spring of 2021.

Upon summarizing the comments, Commissioner Greenberger noted that the next presentation should define what is going to be built as compared to what will potentially be built, so that commissioners clearly understand what they are approving.

Hearing no more questions or comments, Commissioner Greenberger called for a motion. Upon motion by Mr. Nasser, seconded by Ms. Nixon, the members of the commission voted for conceptual approval of the proposed facility by unanimous vote (9-0).

Meeting Minutes

Before moving to the last agenda item, Chairperson Greenberger asked if there was a motion to approve or discuss the minutes from February 5, 2020. A date correction was noted.

Upon the motion made by Mr. Roesch and Seconded by Ms. Febo-San Miguel, the Commission voted to approve the meeting minutes from February by unanimous vote (9-0).

Presentations

5. 42-20

Renovation

Wanamaker Plaza

100 Penn Square East

Chris Tantillo a representative from the design team, as well as other members of the development team, were present to speak to the project.

Mr. Tantillo introduced the project. He described interior work that was previously completed and now the exterior plaza renovation is the remaining phase of the project. The goal of the project is to open up the entry sequence and view corridor back to the building. Plaza renovations include fresh landscaping, new light poles and bollard lighting, new benches, dropping the height of the raised berm area, replace paving, and new signage. Design

coordination with the Dilworth Plaza renovation was also a consideration. In addition, a staccato rhythm present in the interior design is carried out into plaza paving and planting bed. Lastly, a history timeline plaque is part of the renovations.

Clarification about how much of the work is in the public right-of-way was requested. There is an easement from the City to Wanamaker's for the "hambone" shaped planting area. The need to replace all the trees was questioned. An alternative could be to "limb them up" as they represent many years of growth that would be hard to replace. The raised wall will be lowered, but the grade where the trees are will remain.

The light quality was discussed, as it may be too bright and misdirected by the selected fixture. The lighting should avoid glare for pedestrians.

Parking at the street edge of the plaza is unfortunate but will remain. Similarly, a well-marked pedestrian crossing area will improve the safety of this area immensely. Follow-up with the Streets Department is needed.

The "Wanamaker" sign letters were then discussed, as commissioners agreed they needed design revisions. They encouraged the design team to reduce their size as they dominate the space. They should not take away from the viewshed to the building. Their location should be moved more towards the center of the planting bed for their protection. The font should also be reconsidered, as either more similar to or more dissimilar from the building's facade "Wanamaker" lettering. Consider using the paving design as "wayfinding signage" to better indicate where the building entrance is and to help avoid people trampling the plants.

Street furniture was suggested as part of the plaza renovation. Movable seating and tables in addition to the proposed benches will help to transform the way in which the plaza space is used. Commissioner Nixon suggested undertaking time of day studies to better understand how the plaza is used and what enhancements it may need in the future.

Hearing no more questions or comments, Commissioner Greenberger called for a motion. Upon motion by Mr. Almiñana, seconded by Mr. Roesch, the members of the commission voted for conceptual approval of the proposed plaza by unanimous vote (9-0).

The Art Commission meeting was adjourned by the Commission Chairperson Greenberger at 12:13 PM. The April 2020 meeting was eventually cancelled due to the COVID-19 health crisis.