



The Philadelphia Art
Commission
Established 1911

Minutes The Philadelphia Art Commission Wednesday, July 1, 2020 - 9:30 a.m. Remote Zoom Meeting – Hosted by DPZ

Alan Greenberger
Chair

José Almiñana

Carmen Febo San Miguel

Commission members present: Alan Greenberger, Jose Alminana, Carmen Febo-San Miguel, Steve Hartner, Joe Laragione, Raed Nasser, Natalie Nixon, Robert Roesch, Mario Zacharjasz

Meeting of the Philadelphia Art Commission

Bridget Collins-Greenwald

Joe Laragione

Chairperson Greenberger called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. introducing everyone to the remote Philadelphia Art Commission (AC) meeting.

Raed Nasser

Natalie Nixon

Beige Berryman – staff member of the Art Commission – introduced the Zoom platform and remote Art Commission Meeting process, noting that the meeting is being recorded, and by participating in this meeting you are giving consent to be recorded. Ms. Berryman noted the meeting video and meeting agenda and material items will also be posted on the AC website at:

Robert Roesch

[\(https://www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-art-commission/\)](https://www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-art-commission/).

Mario Zacharjasz

C. Beige Berryman
Staff

*Ms. Berryman stated a few instructions for the public. Participants may comment on agenda items during the meeting, and comments should be asked through the “Q&A” function, found on the right-hand side of the screen. Any member of the public who would like to ask a question or provide comments should type in the box and click “send all.” This is important so everyone can see the comment or question. Art Commission staff will then read the comments out loud during the public comment period. If you have submitted comments through email, Art Commission staff will read these emails out loud during the comment period. In addition, if you’d like to speak, please use the “raise hand” feature and staff will be able to unmute you during the public comment period. Lastly, if you are participating by phone, you can activate the raise hand feature by pressing * 9 and staff will unmute you at the appropriate time.*

Previous Meeting Minutes

Chairperson Greenberger began the meeting by stating that the commission needed to catch up on the meeting minutes from March 4, 2020, which was the last session run by previous Art Commission staff person William Burke, as well as last month’s June 3, 2020 meeting minutes.

An approval motion of previous meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Febo-San Miguel and Seconded by Commissioner Roesch.

Chairperson Greenberger added that for the more incidental agenda items, he would ask the commissioners for a “voice vote” for approval or opposition. If anyone is opposed, he would then ask Ms. Berryman for a “roll call” vote of commissioners. Chairperson Greenberger noted this would be done for meeting minutes, the Sign Committee report, and for the administrative approvals. For the presentation projects a roll call vote will be taken.

After this note, Chairperson Greenberger stated that there was a motion to approve the two previous meeting minutes and seconded, then proceeded with an all in favor, the Commission voted unanimously. Hearing no opposition, the vote unanimously passed.

Sign Committee Report

Given that the commission had been able to review the signs applications and recommendations from June 17, 2020, Chairperson Greenberger asked if there was a motion to approve the Sign Committee recommendations. A motion was made by Commissioner Zacharjasz and seconded by Commissioner Nasser. Hearing no comments, Chairperson Greenberger proceeded with an all in favor, the Commission voted unanimously. Hearing no opposition, the vote unanimously passed.

Administrative Items

1. Center City Banner Series

Various locations

Review Type: Fixture extending over the public right-of-way

Submitted by: Center City District

Ms. Berryman explained that the Commission is reviewing this because the fixtures extend over the public right-of-way. These banners are seasonal and don't include any text or refer to any specific event.

2. Modular Classroom Addition at the Meredith School

725 S. 5th Street

Review Type: Alteration of City Property

Submitted by: OZ Collaborative

This is a detached modular classroom addition to be located on the parking lot of the Meredith School. The modular classroom is a temporary structure. It is not attached to any existing buildings, and does not impede the visibility of the existing mural.

3. Northeast Banner Series

Sections of Castor, Cottman, and Bustleton, and Rising Sun Avenue commercial corridors

Review Type: Fixture extending over the public right-of-way

Submitted by: Mural Arts Philadelphia

The Commission is reviewing this because they are fixtures extend over the public right-of-way. There has been a very robust community process for these banners.

Discussion begins at minute mark (00:04:53) in video.

Commissioner Alminana raised a question regarding administrative item number two, the modular classroom addition at the Meredith School. Commissioner Alminana asked if the community had been consulted for the location of the modular classroom. Ms. Berryman replied that she'll have to report back to the Commission to answer this question.

Commissioner Roesch stated that he worries about the trailers becoming permanent and then asked if there is a method for limiting how long a trailer can sit in the parking lot.

Chairperson Greenberger added this structure most likely will not be used just for one year but rather could have a three-to-five-year use. Commissioner Roesch noted the previous points and recommended the Art Commission could ask that the School District come back for a second approval after a period of time to have additional conversations about the temporary or permanent nature of the structure.

Commissioner Febo-San Miguel mentioned that her understanding of administrative approvals is that they are usually minor repairs and that this project is more substantial. Ms. Berryman responded that her understanding was because of the temporary nature of the project that it fell under an administrative review level, but she's open to being corrected. Commissioner Zacharjasz added that he agreed with Commissioner Febo-San Miguel. It should be reviewed by the full commission and not administratively. Chairperson Greenberger asked if the general consensus of the Commission is that they should exclude the item from the administrative agenda, to which the Commission agreed.

Chairperson Greenberger asked about the timing of installation for the modular unit, specifically if the unit is intended to be used at the start of school in September. Ms. Berryman said that she would follow up on the installation timeline. Chairperson Greenberger mentioned that the Commission doesn't have a meeting until September, therefore, he's uncomfortable holding the item, as that has the potential to delay the opening of the school year. Chairperson Greenberger suggested to remove this from the administrative agenda and return to it after the other presentations on the agenda. Chairperson Greenberger requested that the Art Commission receive information from the School District about the urgency of having this reviewed before September.

Commissioner Alminana asked if there were any documents submitted, such as plans, that note when the trailer will be installed, recommending this info could help everyone understand the project context. Ms. Berryman replied, yes, plans were submitted and added that she'll have the staff show them towards the end of the meeting.

Having pulled item number two from the administrative agenda, Chairperson Greenberger asked if there is a motion to approve the banners both in the Northeast as well as Center City. Motion made by Commissioner Febo-San Miguel and seconded by Commissioner Alminana. Hearing no comments, Chairperson Greenberger proceeded with all in favor, the Commission voted unanimously. Hearing no opposition, the vote unanimously passed.

Presentations

1. **Wissahickon Transportation Center (Main Street and Ridge Avenue)** **New transportation facility**

Review Type: Construction paid for by City funds
Submitted by: Sowinski Sullivan

Presentation begins at minute mark (00:14:05) in video.

Kevin Rocky of Sowinski Sullivan, introduced the presentation. The Wissahickon Transportation Center is one of the SEPTA's busiest transportation facilities, with 11 bus routes serving approximately 7,000 riders each week. The existing transportation center is located along Ridge Avenue just west of Wissahickon Creek and just east of the intersection of Ridge and Main Street. The proposed site is the former Restaurant Depot just west of the current Wissahickon Transportation Center.

The key design features for the new project address a major issue with the existing facility, the passenger experience. The site has been organized into two "island" structures for boarding. Passengers will disembark and board from the larger island and busses will be able to circulate to eight different boarding locations around its perimeter. The larger island includes a rain garden and continuous canopy coverage for users. The front, smaller island includes a commercial building, small supervisor's booth, and canopies. When needed, bus operators can utilize the building's break facilities. A SEPTA police sub-station is located in the building as well.

Discussion begins at minute mark (00:16:53) in video.

Chairperson Greenberger clarified the location of the rain garden, which is in the middle of the larger island. Chairperson Greenberger then informed the Commission that there are a number of letters from various civic groups about this project that would be read into the record after they address questions. He then requested clarification about the boarding locations at the main and front islands and asked about the adjacent bike path. Chairperson Greenberger asked - who boards at the front island? The applicant responded - the front island is for routes that pass by, but do not enter the transportation center. The applicant also noted that the bike path doesn't currently exist. SEPTA is designing the facility so that the bike path construction is not impacted.

Erik Schmidt, traffic engineer on the project, asked William Kunkle from SEPTA to address the question. Mr. Kunkle stated that the trail is a City project and they are just allocating space for it. Chairperson Greenberger then asked if there were fences on either side of the trail. Mr. Kunkle said that there will be a fence on the SEPTA side because they do not want people walking through an area with a high amount of bus traffic. The City will decide if the south side of the trail will have a fence. It was noted that along the PECO substation, there is an existing fence.

Commissioner Roesch asked about the width of the proposed bike path. The path was noted as 15 feet wide. Commissioner Nasser asked if there would be any security cameras

that monitor the trail. Mr. Kunkle said that decision is the City's, but the SEPTA facility will be under surveillance. Several other questions were asked including if the green roofs on the project are intensive, Mr. Kunkle said yes. Was there any attempt to do various pavement options given the amount of paving that the property is going to require? Mr. Kunkle said that it would be difficult to incorporate different pavement options due to the amount of bus traffic and the weight of the busses.

At (00:29:05), Chairperson Greenberger asked whether or not the stormwater runoff from the paved areas is being directed to the rain garden. The applicant noted that stormwater management is still being evaluated. There will have to be some engineering solutions for a portion of the runoff, the green roofs, and the rain garden. Commissioner Zacharjasz agreed with the earlier comments about the proposed trail being hidden at the bottom of the depot and becoming a dark, unsafe area. He also raised concerns about security and visibility, the location of the restrooms, and pedestrian traffic.

At (00:33:01), Commissioner Nixon asked a few questions. Is there a lighting plan? Is the trail going to be lit and who is responsible for the lighting? Are there bike racks at the depot? Will Indego bikes be located here? What's the timeline for the construction? The applicant provided responses: Lighting for the trail will be the City's responsibility, there will be covered bike racks, and there has not been coordination with Indego bikes. They're hoping to start construction toward the middle or end of 2021, and it will take approximately 18-24 months to complete. Commissioner Roesch then commented the projecting rooflines on the south corner, noting there might not be enough space for pedestrians and for busses to turn. Commissioner Zacharjasz asked if speed bumps or raised tables were being proposed to help with pedestrian safety. The applicant responded that speed bumps are not being considered at this time.

At (00:37:49), Chairperson Greenberger asked for clarification about the front island. The applicant responded that the front island works like a typical bus stop, reserved for busses that run along Ridge Avenue and have much shorter stopping periods at this location.

At (00:40:14), Commissioner Febo-San Miguel asked about the existing transportation center and shelter. The applicant responded that the existing shelter will most likely become covered bike parking but that is still being determined. Likewise, the use of the existing building is still being determined, as SEPTA is evaluating a couple different options.

At (00:42:07), Commissioner Alminana inquired about the current commercial establishment across the street, Deke's Bar-B-Que. The applicant noted that Deke's could move into the new Wissahickon Transportation Center, and that negotiations are ongoing. Commissioner Alminana asked if there would be renovations to the north side of the existing shelter on Ridge Avenue just west of the Wissahickon Creek because it currently floods. The applicant noted that they are moving that stop further west to be directly across the street from the new facility to create a sense of one large bus facility.

At (00:43:45), Commissioner Nasser asked how many meetings they had with the community. The applicant noted that at this point, they've had one large public open house

and six meetings with stakeholders, Representative Pam Delissio and the Coalition of Civics.

At (00:44:06), Commissioner Zacharjasz raised concerns about the building's elevation appearing very low and also inquired about lighting. The Commission asked what the height is of a typical bus, which is approximately 10.5 ft.

Operations will be reduced in the evening hours and focus primarily on the front island. Boarding locations will not occur on the main island during off hours.

At (00:54:13), Chairperson Greenberger asked Ms. Berryman and the staff to read into the record the numerous comments that they received. There was a summary letter submitted on behalf of several civic groups as well as a letter from State Representative Delissio.

Staff received several letters via email in advanced of the meeting, which Art Commission staff person Alex Smith read to the Commission. Mr. Smith began with a letter from State Representative Delissio, a letter from Joshua M. Cohen, Chief of Staff, of Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr., and a summary letter from the Northwest Philadelphia Coalition of Civics. All three letters requested a postponement of review of the Transportation Center until further discussions between SEPTA and the community could occur.

At (01:04:33), Chairperson Greenberger asked Art Commission staff if there were people in attendance who were requesting to speak. Several members of the public spoke including State Representative Delissio, Seth Dailey, Caroline Kelm, David Deca, and John Hunter who spoke on behalf of the Coalition of Civics. Mr. Smith stated that there were nine more questions or comments and 10 additional letters, most of which request a continuation of the project. Some state support for the project moving forward if additional coordination with SEPTA occurs. Many letters also comment on how the design does not fit within the character of the historic neighborhood, as well as ecological and environmental concerns.

Chairperson Greenberger asked the Commission for additional comments after hearing from the public and other stakeholders.

Commissioner Laragione said that there ought to be more drawings, and Commissioner Roesch agreed, and added that he did not think that the design is fully worked out. Commissioner Roesch noted his concerns about the "alleyway feeling" of the trail, the pedestrian traffic on the Ridge Avenue sidewalk, and the merging of many uses in this area. Commissioner Zacharjasz mentioned the pedestrian and bicycle access, the number of users of the adjacent intersections, and the increase in bus traffic. He requested that the new transportation center needs to better accommodate all users. Commissioner Febo-San Miguel agreed with the previous remarks from the Commission. She added that additional participation from the community is going to be critical for the success of this project. Chairperson Greenberger noted the desire for additional outreach with community stakeholders but didn't hear anybody say that they are fundamentally opposed to a transportation center here.

Chairperson Greenberger recognized that the project team has done a very good job of trying to solve some of the facility's existing problems. With regard to the space that the is designated for the bike path, the Chairperson voiced concern about the width of the trail. Chairperson Greenberger noted confusion on how the proposed and existing fencing will work. The Chairperson also remarked that the edge conditions along Ridge Avenue could be more generous, and asked about how pedestrians use the trail and how they arrive at the boarding locations safely.

At (1:45:30), Chairperson Greenberger noted this review was for concept approval only and would need to return for final approval. Chairperson Greenberger observed that the Commission did not seem ready issue a concept approval on this project because there are too many concerns. Secondly, there are a lot of community concerns warrant further discussion. Chairperson Greenberger suggested the Commission see the project at concept level review again. Further work needs to be done with the communities, and maybe with a smaller group of the Commissioners, as they've done many times with other projects before final approval.

Chairperson Greenberger asked Art Commission counsel Claudia Becker for assistance, asking if procedurally the Commission could continue this item. Ms. Becker mentioned the "60-day deemed approval" provision which might necessitate SEPTA to either waive the provision and resubmit the application for a second concept review or withdraw the application in order to stop the 60-day time limit. Follow up on next steps would be needed. An addition option would be for the Commission to disapprove the proposal. Chairperson Greenberger noted that his preference would be not to do that but rather to find solution. Commissioner Zacharjasz asked Ms. Becker to explain the "deemed approval" term. Ms. Becker responded that if there is no decision made by the Art Commission to an application, than by the 60th day after the application is filed, the Commission's decision is deemed to be approval of that application.

To be clear, Chairperson Greenberger mentioned that this is a concept approval, so the proposal has to return to the Commission for final approval. Chairperson Greenberger suggested and committed to spending some time over the summer to work with SEPTA, and also asked SEPTA to work with the community groups to review the concept design. He supports the project but concluded that the Commission is not ready to vote for approval, so he suggested that the Commission vote to continue the project.

At (01:52:29), Chairperson Greenberger asked the Commission if there is a motion for any of the following: disapproval; continue, knowing that there might be a deemed approval time restriction; or concept approval. Commissioner Roesch made a motion to continue the project and form a subcommittee; Chairperson Greenberger reiterated the motion to continue the project, necessitating a resubmittal at the concept level, and a willingness by the Commission to work with the stakeholders involved. The motion made by Commissioner Roesch was seconded by Commissioner Zacharjasz. Ms. Berryman polled Commissioners: Approved by Commissioner Alminana, Commissioner Febo-San Miguel, Commissioner Hartner, Commissioner Laragione, Commissioner Nasser, Commissioner Nixon, Commissioner Roesch, Commissioner Zacharjasz,

Commissioner Greenberger. The Commission voted to continue conceptual approval by unanimous vote (9-0).

2. 11th and Market Streets SEPTA Station Improvements

Two new street level elevators

Review Type: Construction in the right-of-way

Submitted by: Sowinski Sullivan

Presentation begins at minute mark (01:55:40) in video.

Brian Fey, of Sowinski Sullivan Architects introduced the presentation. The project proposes new headhouses for the SEPTA 11th Street station, which serve the Market Frankford Line. The goal of the project is to provide ADA accessible elevators for the station and make improvements to the existing headhouse stairs. The headhouse stairs are to remain in the same location. The work proposes new canopies and enclosures, replacing the current, at-grade structures. SEPTA will also relocate a newsstand as part of this work. The work will introduce new headhouses which will have glass canopies similar to the new elevators. The headhouses will introduce a curved roof form which picks up on the aesthetics at other stations on the Market Frankford Line including 40th Street, 31st Street, and 30th Street. The proposal also discussed initial work on signage to remain consistent with SEPTA's standards.

Discussion begins at minute mark (02:10:38) in video.

Commissioner Roesch asked about the nature of the polycarbonate roof. Does it have UV protection that will keep it from turning yellow and make it look aged with time. Mr. Fey said no, and that they've had some success with the product previously. Mr. Fey offered to provide examples of locations of where it has been installed for several years to show that it doesn't turn yellow. Commissioner Roesch complimented the work on the elevator tower and noted this project has done a great job expressing the mechanics by using a transparent exterior material. Commissioner Alminana added that he appreciated the effort on the elevator tower and wondered if having only half of it exposed at the top would help to decrease visual clutter in the public realm. Chairperson Greenberger raised the issue that the Art Commission did not approve the new stair design near Iron Hill Brewery between 11th and 12th Streets. Chairperson Greenberger observed that the same station has two different designs of headhouses across Market Street.

Commissioner Greenberger continued on to the issue of the west elevator location noting that the elevator structure consumes much of the space at the corner of the public sidewalk. Chairperson Greenberger asked if they had looked at other locations for the elevator. SEPTA noted they looked at a number of locations, but due to the current station location and utilities there are very limited areas for the elevator to be located.

Chairperson Greenberger confirmed with the Commission that the project was for conceptual approval. The Commission requested to review renderings of the elevators with more transparency at the next presentation.

William Kunkle from SEPTA noted that portions of the elevator walls are concrete for crash protection from cars jumping the curb. Chairperson Greenberger clarified that when he requested more transparency, he meant up to the crash wall. Commissioner Alminana clarified that he was objecting to the fact that only half of it is translucent and half of it is transparent. Commissioner Roesch added that he thinks the proposed renderings should show additional context. The tower should be rendered among the other existing street elements and buildings.

At (02:24:12), Mr. Smith announced that there was one public comment to be read from a member of the Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (OTIS) stating support of the project; however they noted they would like to work with SEPTA to ensure that pedestrian walking zones and circulation for all sidewalk users are maximized on both corners.

Chairperson Greenberger added that they should also dimension on future documentation what the clearances and walking zone dimensions are on the westside of the elevator.

With these conditions noted, and seeing no questions or comments from the public, Chairperson Greenberger asked, is there a motion to give concept approval. Upon the motion made by Commissioner Roesch, seconded by Commissioner Zacharjasz, Ms. Berryman polled Commissioners: Approved by Commissioner Alminana, Commissioner Febo-San Miguel, Commissioner Hartner, Commissioner Laragione, Commissioner Nasser, Commissioner Nixon, Commissioner Roesch, Commissioner Zacharjasz, Commissioner Greenberger. The Commission voted for conceptual approval by unanimous vote (9-0).

Chairperson Greenberger then revisited administrative item number two (2): Modular Classroom Addition at the Meredith School for administrative approval.

Discussion begins at minute mark (02:26:51) in video.

Chairperson Greenberger asked Ms. Berryman to display the submission materials. He reiterated that he doesn't want to delay a September opening of the school. Therefore, his suggestion is that the Commission offer a one-year approval and ask that they come back to explain the temporary or permanent use of the structure. Commissioner Zacharjasz agreed with the Chairperson.

Commissioner Febo-San Miguel said that she has an issue with this as an administrative approval and thinks that the Commission should discuss it more, Chairperson Greenberger agreed. He added that they should come back and present to the Commission a full plan, Commissioner Zacharjasz agreed. Commissioner Laragione suggested that they should present in September and offered that the exterior of the modular classroom should correspond better with the existing school building. He stated that approach wouldn't delay using it as a classroom at the start of school.

Chairperson Greenberger suggested that the Commission approve the proposal with the condition that it return in September to explain how they expect to mitigate the presence of the structure on Monroe Street. Mitigation could be anything from enhanced landscape treatments to painting the modular classroom's exterior walls. This gives them the flexibility to start school. Commissioner Alminana added that if they would create a three-foot wide planting strip along the fence and put some fast-growing canopy trees there, that would be an adequate improvement. Commissioner Nixon agreed and liked the idea of integrating some planting, then wondered if the school district might explore 3D digital printed structures in the future.

Chairperson Greenberger stated that there are several ways that they can mitigate the presence on Monroe Street. They could take Commissioner Nixon approach. They could think about landscaping. By way of accommodating them, the result is to ask them to come back at the Art Commission to explain how they are going to mitigate the structure's presence on Monroe Street, but the approval allows them to start using the classroom. Commissioner Zacharjasz mentioned that the Commission should've seen the administrative part in advance, had an opportunity to talk about it, but that they don't want to interfere with students learning, and thinks that the Commission ought to set a precedent for next time.

Seeing no questions or comments from the public, Chairperson Greenberger asked if there is there a motion to give approval, with the condition that they come back in September and tell the Commission how they're going to mitigate the presence on Monroe Street. Upon the motion made by Commissioner Alminana, seconded by Commissioner Roesch, Ms. Berryman polled Commissioners: Approved by Commissioner Alminana, Commissioner Febo-San Miguel, Commissioner Hartner, Commissioner Laragione, Commissioner Nixon, Commissioner Roesch, Commissioner Zacharjasz, Commissioner Greenberger. The Commission voted for conceptual approval by unanimous vote (8-0). Commissioner Nasser was not present for this item.

The Art Commission Meeting was adjourned by the Commission Chairperson Greenberger at 12:08 p.m.

The next Art Commission Meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, July 22, 2020 at 9:30 a.m.** via Zoom and is a Special Art Commission meeting.