



Philadelphia Art Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 13, 2023 - 9:30 AM

The Philadelphia Art
Commission
Established 1911

Robert Roesch
Chair

José Almiñana
Deborah Cahill
Carmen Febo San Miguel
Matthew Kenyatta
James Lowe
Sarah McEneaney
Raed Nasser
Pepón Osorio
Mario Zacharjasz

Members Present: José Almiñana, Deborah Cahill, Carmen Febo San Miguel, Matthew Kenyatta, Raed Nasser, Sarah McEneaney, Pepón Osorio, and Robert Roesch

MEETING OF THE PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION

Alex Smith – Director of the Art Commission – introduced the Zoom platform and remote Art Commission meeting process, noting that the meeting is being recorded and those participating in the meeting are giving their consent to be recorded. A link to the recording, will be posted on the Art Commission website after the meeting and the meeting agenda and materials can be found on the website at: (<https://www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-art-commission/>).

Alex M. Smith
Director

*Alex Smith welcomed the Commissioners and thanked everyone for a great 2023. Smith then followed with a poll of the Commission via roll call announcing a quorum, then stated a few instructions for the public. Members of the public may comment on agenda items during the meeting. When the agenda item that you are interested in is being discussed, you can use the “raise hand” feature and staff will unmute you during the public comment period. If you’re joining by phone, you can also use the hand raise feature by dialing *9 during the public comment period. If you have any submitted comments through email, staff will add those to the record.*

Chairperson Roesch called the meeting to order at the mark in video (00:02:50).

REPORT OF THE SIGN & STREETERY COMMITTEE – NOVEMBER 29, 2023

Streeter Structure Applications

First Reviews:

- 285-23**
El Camino Real
1040 N 2nd Street

Sign Applications

Second Reviews:

- 230-23**
Wells Fargo
130 S Independence Mall W (aka 601 Chestnut Street)

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

215-683-4636

www.phila.gov/departments/philadelphia-art-commission/



First Reviews:

1. **280-23**
The Philadelphian Sign Package
2401 Pennsylvania Avenue
2. **282-23**
Insomnia Cookies
1 S Broad Street
3. **281-23**
Vuori
1705 Walnut Street
4. **283-23**
Faherty
1600 Walnut Street
5. **284-23**
Bank of America
125-27 S 16th Street
6. **286-23**
UPS
1735 Market Street

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Seeing no questions or comments from the Commission or the Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion to approve the recommendations of the Sign Committee and Streeter Committee from November 29th (00:03:45).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Nasser and seconded by Commissioner Cahill.

The vote was taken by consensus.

Motion carried unanimously to approve (8-0).

ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA

1. **289-23**
Houston Playground Improvements
900 Grakyn Lane
Review Type: Minor construction on City property
Project Details: Playground rehabilitation and replacement project
Applicant: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR)

Mr. Smith reported out Philadelphia Parks and Recreation is seeking administrative approval for play equipment replacement at Houston Playground in Northwest

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Philadelphia. The project includes the removal of existing playground equipment and installation of new playground equipment, safety surfaces and benches. The project is funded by the 4th Council District. The footprint of the playground area remains the same size and in the same location with no vegetation or trees to be removed or impacted by this work.

Seeing no questions or comments from the Commission or the Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion to approve this administrative agenda item (00:05:30).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner McEaney and seconded by Commissioner Febo San Miguel.

The vote was taken by consensus.

Motion carried unanimously to approve (8-0).

PRESENTATIONS FOR FINAL REVIEW

1. 69-20

North Central Public Safety Building 2100 Diamond Street

Review Type: Construction project of new City facility

Project Details: New building construction and associated site improvements

Applicant: Philadelphia Department of Public Property (DPP)

Presenter: Ballinger

Modesto Bigas-Valedono of Ballinger, the architect of this project started the presentation (00:06:30).

Questions and comments from the Commission (00:19:10).

Commissioner Kenyatta asked about the community engagement process for this project and asked about the engagement between members of the community, the Council President's office, and the Department of Public Property.

Commissioners discussed the One Percent for Art process as well as the lighting design. Rebecca Mintz from the Lighting Practice responded to specific lighting questions.

Chairperson Roesch and Commissioner Kenyatta noted comments about the parapet and the use of the unique brick design/layout.

Several members of the public spoke to this project requesting additional community engagement and outreach.

Questions and comments from the Commission continued (00:34:00).

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The Commission requested additional public engagement occur before moving forward with final approval and asked for more details about why this location was selected initially.

Representatives noted that the site is centrally located within the police district boundaries, Diamond Street is a major arterial roadway and has two-way connections. Additionally, the location allows for sufficient parking to meet the needs of the new facility users.

Commissioners noted that the design is elegant and aligns with the corridor's historic aesthetics. The proposal provides ample outdoor amenities and shade trees.

The Commissioners requested that the Council President's office, designers, Department of Public Property, and the larger community work together to move forward with design and understanding of the location selection.

Seeing no additional questions or comments from the Commission or the Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion to continue this project, requesting additional public meetings between all stakeholders and further refinement of the design (01:04:00).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner McEaney and seconded by Commissioner Almiñana.

Mr. Smith polled the Commission: Commissioner Almiñana, Commissioner Cahill, Commissioner Febo San Miguel, Commissioner Kenyatta, Commissioner Nasser, Commissioner McEaney, Commissioner Osorio, and Chairperson Roesch

Motion carried unanimously to continue (8-0).

2. 247-23

Masonic Temple – Temporary Art 1 N Broad Street

Review Type: Public art located in the Benjamin Franklin Parkway Buffer Area

Project Details: Freestanding structure-supported mural

Applicant: Global Philadelphia Association

Presenter: Global Philadelphia Association

Finn Martel of Global Philadelphia Association presented and addressed the comments since the concept approval (01:05:00).

Questions and comments from the Commission noted their concern with the proposed translation, and requested a translator redo this translation (01:08:35).

Finn Martel continued the presentation discussing the constructability and lighting of the proposal.

Questions and comments from the Commission (01:13:10).

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Seeing no additional questions or comments from the Commission or the Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion for final approval (01:13:25).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Nasser and seconded by Commissioner Kenyatta.

Mr. Smith polled the Commission: Commissioner Almiñana, Commissioner Cahill, Commissioner Febo San Miguel, Commissioner Kenyatta, Commissioner Nasser, Commissioner McEaney, Commissioner Osorio, and Chairperson Roesch

Motion carried unanimously for final approval (8-0).

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PRESENTATIONS FOR CONCEPT REVIEW

1. 160-23

Thomas Paine Plaza

1401 John F Kennedy Boulevard

Review Type: Construction project located on City property

Project Details: Exterior site improvements

Applicant: Philadelphia Department of Public Property (DPP)

Presenter: Ground Reconsidered

Before the presentation began, Erin Kindt of the Department of Public Property provided an overview of the changes made based on feedback from public comments and Commissioners from July 2023, then requested conceptual approval for the project (01:14:50).

Karen Skafte introduced the design team including Sam Emory and Michael Barber and presented the vision of the plan, which included an overview of the engagement process with a focus group, priorities for improving the plaza, and maintaining the plaza as a civic stage for free speech and as a place that supports the skateboard community. Namely, making a place for people (1:16:16).

Michael Barber presented the lighting design and visual summary for the plaza (01:25:30). Ms. Skafte continued the presentation with proposed ground cover materials used, granite pavers, exposed aggregate concrete, granite seat walls, and stone walls. Additionally, the presentation reviewed the furnishing components, planting plans, and a series of slides including colors and textures proposed, and site perspective (01:28:45).

Questions and comments from the Commission (01:31:04)

Chairman Roesch highly commended the presentation and involvement with the public. Commissioner Kenyatta agreed and echoed those sentiments. Commissioner Almiñana expressed concerns and consideration of maintenance for the proposed wooden step material. Ms. Skafte responded that they are looking into the details of skateboard deterrents for these steps and working with Skate Philly (01:34:04).

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Discussion continued about the reuse of materials as well as sharing the space for skaters and other users and One Percent for Art was discussed (01:35:53).

Questions and comments from the Public (01:43:04).

A member of the public commented on the noise factor and suggested insulating the sounds in some way.

Mr. Smith read a public comment into the record that was received via email from Pat Hyde, who is a board member of Skate Philly and in support of the project (01:44:20).

Seeing no further questions or comments from the Commission or Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion for concept approval (01:45:55).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Febo San Miguel and seconded by Commissioner McEneaney.

Mr. Smith polled the Commission: Commissioner Almiñana, Commissioner Febo San Miguel, Commissioner Kenyatta, Commissioner Nasser, Commissioner McEneaney, Commissioner Osorio, and Chairperson Roesch.

Motion carried unanimously for concept approval (7-0).

2. 290-23

Belmont Grove Playground 1800 Belmont Mansion Drive

Review Type: Construction project located on City property

Project Details: Exterior site improvements

Applicant: Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR)

Presenter: Marvel

Tyler Sylvestro began the presentation by going over the existing site and structure, playground space, tree protection, and design approach (01:47:13).

Questions and comments from the Commission (02:04:10).

Chairman Roesch inquired about the ground cover, which will be poured rubber safety surface. Discussion continued about the lighting, site and design of the basketball court, parking, and consideration for use of basketball court and shared space.

The Commission would like to see details on dealing with root protection for the trees.

Seeing no further questions or comments from the Commission or Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion for conceptual approval (02:12:57).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner McEneaney and seconded by Commissioner Febo San Miguel.

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Mr. Smith polled the Commission: Commissioner Almiñana, Commissioner Febo San Miguel, Commissioner Kenyatta, Commissioner Nasser, Commissioner McEneaney, Commissioner Osorio, and Chairperson Roesch

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Motion carried unanimously for concept approval (7-0).

3. 291-23

**Queen Lane Pump Station
4540 Ridge Avenue**

Review Type: Construction project located on City property

Project Details: Exterior site improvements

Applicant: Philadelphia Water Department (PWD)

Presenter: HDR

Judy Arnobit began the presentation with a background of the project (02:14:12). The existing raw water pump station is one of the City's water sources. Philadelphia Water Department is seeking FEMA BRIC funding for this project.

Questions and comments from the Commission (02:28:00).

Commissioner Febo San Miguel inquired about the disturbance of the trees. Ms. Arnobit stated that there would be some disturbance, but new plantings would be included. Comments from the Commission continued (02:30:28-02:38:35).

Seeing no further questions or comments from the Commission or Public, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion for conceptual approval (02:38:48).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Febo San Miguel and seconded by Commissioner Almiñana.

Mr. Smith polled the Commission: Commissioner Almiñana, Commissioner Febo San Miguel, Commissioner Kenyatta, Commissioner McEneaney, Commissioner Osorio, and Chairperson Roesch

Motion carried unanimously for concept approval (6-0).

Seeing no further questions or comments from the Commission, Chairperson Roesch asked for a motion to adjourn (02:39:54).

Upon the motion made by Commissioner Almiñana and seconded by Commissioner Febo San Miguel.

Motion carried with no nays to adjourn the December 13, 2023, Philadelphia Art Commission meeting.

The next Art Commission will be held Wednesday, January 10, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. via Zoom.

Written Public Comments Received

December 13, 2023

FINAL REVIEW:

2100 Diamond Street – North Central Public Safety Building

1. FROM: Judith Robinson
Received 12/12/2023

Good Day Art Commission,

Please consider tabling the final approval of the above mentioned project before your Commission. The Community has had NO INPUT in any aspect of the design, or even the very location! Please know we did APPEAL the decision of the Historic Commission. Also Will Appeal the BLIR decision! Please do not add the hardship to Appeal the decision of the Art Commission. This Police Facility is artistically out of order on a HISTORIC DIAMOND STREET CORRIDOR.

Looking forward to your decision on this very Urgent Matter. Thank you.

Sincerely
Judith Robinson
Representative/EMERITUS

CONCEPT REVIEW:

1401 JFK Blvd – Thomas Paine Plaza

1. FROM: Alex Sorensen
Received 12/8/2023

Hello,

I'm writing in regards to the Thomas Paine Plaza submission proposal that appears to include a "designated section" for skateboarders. I used to live directly over the plaza and have observed that they tend to create an exclusive space for themselves where no one else was able to use the plaza. There would be 30-50 skateboarder at any given time. The noise was frankly interoperable, not the mention they tended to leave graffiti and caused damage to benches and installations etc.

Given the fact that skateboarding is/was in fact prohibited on the plaza, why does the plan appear to accommodate them? If they are allowed there, I have no doubt that no one else will be able to use it besides them, which had previously always been the case.

Best,
Alec

2. FROM: Pat Heid
Received 12/11/2023

Hello,

My name is Pat Heid and I am a board member of Skate Philly, a non-profit that advocates for skateboarders in Philadelphia, by connecting communities with designed spaces and events. I also have worked in the skateboarding industry for over a decade, as a marketing and sales representative for Vans Footwear Company. I have been engaged with the communities that skateboard in and around the areas of Thomas Paine Plaza for over 20 years.

On July 12, 2023, I participated in the Public Meeting with the Art Commission, where the first Concept Review for Thomas Paine Plaza was presented. Myself, and several others, voiced our concerns about the lack of engagement with the downtown Philadelphia skateboard community, which has been an influential and key stakeholder within the space for the last 7-10 years, primarily after the redevelopments of JFK Plaza and Dilworth Plaza. As a result of our concerns and feedback, I was happy to receive the opportunity to present a proposal to include skateboarding within the redesign – so I would like to thank the Art Commission of allowing this conversation and opportunity to progress.

On August 2, I, along with other representatives of Skate Philly and the community, met with key representatives of the Dept. of Public Property (Bridget Greenwald, Valerie Bergman, Pedro Pinto, and Erin Kindt) and Ground Reconsidered (Karen Skafte and Sam Evory) to discuss the proposal and opportunity. We had great dialogue and addressed both concerns and considerations, in hope that we could find a middle ground where all parties could be happy.

Through several meetings following, we were able to land on an ideal scenario that allows for safe area within the space for skateboarding, by planning to re-use salvaged granite benches from Thomas Paine Plaza and smart design to inhibit damage and liability concerns - while keeping the space safe, active and entertaining, specifically during non-business hours when people are not working in the Municipal Building. We hope to continue refining this scenario and design, to land on an exciting and sensible space for all to enjoy.

For some context, the three plazas planned by Edmund Bacon, and designed by Vincent Kling Architects in the early 60's (JFK Plaza, Dilworth Plaza, and Thomas Paine Plaza) became a trifecta of some of the world's most famous and iconic areas for street skateboarding from the late '80's until 2023, allowing many of our city's youth to become professionals within the global skateboarding industry, as athletes, marketers, sales people, photographers, and videographers. The influence of these spaces and extended community, has reached millions and millions of people globally through print, digital, and social media, extending into the fashion and art landscapes. Specifically, the community over the past 7-10 years has been some of the most influential. We are hoping to preserve our community and this history, allowing future generations of our city's youth to engage this area positively through the active, physical and creative expression of skateboarding.

I wanted to update the Art Commission on these developments and engagement with the DPP and Ground Reconsidered, and I appreciate the opportunity for our community to have a voice at this point in this process. This is something that would be recognized globally as a huge win for our community, and we hope to preserve the historical context of our culture within the last of the modern redevelopments within this area, for future generations to come.

I will be present on the call this week and would be happy to share more details about the discussions, to answer any questions or concerns that might arise.

Thank you,
Pat Heid