



General Membership Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 9, 2020
Zoom Virtual Meeting, 7:00 pm

In Attendance (17):

Beth Boroumand, Lauren Brock, Nick Cafardi, Margaret Connor, Maddielynn Fox, Andres Franco, Joan Gielas, Arthur James, Deirdre Menchaca, Glenn Olcerst, Neil Parham, Sherah Rothman, Vincent Salvino, Julie Segner, Patrick Sweeney, Eric Williams, Alex Zanon

Introduction:

The regular monthly meeting for the membership of the Allegheny City Central Association was held on Monday, November 9, 2020, at 7:00 pm via Zoom. The meeting was presided by Maggie Connor and minutes transcribed from recordings by Joan Gielas.

Announcements/General Discussion:

Eric Williams from the Office of the Mayor reported:

- **Clean and Lien Team:** The City's Department of Public Works launched Clean and Lien Team to address blighted properties. Once a property owner has been notified of an overgrowth or debris violation and does not bring the property into compliance, the City of Pittsburgh reserves the right to enter onto the property and take the necessary steps to remove the weeds or debris and place a lien on the property. If you know of a property that has an issue with overgrowth or debris, call 311 and someone will be sent to help with the problem.
Website: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/pli/pli-clean-lien>
- **Snow Angels Program:** Applications are currently live for the city's Snow Angels program. This is a Community-Based program where the city partners with volunteers to provide snow removal service for city residents who need the service due to age, physical disabilities etc. If a community group recruits the most Snow Angels volunteers, the group will have an opportunity to win a Golden Shovel and other prizes.
Website: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/snowangels/>
- **Downtown Bike Facilities:** DOMI announced new Downtown Bike Facilities that will connect the Three Rivers Heritage Trail, Point Park University, Point State Park, and a significant portion of the Golden Triangle businesses, to a dedicated bike track.
Website: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/press-releases/press-releases/4413>
- **City-Wide Storm Water Management Master Plan:** The City and PWSA are seeking proposals for Innovative City-Wide Storm Water Management Master Plan that could serve as a local and global model.
Website: <https://www.pgh2o.com/your-water/stormwater>

- **Housing Assistance Resource Portal Program (HARP):** HARP guides residents to rental assistance, utility assistance, finding available public housing, and more. The site is easy to use for those needing housing resources.
Website: <https://pittsburghpa.gov/harp/>
- **CARES Rent Relief Program/URA Housing Stabilization Program:** The City and County offer Rental Assistance through the CARES Rent Relief Program and the URA Housing Stabilization Program. These programs are available to help assist renters through the Housing Opportunity Fund.
Website: <https://covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us/>
- **Reference Links Provided by Eric Williams:**
 - Allegheny County Rent Relief Program:
<https://covidrentrelief.alleghenycounty.us>
 - Housing Opportunity Fund:
<https://www.ura.org/pages/housing-opportunity-fund-programs>
 - Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency:
<https://www.phfa.org/pacares/>
 - ForgingPGH - a data- and community-driven comprehensive plan:
<https://forgingpgh.org/>
 - Workshops on How to do Business with the City:
<http://entrepreneur.pitt.edu/events/bids-for-pgh/>
 - Minority Business Growth & Recovery Fund:
<https://www.ura.org/pages/mbrglf>
 - CitiParks KidsSMART Afterschool Program:
<https://pittsburghpa.gov/citiparks/kidsmart-club>
 - Year-Round Yard Debris Drop Off Locations + Info:
<https://pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/leaf-waste>
 - EngagePGH Online Portal:
<https://engage.pittsburghpa.gov/>

Maddielynn Fox from State Representative Jake Wheatley's Office reported:

- Representative Wheatley's office is operating on Mondays and Fridays from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm by appointment only. Call 412-471-7760 to schedule an appointment.
- Representative Wheatley's office is helping with Rent Rebates, Driver's Licenses, Unemployment Benefits, and more. Contact the office if you need assistance.

Minutes from July 13, 2020 General Membership Meeting

MOTION:

A motion was made to accept the July 13, 2020 minutes as posted.
Motion was seconded.
Motion passed.



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Glenn Olcerst from Rail Pollution Protection Pittsburgh:

Glenn Olcerst is the cofounder of **Rail Pollution Protection Pittsburgh (RP3)**. In responding to Norfolk Southern's initiative to increase rail traffic through the Northside, as well as through the most densely populated neighborhoods of the city, RP3 wants to ensure that Norfolk Southern is running more safely in the most healthy way possible.

Glenn Olcerst is proposing that:

1. Our City, State, and Federal representatives send a letter to Norfolk Southern offering to help Norfolk Southern get Diesel Emission Reduction Funding from the state, as well as Federal funds. Norfolk Southern would use the funds for scrubbers for older locomotive, the newer Tier 4 locomotives, and switching engines. This is a model Atlanta and Chicago used to get Norfolk Southern to enter into voluntary agreement to mitigate issues brought about by increased rail traffic, and to help neighbors live more comfortably with that reality.
2. Because Norfolk Southern has a long history of not inspecting properly or disregarding the results of their inspections, Glenn is proposing that our local, state, and federal representatives send a letter to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) to engage in special inspection oversight.

MOTION:

Glenn Olcerst Motioned That:

ACCA be authorized by its membership to send a letter to local (Wilson, Lavelle), state (Wheatley, Doyle, Lamb), and federal (Casey, Toomey) representatives requesting that the representatives send a letter to Norfolk Southern offering to help Norfolk Southern obtain State and Federal Diesel Emission Reduction Funding.

In addition, ACCA be authorized to send a second letter to representatives at all levels, requesting that they send a letter to the Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) asking for special inspection oversight of the Norfolk Southern operation - especially including their rail bridges.

Motion Seconded by Arthur James

Questions and Comments:

Q: *Is there anything in the ongoing mediation that prohibits ACCA from advocating outside of that process?*

A: Mediation has been going on since February. What is being asked is not part of the mediation, but rather a work-around to get Norfolk Southern to agree to things that are under discussion in the mediation. It is appropriate for the neighborhood to say that we want to make sure bridges are safe. Since Norfolk Southern will soon be carrying liquid natural gas under pressure, and our neighborhood is in the blast zone, we want to make sure that our neighborhood is safe.

Q: *Why is Norfolk Southern getting funding? Do they need funding?*

A: This is an imaginative out-of-the-box solution to get Norfolk Southern to agree to the things that the neighbors would like.



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Q: *Would this funding be coming from the State?*

A: There are three buckets, The State has \$121 million in the *Volkswagen Environmental Trust Fund* that is specifically available to help railroads build cleaner switching stations. The funds will help Norfolk Southern hire people to produce cleaner locomotives. This is a win-win for Norfolk Southern, for the state getting jobs, and the neighbors getting a cleaner environment. In addition to the state, there are two federal buckets.

Q: *Wasn't ACCA funneling all of this through the Northside Leadership Conference (NSLC) with two ACCA representatives? Is NSLC still involved in this?*

A: ACCA is still working with NSLC on this issue. RP3 is leading the charge in doing the research and investigation. RP3 has much larger jurisdiction than just the Northside. They are contacting and asking the same from all communities along the 20 miles of the railroad route. The actions done by the ACCA would be additional help to get Norfolk Southern to do the things that would help our neighborhood. This is a way of getting Norfolk Southern to do something that they don't want to do.

Q: *Why isn't this letter coming from NSLS?*

A: This is communication that ACCA can vet with NSLC, and discuss with the Bridge Committee, to make sure there isn't anything that can upset ongoing negotiations.

ACCA's letter would be asking Norfolk Southern to address their pollution and safety issues, and offering some ways that can make that happen. This affects every family in our neighborhood.

RP3 is the only group taking on this grassroots campaign - doing investigation, making videos, etc. Nobody else has the time or energy to do this.

VOTE:

A Vote was taken on the Motion by Glenn Olcerst and Seconded by Arthur James (as identified on previous page).

Motion passed.



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Mexican War Streets Historic District Renovation Process

ACCA members had asked for a run-through of the Historic District Guidelines and the process of working with the city when doing renovations on the exterior of a home in the Mexican War Streets Historic District. Maggie Connor presented the steps necessary to fill out an online application with the City, as well as the Historic Review Commission's Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Maggie also generally discussed the Mexican War Streets Historic District Design Guidelines.

The City of Pittsburgh is now using **OneStopPgh**, a "one-stop-shop" website where residents can apply, pay for, and receive business licenses and permits, upload development plans, and track violation notices. When making changes to the exterior of your home, you will begin the process with the city on the **OneStopPgh** website.

If you are beginning the process and need assistance, contact Allegheny City Central Association at info@accapgh.org or the Mexican War Streets Society at info@mexicanwarstreets.org.

Helpful Links:

- OneStopPgh:
<https://pittsburghpa.gov/onestoppgh/>
- Historic Review Commission - Application for a Certificate of Appropriateness:
https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/4500_Application_For_Exterior_Work_12.20.18.pdf
- Mexican War Streets Historic District Design Guidelines:
https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/05_Mexican_War_Streets_Guidelines.pdf

Questions and Comments:

1. *Survey Related to Historic District Guidelines:*

The ACCA Development Committee Chair, Matt Williamson, is working with Maggie Connor to generate a survey to better understand how people feel about the Historic District Guidelines, and to identify their concerns, questions, and issues. ACCA will continue to gauge interest among the community and engage with the city to make changes, as necessary.

2. *Art in the Historic District:*

There was a class action suit filed at the Historic Review Commission. The resolution would allow the neighborhood's historic guidelines to include art, such as the existing Sampsonia Way Houses, River of Words, and Art in the Alley. The commission would approve whatever was included in our own individual historic guidelines in relation to art.

In Allegheny City Central's Master Plan, ACCA's consultant developed a plan with individual menus. The only item that was included in every single menu – whether safety, development, inclusiveness, etc. - was art. The neighborhood can edit the guidelines to include art into the fabric of our neighborhood.



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City of Asylum / Mattress Factory: Art Guidelines for the Neighborhood

Maggie Connor met with Henry Reese and Andrés Franco from City of Asylum, as well as Hayley Haldeman from the Mattress Factory. City of Asylum and the Mattress Factory are interested in working on establishing art guidelines for the neighborhood.

The goal is to define a process that works for including art projects in the neighborhood. There would be a clear processes guideline that handles about 80% of the proposed art projects. Historic guidelines related to art would basically be following rules of how the art is mounted on buildings. The things that ACCA can't control is anything that relates to the Art Commission's process. A conversation has been opened with the City Art Coordinator.

Update on City of Asylum

Andrés Franco reminded ACCA members that:

- City of Asylum continues to offer online events.
- The Alphabet Reading Garden, located at 1406 Monterey Street, remains open for use by the community from Dusk until Dawn, Monday through Sunday.
- The City of Asylum Bookstore is open daily from 12:00 pm until 5:00 pm.

Update on Garden Theater Block

Maggie Connor talked to Rick Belloli of Q Development about the status of the Garden Theater Block. Rick reports that they are continuing to move forward with the Garden Theater Block project. They have finished all public applications related to zoning, and they are in the process of finishing the design and getting pricing done. They are cautiously optimistic that they should be in the ground during the first or second quarter of 2021.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:40 pm.



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