

SOUTH SIDE PLANNING FORUM
December 8, 2020 ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

Present: Tom Smith, South Pittsburgh Reporter; Barbara Rudiak, South Side Community Council; Blake McLaren, South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association; Lynn Kurhan, UPMC; Kathy Hamilton Vargo, South Side Presbyterian Church; Candice Benson, The Brashear Association; and Candice Gonzalez, South Side Chamber of Commerce.

Visitors: Bruce Kraus, Pittsburgh City Council; Allison Harnden, City Office of Nighttime Economy; Brosha Tkacheva, Office of Councilman Bruce Kraus; Gisele Betances, Office of the Mayor; and Margie Smykla, South Pittsburgh Reporter

I. Review of Minutes: Tom Smith called to order the December 8, 2020 Zoom meeting of the South Side Planning Forum at 5:30 p.m. The minutes of the November 10, 2020 Zoom meeting were reviewed and approved as prepared by Candice Gonzalez.

II. Presentation:

A. Bruce Kraus, Pittsburgh City Council, and Allison Harnden, Office of Nighttime Economy – City Updates and South Side Parking Enhancement District (SS PED) for November: Councilman Bruce Kraus and Allison Harnden reported that some nuisance bars and speakeasies have been cited by the City for violations.

Councilman Kraus reported that SS PED revenue has been greatly decreased due to COVID-19 and official pandemic orders and restrictions. He said that he is looking at grant opportunities and other ways to boost SS PED revenue to cover desired purchases such as bicycles for the City's South Side police officers. Ms. Harnden reported that PA restaurant income was down 41% in October. She said that some businesses are leveraging their properties to keep their employees on their payrolls. Many businesses are anxious for expected stimulus funds to keep their businesses intact in spite of the many problems caused by the pandemic.

Ms. Harnden reported that SS PED revenue for November was \$4,971.51. The January-November revenue was \$90,985.78. There were no Parking Authority enforcement costs in November. There were no other expenditures in November. The SS PED trust fund balance as of the end of November was \$234,161.11. As of the end of November, the total revenue collected since the inception of the SS PED in April 2017 was \$677,502.33.

Mr. Kraus reported that the SS PED clean team recently got retroactive union wage increases, and the 2-worker team costs about \$12,000 per month and will work through January and February. In November, the clean team collected 5,050 pounds of trash, assisted 13 people with hospitality questions, reported 11 observances of homeless issues, and reported 5 panhandling issues. They removed a large amount of seasonal leaves and sanitized major touch points in bus stop shelters.

Mr. Kraus reported that the East Carson Street roadway and sidewalk improvements contract work is continuing during the pandemic. ADA ramps are being installed on major corners. Sidewalks are being completed between the T-Station and S. 7-8th Streets. New traffic light installations will cause disruptions. The pandemic has decreased pedestrian and street traffic which has been favorable for construction. He expects PennDOT PA Route 837 updates to continue to keep us informed of traffic restrictions.

III. Old Business:

A. Development Activities Meeting (DAM): Ms. Rudiak reported that South Side Community Council organized a DAM meeting in November that featured the commercial property at 1213 East Carson Street next to The Urban Tap. Owner John DeMauro and architect David Morgan presented the proposed plan for a front of the building enhancement for a new restaurant and the addition of an outside patio located at the rear of the building and adjacent to the Parking Authority parking lot. After discussion, it was suggested to alter the design to preserve and showcase some of the original historic façade features on the East Carson Street front of the property that have been covered up over the years. Messrs. DeMauro and Morgan will work with the Local Review Committee, a subcommittee that works specifically on the historic district guidelines.

B. Neighborhood Plan Committee (NPC): Tom Smith reported that there was no NPC meeting since the previous Planning Forum meeting. He said that the NPC is scheduled to meet online in early January and will report back at the January Planning Forum meeting.

IV. New Business – Member Organization Reports and Announcements:

A. South Side South Side Community Council (SSCC) (RCO): Barbara Rudiak reported that the SSCC will hold a December 17th Development Activities Meeting for the historic review of two projects. First, Excuses located at 2526 East Carson Street engaged Peter Margittai Architects to design a new exterior façade and plan for the conversion of their mostly unused exterior space for outside dining and improved ADA access to restrooms. The first phase of the renovation is in the side lot to the left of the building and is limited to improving ADA accessibility into the establishment. At the present time, they are not adding a considerable amount of outdoor seating until they can add more restrooms.

And second, the large mural at 2308 East Carson Street will be reviewed after the fact as it has been painted already. The community will have an opportunity to review these projects. Ms. Rudiak also reported that the large mural that was started and paused on the Mallorca Restaurant exterior wall at East Carson and S. 23rd Streets must be presented to the City's Historic Review Commission.

B. UPMC Former South Side Outpatient Center: Lynn Kurhan reported that there are no updates on the renovation of the former outpatient center due to the pandemic. Barbara Rudiak thanked UPMC for opening its S. 23rd and Jane Streets location for walk-in patients after closing the former outpatient center.

C. South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association (SSSNA) (RCO): Blake McLaren reported that the SSSNA will not have a holiday party this year. Instead, SSSNA will make donations to The Brashear Association and Hot Metal Faith for their holiday and community programs. They will send community holiday cards and have a gift card drawing for local businesses. He reported that they have been reaching out to homeless people encamped in South Side Park with a compassionate approach to see how we can help them.

D. The Brashear Association: Candice Benson of The Brashear Association reported on Brashear's holiday programs, including groceries, gifts for children by age groups up to age 17, and gift groups. She reported that South Side residents made generous donations for the holiday program. Barbara Rudiak thanked the South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association for their generous donation to Brashear for the purchase of more holiday toys for children and gift cards for families.

E. South Side Presbyterian Church: Church Pastor Kathy Hamilton-Vargo asked that we keep the faith during these challenging times. She said we will get through the COVID-19. She asked that we be kind and attend to neighbors as some are having very difficult times coping with and surviving during this pandemic, especially during the holidays.

F. South Side Chamber of Commerce: Candice Gonzalez reported that the Chamber's planned Progressive Holiday Mingle on December 2, was postponed due to the Allegheny County Health Director's strong November 18th stay-at-home advisory. She reported that PennDOT is building an underground concrete wall reinforcement in the vault under the sidewalk at the Welcome Center.

G. City Snow Angels Program: Gisele Betances of the Office of the Mayor reported that the City is recruiting snow angels to help residents with limited capacity to get snow and ice cleaned as needed at their residential properties. They try to match snow angels with residents in need within a 10-minute walk. As an incentive, the community group with the most snow angels will be awarded with a golden shovel and a virtual meeting with the mayor online. She said that South Side needs more snow angels. Blake McLaren said that there is a Google StepTrek virtual map of the South Side public steps that may be helpful for this program. Barbara Rudiak added that the South Side Community Council has residents, who are willing to help with shoveling snow as needed. www.pittsburghpa.gov/snowangels

Moved by Tom Smith and seconded by Lynn Kurhan, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:30 p.m. The next Zoom meeting of the Planning Forum is scheduled for Tuesday, January 12, 2021, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice A. Gonzalez
South Side Chamber of Commerce