

**SOUTH SIDE PLANNING FORUM**  
**March 9, 2021 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; Margie Schill, The Brashear Association; and Mark Bucklaw and Candice Gonzalez, South Side Chamber of Commerce.

**Visitors:** Bruce Kraus, City Council; Allison Harnden, City Office of Nighttime Economy; Brosha Tkacheva and Bob Charland, Office of Councilman Kraus; and Margie Smykla, South Pittsburgh Reporter; Andrew Donchez, Brock Kenyon, and Chris McCune, SouthSide Works; Mahdi Bey, for PA Rep. Jessica Benham; and Mike Clark and Jacky Kaiser, residents.

**I. Review of Minutes:** Tom Smith called to order the March 9, 2021 Zoom meeting of the South Side Planning Forum at 5:30 p.m. Moved by Mark Bucklaw and seconded by Lynn Kurhan, the minutes of the February 9, 2021, Zoom meeting were approved as prepared by Barbara Rudiak.

**II. Presentations:**

**A. Andrew Donchez, Director of Development, Somera Road, Inc. – SouthSide Works New Apartments**

**Project:** Barbara Rudiak introduced Andrew Donchez of Somera Road, Inc. She stated that individual SouthSide Works projects have been presented to the community for input at development activities meetings over the last eight months. Since there has not been a presentation for the overall changes that are being planned for SouthSide Works, she suggested that he present to the Planning Forum. Mr. Donchez said he would give an overview of the next stage of the proposed residential apartments project along the Monongahela waterfront. Ms. Rudiak also introduced Mr. Chris McCune, the SouthSide Works site manager on behalf of Somera Road, Inc. Mr. McCune said he is based in Pittsburgh and manages SouthSide Works improvements, development, design, construction, and complaints. Mr. Donchez reported that the previous SouthSide Theater is being redeveloped into a 70,000 square-foot office space and expects it to be open this summer. Phase 2 improvements include all public spaces, town center, tunnel park, dog park, common garden areas, pedestrian path, playground, and container hospitality area. He said that Somera Road thinks that the SouthSide Works is the best Pittsburgh location to live, work, and play. With the proximity and pedestrian access to the riverfront, they believe this location is a gem for the South Side. The existing apartments will remain as will The Cheesecake Factory. Desmone Architects, a local firm, is mindful of the unique assets of SouthSide Works and its geology, and through their designs will pay homage to the setting and history of this location. This S. Water Street location is a 2-acre lot near Hofbrauhaus along the river. They will comply with the Preliminary Land Development Plan (PLDP) requirements. The building site adds to the riverfront trail and presents as a great asset of significant scale. Urban design targets have been achieved on the immediate grounds and riverfront as they are scaled to the location. They adhere to riverfront design principles with high quality materials that are consistent and sustainable.

The overall design includes terraced gardens and landscaping, pool, trail system, community garden and lawn with an REI bike test track, and playground. The structure will be seven stories high with two levels of concrete for parking and five levels of apartments with a rooftop deck. He showed the rock strata and geology that shows that they intend to have the structure look like it has grown out of the natural strata. The building exterior has decorative perforations in design with rusted steel to project an authentic quality. The masonry is precast stone. There is street-facing storage. With trails, grass elevations, residential entrance, vehicle and bicycle entrances, and pedestrian access, the apartment building will be a passing beacon to the SouthSide Works complex. There is no retail space in the apartment building. There is an outside patio with private amenities for the building, with fitness and conference rooms, co-work space, and quasi-public spaces. They are working with the City to get S. Water Street closed to vehicular traffic. It will serve this building and could be a public promenade and open to the public. If approved, they would construct and pay for the street conversion. Mr. Donchez said that this apartment complex is a high-end residential building with an amphitheater staircase inside for gatherings and events. The building is set back from the riverfront trail about 15 to 20 feet. Some trees will be removed in the structure footprint, but they believe that trees are important and more trees will be planted. The location is a visible piece of South Side to live, work and play. Good for the South Side, he said there will be 251 studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom residential units. If approved, they target the fourth quarter of 2021 for construction start and occupancy 24 months later.

Mike Clark said that closing the street would create a traffic bottleneck for parking, and the building would obstruct the riverfront views of existing smaller residences. To Mr. Clark's questions: no cars will be seen from the trail, the perforated panels are physical and landscape screening, and roof utilities will be screened. Mr. Clark said that although zoning permitted, the height of the structure is not respectful of neighboring residents as the community will lose its view along this part of the riverfront. Mr. Donchez said that this proposed apartment complex is one-half a floor higher than the existing City Apartments across the street. He said that it is a big building that creates connectivity with SouthSide Works

and outside amenities with this private development. To Mark Bucklaw's question, Mr. Donchez said that SouthSide Works has no association with the South Side Marina. Mr. Donchez said there is no public kayak storage facility along the South Side riverfront, and that perhaps the Marina or SouthSide Works could address that. To Blake McLaren's question, Mr. Donchez said that they have no concerns about occupancy at the proposed apartment complex. The street and trail level landscaping feature foundation relics, ingot statuary, and the Morgan Mill Gate. To Ms. Rudiak's question, Chris McCune said that the PLBP requirements set their river design goals, and the height and restrictions do not apply to the South Side.

Ms. Rudiak reported that the proposed Box Office redevelopment was approved by the City Planning Commission. On March 23, the SouthSide Works playground, dog park, and town center redevelopments will present to the Planning Commission. On March 25, the South Side Community Council DAM meeting will review the SouthSide Works proposed apartment complex plan. Ms. Rudiak reported that Somera Road has presented on proposed development plans for six to nine months, and that it has been a pleasure to work with them. Mr. Donchez welcomed phone calls for questions.

**B. Bruce Kraus, Pittsburgh City Council, and Allison Harnden, City Office of Nighttime Economy – City Updates and South Side Parking Enhancement District (SS PED) for February:** Allison Harnden reported that SS PED revenue for February 2021 was \$7,239.67, and there were no paid Parking Authority costs in February, although the October-January Parking Authority invoices in the approximate amount of \$40,000 are outstanding. The January-February 2021 revenue was \$13,839.06. The 2020 revenue transfer in the amount of \$87,097.97 was made. The SS PED trust fund balance as of the end of February was \$351,259.08. As of the end of February, the total revenue collected since the inception of the SS PED in April 2017 was \$692,482.42.

Ms. Harnden reported that the South Side alcohol license changes included Ranor Corp. at 1209-1211 East Carson Street for emergency temporary extension of premise, Rex Theater at 1602 East Carson Street for surrender to safekeeping, and Dough Bar at 1831 East Carson Street for a new opening. The SS PED clean team collected 5,125 pounds of trash, removed 5 graffiti/stickers, and assisted with 3 hospitality inquiries. The SS PED team will increase from 1 to 2 workers in April. About \$15,000 will be contributed to the Esser's Plaza renovation. Ms. Harnden reported that on March 2 she held a virtual pre-St. Patrick's Parade Day meeting with South Side bar and restaurant owners and managers to review the City's public safety plan for this usually popular day to celebrate on the South Side.

Councilman Bruce Kraus reported on the East Carson Street roadway construction. It is slow due to the age of the street, underground utilities challenges, and other underground conditions. The accessibility ramps on the southern side of the street have been installed. The scheduled highway lighting equipment and road resurfacing will be disruptive. For the St. Patrick's Parade Day celebration, Mr. Kraus said that City officials will check house parties. This year the City will not provide porta-potties nor handwashing sinks. City officials will monitor for COVID-19 precautionary measures, controlled exterior lines to get into various bars and restaurants, and monitor occupancy counts. To Mike Clark's questions, Mr. Kraus said that he would inquire about when the S. 18<sup>th</sup> Street bump outs and traffic signal equipment installation bids are due. Mr. Clark asked if City DPW Division 3 will pick up trash and sweep the residential streets on the flats. Mr. Kraus said he will get an update for the street sweeping.

### **III. Old Business:**

**A. Development Activities Meeting (DAM) – South Side Community Council:** Barbara Rudiak reported that the South Side Community Council held its February DAM meeting on Thursday, February 25. There were three presentations. The first presentation was Phase 3 of the Riverside Mews development at S. 18<sup>th</sup> Street near the Riverfront Park entrance. It will go before the City Planning Commission. The second presentation provided the community with an opportunity to review the signage on the front of the new BEYOND/HELLO medical marijuana dispensary building located at 2009 East Carson Street and the addition of a garage door and other door at the rear of the building on Wrights Way. These changes need to go before the City Historic Review Commission. The third presentation showed changes to the entrance of 1321 East Carson Street, where Glassworx is currently located on the first floor. The Glassworx lease ends shortly, and that first-floor space will become the entrance for the second and third floor redeveloped apartments that are planned for 1321-1327 East Carson Street. This also will go before the City Historic Review Commission.

Ms. Rudiak reported that the City Historic Review Commission (HRC) met. The Dollar Bank ATM machine move to the bank entrance area was approved. The Cosmos on Carson façade silver tiles at 1713 East Carson Street were removed. This façade was presented to the HRC three or four times, and the Local Review Committee (LRC) has worked with the Cosmos representatives to get the façade corrected. Ms. Rudiak reported that the HRC approved the Urban Tap's proposed plan for its 1213 East Carson Street next door property and approved their proposed building on Bedford

Square as they presented to the DAM, LRC, and HRC. Ms. Rudiak also reported that the South Side Community Council scheduled a DAM Zoom meeting on Thursday, March 25, at 6 pm. There will be two presentations: SouthSide Works proposed riverfront apartment complex, and Esser's Plaza renovation.

**B. Neighborhood Plan Committee (NPC):** Tom Smith reported that the Neighborhood Plan Committee (NPC) met at an online meeting on March 4 with Councilman Bruce Kraus, Barbara Rudiak, Blake McLaren, and Bob Charland in attendance. They discussed the next steps for updating the South Side Neighborhood Plan in accordance with the new City neighborhood plan program. To get moving on it, they decided to start with fact finding. Councilman Kraus will obtain information on the OBID neighborhood plan. Mr. Kraus thought it would be helpful to see how the Oakland community group approached their neighborhood plan. OBID representatives have been invited to meet with our Neighborhood Plan Committee, the date to be determined. City Planning staff advised that to develop the City's new model neighborhood plan is a long process, two years at a minimum.

**IV. New Business – Member Organization Reports and Announcements:**

**A. South Side Community Council (SSCC) (RCO):** Barbara Rudiak reported that the SSCC is looking forward to beautification work at the outside gardens. SSCC will have a general meeting at the end of March, the date to be determined.

**B. South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association (SSSNA) (RCO):** Blake McLaren reported that the South Side Slopes Neighborhood Association is holding an online general meeting at 6:30 p.m. right after this meeting.

**C. The Brashear Association:** Margie Schill reported that The Brashear Association is working to get residents vaccinated. They have been working with Hilltop Pharmacy in Allentown. Brashear is planning a blood drive in March. They are recruiting for an executive assistant. Tom Smith added that Brashear's "It's more than soup!" social media campaign got a lot of engagement, and South Side restaurants participated in the fundraising.

**D. PA Representative Jessica Benham – 36th Legislative District Update:** Mr. Mahdi Bey attended the meeting on behalf of Rep. Benham. He said that Rep. Benham updates her work and efforts on Facebook regularly. She plans a virtual office opening and is working on the LIHEAP Program.

**E. UPMC Former South Side Outpatient Center:** Lynn Kurhan reported that there are no new UPMC South Side updates. She said that UPMC will schedule/administer COVID-19 vaccines on the South Side as UPMC gets the vaccines.

**F. South Side Presbyterian Church:** Pastor Kathy Hamilton-Vargo acknowledged and thanked God for the beautiful day and encouraged everyone to look to our neighbors to make sure they are all right.

**G. South Side Chamber of Commerce:** Mark Bucklaw said that the Chamber is thankful for the many messages of caring and sadness about the loss of the Chamber's welcome center and headquarters due to the fire. He is grateful that everybody in the building escaped the building safely. A number of businesses have offered temporary office space for the Chamber. Thomas Shannon Barry is preparing for the Chamber to use the front of his law office across the street from the former welcome center location. In the interim, Candice Gonzalez is continuing the Chamber's work remotely. The comprehensive fire investigations are in progress. The Chamber's new mailing address is P.O. Box 42345, Pittsburgh, PA 15203-0345. The Chamber will keep everyone informed as they progress. The Chamber plans to resume events when safe.

Moved by Lynn Kurhan and seconded by Barbara Rudiak, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:35 p.m. The next Zoom meeting of the Planning Forum is scheduled for Tuesday, April 13, 2021, at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Candice A. Gonzalez  
South Side Chamber of Commerce