

**Minutes
Special Council Meeting
September 5, 2024
9:00 a.m.
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft TEAMS**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS: Chair Cohen, Mr. Alaquiva, Mr. Astorino, Senator Cappelletti, Mr. Gabel, Ms. Goldberg, Representative Labs, Judge Morgan, Mr. Parks, Mr. Stull

COUNCIL MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: Senator Bartolotta, Representative Ciresi, Ms. Gunderson, Ms. Vilayphonh, Mr. Warfield, Ms. Zaborney

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Karl Blischke, Executive Director; Heather Doughty, Deputy Executive Director; Laura Kline, Executive Assistant; Sarah Merritt, Director, PA Creative Communities, and the Creative Economy

GUESTS PRESENT: Addie Abelson, Chief Counsel

ACTION ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER: Chair Cohen called the meeting to order.

ACTION ITEM 2: ROLL CALL: Mr. Blischke called the roll. A quorum was established.

REQUESTS FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS: Chair Cohen asked if the PCA received any requests for public comments. There were no requests for public comment.

ACTION ITEM 3: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Mr. Blischke reported that Mr. Astorino has stated that he has relationships with the City of Pittsburgh and Point Park University and will recuse himself from the Council vote on this action item.

ACTION ITEM 4: Recommendation for the Creative Communities Initiative

Chair Cohen thanked Council members for attending this morning's meeting and commended PCA staff for their work on this project. Cohen added that PCA staff is always thinking outside of the box so that Council can be part of bigger projects to grow the creative economy in Pennsylvania.

Karl Blischke stated that PCA staff is very aware of opportunities for the PCA to work on community and economic development efforts and PCA wants to connect and align with those efforts. Blischke added that the goal to is to be up front in the planning process which raises the visibility of not only the PCA but the creative sector.

Blischke stated that he is pleased that the City of Pittsburgh recognizes the importance of the creative sector and has put it up front in its planning process as it looks to revitalize downtown. Blischke said is pleased that PCA has developed the programs to respond to communities that are doing development efforts through the creative sector.

Ms. Merritt reported that she is very excited about this project and is also excited about the prospect of collaborating with other agencies. Merritt stated that this project will connect the creative economy with the creative sector in this work.

Merritt reported that PCA staff recommends support for the planning and implementation of community driven creative placemaking projects as part of this work by providing \$100,000 per year for four years. Merritt stated that this is like other multiyear grants and will have the same requirements which are outlined in the Council memo.

Ms. Merritt stated that the City of Pittsburgh has worked very hard with its partners and stakeholders across the city including representatives from the central business district and other community stakeholders to develop their plan. Merritt explained that they are envisioning artists in residence in the public realm. She stated that the artists working in that program would lead and manage creative placemaking projects in the central business district that would include public art, community activities, community engagement and working with creative small business owners and creative entrepreneurs. Merritt indicated that this is a very holistic approach and said that one of the things that PCA staff liked about this initiative was that they are really leveraging the creative in downtown Pittsburgh, which has very vibrant creative assets.

Vice Chair Alaquiva asked if there is a timeline or start date for the execution of this initiative. He understands that PCA will be providing \$100,000 each year for four years, but asked for a little more clarification on what PCA will be funding.

Ms. Merritt stated that there is a plan, but that it has not yet been implemented, so she cannot detail what the project are yet as they are still in the beginning phases. She explained that one of the important things to keep in mind is that that artists will be paid to do this work. In terms of a timeline, Ms. Merritt explained that that it is up to the partners in this project which include DCED, DCNR, PHFA and the PCA to collaborate and roll this out in a timely and cohesive manner.

Mr. Blischke stated that the timeline would most likely start at the beginning of the next fiscal year and explained that pending Council authorization, PCA would enter into a contract by the end of this calendar year that would set this up as four consecutive years of development. Blischke explained that there would be a plan outline as well as quarterly status reports provided to Ms. Merritt to track the progress over the four-year period. Blischke also added that the grant will be a reimbursement grant, so that PCA's grant payment will follow verified and completed expenditures made toward the project.

Ms. Merritt told Vice Chair Alaquiva that she would keep him up to date of the ongoing projects and will also connect with the individuals from the city's planning department as well as from individuals from community and economic development.

Chair Cohen stated that she is pleased that PCA is beginning to be recognized as an agency that is working on growing the creative economy and added that the fact that DCED brought the PCA in at the very beginning in important.

Ms. Goldberg asked that Ms. Merritt provide clarification on the four years of the project. Specifically, Goldberg asked if it would be just the planning stages or if there would be implementation during that time.

Ms. Merritt stated that there have been discussions with the stakeholders mentioned earlier and that there has already been a lot of intentional planning and visioning that has occurred over the past year. She added that she has had discussions with the planning department

that deals with the creative sector, arts, and culture in downtown Pittsburgh and in those discussions, they have stated that once they get the artist in residence in place, then the work can really start. Merritt explained that initially they have plans to do some work that will spark some enthusiasm around the revitalization of the downtown central business district.

Ms. Goldberg then asked if after the four years, will there be an established organization that will come up with different projects that will require additional funding after the four years. If so, Goldberg asked where that funding will come from to maintain the level of activity.

Ms. Merritt stated that within these creative communities projects, that she has tried to work with all these communities to be thinking about this as they move through their projects but stated that there is always that question of sustainability. Merritt explained that one of the things that has been interesting about the creative communities initiative is as communities are going through the four years through planning and implementation of their projects, it has brought visibility to the work and it has enabled them to leverage other funding to ensure sustainability of their work as they move forward.

Ms. Goldberg asked if these organizations will be providing updates on progress throughout the four-year grant period.

Ms. Merritt said that she agrees that updates showing the impact that this will have on the community should be a component of this work and that she would talk to them about this moving forward.

Vice Chair Alaquiva asked what kind of branding the PCA will be putting forward about this project.

Blischke stated that the City of Pittsburgh is interested in taking on PCA's branding of creative communities.

Vice Chair Alaquiva suggested planning a creative communities event in the near future to raise additional awareness about the PCA and of this initiative.

Ms. Merritt stated that she will keep Council aware of the upcoming announcement event in Pittsburgh.

Chair Cohen stated that having Council members attend various activities and events is important and asked PCA staff to keep Council members informed of these opportunities.

Mr. Parks stated that he think's this it is fantastic that the creative communities concept is happening. He strongly thinks that Council should think of ways to document and communicate that this revitalization takes time. Parks gave the City of Philadelphia as an example of a community that has been part of a journey for almost 50 years to turn around the community and economy of the city. He added that there are many communities across the Commonwealth with similar situations.

Parks stated that this communication is imperative because citizens may expect an instant solution to their communities, and these are not instant solutions. Parks explained that it takes dedicated planning, time, resources, and a positive attitude. Parks stressed the

importance of letting communities know that this is a broad-based platform and that it takes time.

Chair Cohen asked if there were any questions regarding this recommendation. Hearing none, Chair Cohen asked for a motion to approve this recommendation.

Ms. Goldberg made a motion to approve the recommendation. Mr. Alaquiva seconded the motion. Motion carried, Mr. Astorino abstained, none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24 am