

Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 7, 2020

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom – Virtual Meeting

Present via Zoom: Roger Altmeyer (UPMC), Scott Bofinger (Uptown Partners), Dara Braitman (DOMI), Derek Dauphin (City Planning), Lilly Freedman (URA), William Generett Jr. (Duquesne University), Ben Grunauer (PWSA), Joan Hilton Hayek (Duquesne University), Simona Loberant (SEA), Mike Madden (InnovatePGH), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Sean Luther (InnovatePGH/Avenu), Alyssa Lyon (GBA), Jeanne McNutt (Uptown Partners), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Paul Svoboda (Duquesne Light), Alex Toner (University of Pittsburgh), Joseph Wingenfeld (Uptown Partners), Marlene Williams (Uptown Partners), Caroline Woodward (Bethlehem Haven), Megan Zeigler (GBA)

Call to Order/Welcome: Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting via Zoom at 8:05 a.m. with an introduction of all present members.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Ellen asked for a motion to have the March meeting minutes approved that were previously distributed to all members via email. The motion was approved with no dissent. The April meeting was not held due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Agenda Discussions:

(1) Member Updates – COVID 19: Mary Ellen started the meeting by asking all members to give a brief update as to how things were going with each organization and what ongoing challenges they were facing as the pandemic continues. The following were those updates:

- **City Planning:** All employees have been working from home since mid-March. The City has created a COVID-19 homepage that has relevant information, updates from the health department as well as the governor's office, and many resources on it. City Planning is looking at platforms that will allow for community meetings as well as planning commission to convene virtually.
- **DOMI:** Construction projects resumed this past Friday as the governor had lifted the ban on those projects. There is a parking plan study coming up that will be looking at on/off street parking as well as parking lots.
- **Duquesne University:** Classes were administered virtually for the remainder of the semester beginning mid-March. Those students who were able to moved out mid-March and returned home for the remainder of the semester, with only about 30 students remaining on campus. A virtual commencement is planned for May 8th. University leadership has been diligently working on contingency planning for different scenarios for the fall semester and will look to make determinations by the end of June.
- **GBA:** All employees have been working from home since mid-March and will most likely continue to do so even if they are allowed to go back into the office. They are working to be a supportive community partner and have created a resource page for struggling organizations and are working to help them in any way that GBA can.
- **InnovatePGH/Avenu:** All employees have been working from home since mid-March and they working diligently to keep in touch with their tenants. Discounts are being given for rent, and they are working to connect tenants with resources that will help them during this time.
- **PPG Arena:** The arena has postponed a significant percentage of events since March, and will likely not host any concerts for the remainder of the year. Arena management is exploring venue reconfigurations

to adhere to social distancing guidelines and provide for a touchless experience. Some employees have been furloughed. Penguins continue to work with NHL to make determinations about hockey season.

- Port Authority: There is a resource page on its website. There is a limit to the amount of people allowed on buses, and masks are required when riding.
- PWSA: The majority of the employees are working from home at this time. Some of the crews and contractors have resumed work this week.
- University of Pittsburgh: Pitt celebrated a virtual commencement at the end of the semester, and summer classes have begun fully online. They expect to announce their plans for the fall semester at the beginning of June and will have full details by July. Pitt started a pandemic service initiative that allows faculty, staff and students to participate in service and volunteerism to meet critical community needs during this time.
- UPMC: Construction had continued throughout the last several weeks throughout about 20 projects, allowing the new Eye and Rehab Tower to remain on target for opening at the end of 2022. Toward the end of August, the section of Van Braam Street between Locust Street and the Boulevard will close so that the building of the parking structure can begin.
- Uptown Partners: All employees have been working from home since mid-March, and UP is doing everything they can to support and work with businesses in the Uptown neighborhood. Pure Chemical Solutions, located in Uptown, is working on making and supplying hand sanitizer to local businesses. Amplified Church is working to put together virtual programs including a format for games. UP was also helping to distribute masks and was hoping to put together an online raffle to support restaurants in Uptown.
- URA: All employees have been working from home since mid-March. The small business loan program was extremely successful in helping businesses during this time. They have also put together a resource webpage. Internally, the URA is doing some restructuring and they are planning on a phased return once given the OK by the governor.

Mary Ellen thanked every partner for their updates as well as their continued efforts through such a difficult time. Mary Ellen specifically thanked Jeanne McNutt for her years of service to Uptown Partners as well as to the Uptown community as a whole. This will be her last meeting leading up to her retirement. UTF members extended thanks to Jeanne.

(2) Adoption of Proposed Infrastructure Sub-Committee 2020 Plan: Mary Ellen asked the group for a motion to adopt the plan. The motion was approved with no dissent.

(3) EID Plan in Context of COVID 19: Mary Ellen asked the group if the neighborhood plan should be revisited in the context of the global pandemic to see if priorities should change for the UTF and/or its sub-committees. This conversation would most likely also tie in with the update of a partnership between the UTF and Uptown Partners. Several members commented that they felt the sub-committees were able to continue the work that they had prioritized, but virtually. There are certainly concerns around the restaurants surviving through this as well as the availability of testing for residents. The Development Sub-Committee is working with Duquesne University on a business corridor plan and this extra time has been beneficial in the sense that now health plans can be taken into consideration as well as what businesses are going to need more support after the pandemic.

As far as the ongoing conversation with UP about a partnership, discussions have continued around the details of what this will look like. UP Board prefers to manage the search for a new Executive Director on its own, and suggested a role for the UTF in the subsequent search for the District Manager position. Discussions will continue in conjunction with the effort to submit a grant application to the Forbes Funds for funding for the facilitated

discussion on governance between UTF and UP Board.

The group ran out of time to discuss the rest of the agenda items, so they will be moved to the June agenda. Mary Ellen adjourned the meeting at 10:05am.

Next Uptown Task Force Meeting - 8 a.m. on Thursday, June 4th via Zoom.