

Uptown Task Force Meeting Minutes

Thursday, August 6, 2020

8:00 – 10:00 a.m.

Via Zoom

Present: Roger Altmeyer (UPMC), Dara Braitman (DOMI), Derek Dauphin (City Planning), Gary Desjardins (PPG Arena), Lilly Freedman (URA), Joan Hilton (Duquesne University), Simona Loberant (SEA), Sean Luther (InnovatePGH/Avenu), Mike Madden (InnovatePGH), Breen Masciotra (Port Authority), Brittany McDonald (Uptown Partners), Kaylani Singh (InnovatePGH), Mary Ellen Solomon (Duquesne University), Paul Svoboda (Duquesne Light), Alex Toner (University of Pittsburgh), Marlene Williams (Uptown Partners), Joe Wingenfeld (Uptown Partners), Caroline Woodward (Bethlehem Haven)

Call to Order/Welcome: Mary Ellen Solomon convened the meeting at 8:04 a.m. with an introduction of all present Task Force members.

Approval of Minutes: Mary Ellen asked for a motion to have the July meeting minutes approved that were previously distributed to all members via email. The motion was approved with no dissent.

Before moving forward with the agenda, Mary Ellen asked Sean Luther to introduce Dr. Brittany McDonald, the new Executive Director of Uptown Partners. Sean introduced Dr. McDonald saying she was the unanimous choice amongst the UP board members, mostly because of her experience, and her shared passion for what Uptown Partners wants the neighborhood to look like.

Dr. McDonald thanked Sean for the introduction, stating that she is excited to be taking on this role. Prior to her arrival to Uptown Partners, Dr. McDonald worked as a business analyst at PNC Bank. She did a lot of community outreach on the side, including fundraising for nonprofits. She knew it was time to make this side passion her profession, and applied for the job.

Agenda Discussions:

(1) Member Updates re: COVID-19 Pandemic:

- **Duquesne Light:** Duquesne Light is continuing to provide financial support to its customers who are struggling to pay their bills.
- **Duquesne University:** The University has released its plan to reopen for the Fall semester. The upperclassmen are currently allowed to move in their belongings over the course of a few weeks. Freshmen begin to move in on August 16th, and classes start August 24th. There will only be two access points for campus, and external guests will be very limited. Employees and students will be on campus until the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, and then will finish the semester remotely.
- **University of Pittsburgh:** The University has been providing all updated information on their re-opening at coronavirus.pitt.edu to students, parents, and community members. Students have started to move-in off campus, and residence hall move-in starts next week. Pitt has rented out 3 hotels to space students out, as well as to provide quarantine spaces.
- **Uptown Partners:** MetaMesh and HackPGH will be providing free WiFi to families in the Uptown neighborhood through Women's Space East. UP will work with MetaMesh to raise funds to support this initiative as well as maintenance.

(2) Update on Forbes Funds Grant Application: Dr. McDonald stated that the application was submitted and they are currently waiting on feedback.

(3) Priority Projects for Funding: Derek Dauphin continues to explore viability of the top projects identified via a UTF survey. They are as follows:

1. Use funds to invest in Tustin Smart Block components: park improvements, community garden, streetscape enhancements, affordable housing in adjacent buildings.
2. Increase low-carbon mobility options by investing in infrastructure such as on-/off-street parking and charging for electric vehicles, electric bikes, and/or electric scooters.
3. Establish program that would help connect Uptown and Hill District youth/residents to jobs in the Innovation Economy.
4. Build out slow streets interventions as identified in the plan (mostly in the residential areas east of Dinwiddie Street and south of Fifth Avenue).
5. Work with UTF, Uptown Partners RED Committee, Contextual Design Advisory Panel, and Planning Commission to establish design guidelines for new development in Uptown.

Another project that is also in the mix of discussions is the Colwell Trail, specifically the Brady Street connector. Derek stated that there had been very successful follow-up discussions with different constituents about each project, and the decision about which project will be provided the City capital budget funds will most likely be chosen based off of feasibility, timing, and budget. Derek is hopeful this decision will happen before the September meeting.

(4) Adoption of Mobility Sub-committee Annual Work Plan: Mary Ellen asked for a motion to adopt the 2020 – 2021 Mobility Sub-committee Work Plan that was previously distributed to members via email. The motion was approved with no dissent.

Sub-Committee Updates:

- Community: The group is hoping to conduct monthly clean-ups in Uptown. There is a lot of trash around the Uptown sign, and UP has a letter into the City to fix the sign and clean up the area. There was an event to introduce Dr. McDonald to the Uptown community that was well attended. Finally, there is a Hill District Resource map in relation to COVID-19 that is being developed and almost ready to be available to the public.
- Development: The group has started interviewing people in regards to how Avenu's resources could be leveraged to improve the local innovation economy and better interact with residents. The group is also following up on leads on spaces in the Uptown area from the URA that businesses might be interested in moving into. Finally, the group is going to have a roundtable discussion with city employees about affordable housing. There will be a written update on this soon.
- Mobility: There is a contract in progress for the Parking/TDM study. It should be fully executed in 2 to 3 weeks. The first exercise of the contract will be a preliminary parking condition analysis, but DOMI already has a lot of that data. DOMI is happy to have conversations with UPMC and Duquesne University around parking conditions. The shared parking management district under consideration in the Strip District could serve as a model for Uptown.

Mary Ellen adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.

Next Uptown Task Force Meeting - 8 a.m. on Thursday, September 3rd via Zoom.

