

**Senate Community Relations Committee Meeting**  
**12:00 – 1:30 p.m., Room 272, Hillman Library**  
**January 17, 2012**

**Attendees:** Genevieve Barbee, CHS; Denise Chisholm, SHRS; G. Reynolds Clark, Vice Chancellor of Community Initiatives; Laurie Cohen, ULS, CRC Co-Chair; Mary Davidson, OBID; David Givens, GPSA; Peter Hart, *University Times*; Linda Hartman, HSLs; Patrick Loughlin, Bioengineering; Martha Ann Terry, GSPH, CRC Co-Chair; Tara Sherry-Torres, OPDC; Patricia Weiss, HSLs, Vice President, University Senate; John Wilds, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Community Initiatives.

Old Business: Minutes from the CRC meeting of December 13, 2011 were distributed and approved after correction of typographical errors.

Co-Chair Remarks: Co-chair Martha Ann Terry mentioned that Senate elections are coming up this spring, and that anyone interested in running for a position should let Dr. John Baker know

Co-Chair Laurie Cohen reported that the new mission statement for the committee had been sent to Michael Pinsky and approved. The changes have already been made on the Senate Standing Committee web site. Another piece of information that was reported was an estimate of the attendance at November's Senate Plenary session. According to Lori Molinaro, Director of the University Senate, close to one hundred people attended, with about twenty of those serving as speakers and/or organizers.

New Business: A large portion of the meeting involved a discussion of the recent Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) meeting, held the previous week. The ridership between Oakland and Downtown Pittsburgh amounts to about 18,000 people, which constitutes 28% of the Port Authority's business. Pitt resides in PAT's busiest corridor, which represents the third largest concentration of population within the state.

Bus Rapid Transit would provide a frequent, evenly-spaced schedule of stops between Oakland and Downtown, with limited stops. There would probably be three Oakland stops and riders would be able to pre-pay for their tickets, and use smartphone apps to determine real time arrival of buses. Newer, articulated buses would be used, with three entrances to speed up travel time. It hasn't been determined yet, but one possibility is a separate BRT corridor to avoid traffic on major routes. The bus would not go far into Downtown but would include a stop on Grant Street. At this point, the end point of the route in the east has not been established. Possibilities include Shadyside, Squirrel Hill, and the East Busway.

The success of BRT implementation in other cities such as Cleveland and Portland, Oregon is being looked at, and there is an ongoing study through the fall of 2012. A number of local groups are collaborating on this effort, including OBID, PAT, Innovation Oakland, and the Oakland Task Force. This development will affect residents and local businesses, and the advisory groups are looking at best practices. Once more decisions have been made there will be branding for the service, and possibly stations for purchasing tickets. One of the problems discussed by the committee was a negative perception of the Port Authority at a time when many bus routes are being cut due to budget difficulties.

University Updates: The Pennsylvania state legislature recently cut another 5% of their appropriation to Pitt, which amounts to \$6.8 million. The heads of the five super-responsibility centers (offices of the Chancellor, Executive Vice Chancellor, Provost, Executive Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences, and Chief

Financial Officer) must identify areas for cost reductions. This money will be put into a reserve fund, with the possibility of it being returned at the end of the fiscal year. The governor's budget will be released on February 7<sup>th</sup>, and the Pennsylvania House Budget Committee hearing is on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, so more information will be forthcoming.

Construction is continuing on new freshman housing, and the addition to Salk Hall is expected to resume soon, once the soil stabilization around old mine shafts has been completed. Work on Benedum Hall and the Graduate School of Public Health is ongoing, and abandoned buildings at the end of Fifth Avenue have been torn down.

Community Service Updates: Renny Clark provided an update on campus activities, including Christmas Day at Pitt, which provided 1200 meals, the holiday food drive, Pitt's contributions to the Oakland Food Pantry, and the hat and glove set drive.

Student Updates: Laurie Cohen reported that a new CGS representative had joined the CRC. Her name is Victoria Artis. David Givens reported that the graduate students are looking for community service initiatives to participate in.

Community Partners: Tara Sherry-Torres recently wrote a letter to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* entitled "Oakland is improving in many ways." This was in response to Brian O'Neill's interview with Carlino Giampolo, which painted a negative and one-sided picture of Pitt students living in Oakland. In the ensuing discussion, groups such as the Oakland Code Enforcement Task Force were mentioned as one of the community groups which handle disputes between renters and landlords.

A need was identified to disseminate more information about the various Oakland community agencies and the services they provide. Denise Chisholm suggested that the CRC provide a document on our website about the community partners and their initiatives. We could check the site on a quarterly basis to keep the information current. Tara mentioned that both the Innovation Oakland and the Oakland 2025 sites already provide this information, so maybe all we need is a link to one of those sites.

Tara spoke about the Oakland 2025 planning effort. The consultants have gathered information and feedback from the many public meetings that were held over the last year, and they are currently analyzing that data. In March, recommendations from the consultant will be made in a variety of public forums to get buy-in from the residents and encourage a sense of stewardship, as was done in the South Side when they implemented their community plan. The plan will be reviewed every three years, using the Everyday Democracy model. As an update, the Pittsburgh School Board recently rejected the latest developer's bid for turning the former Schenley High School into apartments.

Genevieve Barbee passed around a list of activities taking place at Community Human Services, and announced that they have space available for community groups or clubs that want to meet in their facility on Lawn Street. CHS is offering free tax help for households earning less than \$40,000 or individuals earning less than \$20,000, thanks to a grant from the United Way. Other services offered include financial literacy classes, and asset-building workshops. The Smile 'N Dine lunch program is going strong, and CHS is seeing more clients every month at the Oakland Food Pantry. They recently served between 30-45 households in the first half hour of distribution per week. Genevieve thanked Dr. Wilds for the delivery of 127 cases of food donated by Pitt.

Mary Davidson reported that OBID is undergoing an office renovation, which includes a bottle-filling station.

John Wilds reported that March 13<sup>th</sup> is Pitt Day in Harrisburg. The university generally sends busloads of students to this event. He also reported that the Pitt 225 committee is forming a calendar listing of 225 different community service projects performed by Pitt staff, students, and faculty from February until the fall of 2012. John asked the community partners at the meeting to inform him of any opportunities to work with the university on service initiatives.