

July 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday | July 22, 2021 | 10AM

Via Zoom



Municipal Attendees: Mary Ellen Ramage, Etna; Darla Cravotta, Allegheny County; Patty DeMarco, Forest Hills; Ben Estell, Dormont; Tim Rogers, Shaler; Tim McLaughlin, Aspinwall; Lindsay Powell, Pittsburgh; Phyllis Anderson, Oakmont; Andrew Flynn, Mt. Lebanon; Mark Sampogna, Green Tree; Connie Tinsley, Turtle Creek; Ron Borczyk, Ross; Rob Zahorchak, Edgewood; Shawn Alfonso-Wells, Swissvale; Kelly Robertson, Duquesne; Brittany Reno, Sharpsburg; Kyle Thauvette, Collier; Jessica Semler, Etna; George Zboyovsky, Brentwood; Steve Beuter, Carnegie; Vanessa McCarty-Johnson, Homestead; Cindy Bahn, Bellevue; Tom Rengers, Etna; RJ Susko, McCandless

Other Attendees: Jeanne Clark, ALCOSAN; Dianne Russell, Institute for Conservation Leadership; Lina Dostilio, University of Pittsburgh; Carissa Slotterback, University of Pittsburgh

GSPIA/CONNECT: Lydia Morin, Tess De Jong, JoEllen Marsh, Kelley Kelley, Brett Stewart, Eric Raabe, Sarah Downing

The Zoom room opened at 9:45am for members to casually chat with one another

Introductions, Call to Order and Agenda Overview by Chair Patricia DeMarco

- We are entering a new stage where we engage, develop and strategize as a network of networks, not just as an organization within an institution
- Comments on the challenging but transformational and interconnected time we are in and the issues we are involved in

May 2021 Executive Committee Minutes

Motion to approve minutes – Andrew Flynn, Mt. Lebanon

Second – Shawn Alfonso-Wells, Swissvale

Motion approved.

Big Picture: CONNECT x University of Pittsburgh and Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA)

Introduce Lina Dostilio, Pitt Associate Vice Chancellor of Community Engagement

- Acknowledgment of the last 12 years of CONNECT as excellence in community engaged research and the established network
- Our office is going through evolution. We're prioritizing engagement in new and exciting ways
- The new Plan for Pitt places communities in the center. How can Pitt be responsive to community agendas and how do we grow and strengthen together
- Discussion of five-year goals: impactful community engaged research, connecting local to global, making connections across the globe, placing local communities at the center
- Pitt seed grants

- The Plan for Pitt strategic plan really does leverage high operations at Pitt. It impacts the budget, it impacts the creation of new staff positions that we can recruit for, and it impacts program development
- Acknowledgment of her amazing team behind her including Jamie Ducar and Alex Toner
- Call on me (through Lydia) whenever! We want to be better partners with CONNECT. The university can come behind CONNECT more than it already has. See my office as your resource.
- Remember one thing: CONNECT is an *exemplar* of the way we engage with local communities!

Introduce Carissa Slotterback, Dean of GSPIA and CONNECT advisor

- Given my experiences with universities in the past, what Pitt is doing now is exceptionally exciting and progressive and leading the way
- I'm an urban planner by trade. CONNECT certainly caught my eye as I had the prospect of coming to Pitt and Pittsburgh. Since I've settled into this city in October, it's so clear. CONNECT catches my attention and stimulates my imagination and I want to amplify it
- One of my priorities in the upcoming years is positioning GSPIA for the future. As well as our own strategic planning process, so I am excited to watch your network planning/mapping. We'll bring in more partners, alumni, and faculty, and CONNECT is a key piece of this process
- Another priority is research. Among many other things, CONNECT is research, and it's funded which is always great
- Explanation of other top priorities related to GSPIA student support, diversity & inclusion, and more
- Taking an approach that is relationships-based is the most realistic. Not just pushing things out in 1-way format, but really thinking about ways to engage people. Opportunities exist within communities, CONNECT, & GSPIA
- Examples of how: dedicated staffing, board of visitor members, giving each GSPIA student an interaction with CONNECT, connect with relevant faculty research
- Diversity and inclusion are shared priorities so we can learn from and reinforce each other
- How do we tell a more effective, clear story about what's going on in the school/CONNECT? GSPIA will be highlighting CONNECT more and telling that story to the broad ranges of our audience.

Future of Fire Update

- As a recent grad, thanks to Dean Slotterback for your support and engagement with our work! So much work has gone in, the whole arena is changing!
- The needs assessment we've been working on to support fire services is off to a strong, positive start.

- CONNECT's ALOM presentation and panel was huge success. We received lots of interest from municipalities outside CONNECT as well as our members in attendance, which is sign of sustainability of our program.
- We will submit to DCED to have the study fully funded

CONNECT Regional Climate Action Plan Update

- More communities became interested in climate action after 6 did their own CAPs as part of the DEP cohort the previous year, so CONNECT voted to put together a regional plan to help more municipalities engage
- The hope is to empower municipalities with this research and knowledge
- The draft will go out to you, our partners, the university, and more to help make it as best as it can be! It will start going out in August after we have a whole Infrastructure & Utilities Coordination Working Group dedicated to it next week, July 29
- The CAP subcommittee is hoping to grow with more members engaging to complete a final draft by our April 21, 2022 Legislative Session

Introduction to Strategic Network Leadership Training

- Realized we're missing huge piece in that talking about how we are a network
- The national things our consultant Institute for Conservation Leadership (ICL) has done are so valuable, this theory/research didn't really exist when we all studied organizational development/strategies
- As Executive Director, I kept trying to fit a strategic plan into an organizational development box... and what you all found valuable was that we are a network! We started connecting these dots. With similarities with New Sun Rising and Sustainable Pittsburgh, who have staff sitting in a number of Working Groups, we decided to do a pilot with some tools. How can we be the most strategic network of networks that we are?
- We have more nonprofits and funding per capita than any other region, yet we aren't necessarily the leading region for solutions
- We're very excited to have Dianne from ICL with 30+ years of experience and for a Forbes Funds grant for the Strategic Network Leadership Training starting this September

Dianne Russell

- I am excited for this whole Executive Committee meeting to see the full breadth of work you're all doing together
- Dianne explained her organization, past work, and dissected "organization mindset" versus "network mindset." [See her slides here.](#)
- Today I'd like to show you draft model/design, then ask for your input. This is not an off-the-shelf design, it was created for CONNECT

- View the [flyer](#) here
- Upcoming Strategic Network Leadership Training dates: September 30, October 21, October 28, November 16

Member Visioning Session in Breakout Rooms

- “Thoughts on the pacing, meeting frequency, meeting length, content covered, & post-meeting action items of Working Group and Executive Committee meetings?”
- “What opportunities do you see for CONNECT with GSPIA/Pitt?”

Join us for [David Y. Miller’s Memorial Event](#) on his would-be 74th birthday, Wednesday, September 1st, 5:00-7:00pm at the Schenley Tent.

Tentative next Executive Committee Meeting: Thursday, September 16th, 10:00am

Adjourn 11:45am