

The Newsletter of the  
Port of Pittsburgh Commission

2022 Vol 1 (issue #8)

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



In light of recent events in Pittsburgh, infrastructure is filling the headlines. As part of the Infrastructure Package, we will receive full funding for the new construction start at the Montgomery Locks and Dam; President Biden visited Pittsburgh to talk about his infrastructure plan; a new round of CMAQ grant money has just been approved; the Port Commission is ready to start up its popular Small Grants Program once again; and we get to welcome yet another new board member to our Commission.

Of course, we still have work ahead of us to acquire the rest of the funding for the entire Upper Ohio River Navigation Project, but we have confidence in our knowledgeable legislators who continually champion for the improvement of our waterway infrastructure.

The Fern Hollow Bridge collapse that occurred on January 28th (the same day the President was scheduled to visit Pittsburgh) keeps us ever mindful of the importance of infrastructure plays in terms of the safety of our citizens as well as the movement of goods and services in our region.

*Mary Ann Bucci* Executive Director, Port of Pittsburgh Commission

### **Pittsburgh port district receives unprecedented sum for new construction at Montgomery Locks**

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission (PPC) announced on January 19th that an unprecedented \$857.71 million has been allocated to fully fund the Montgomery Locks located along the Ohio River, in Monaca, PA, Beaver County. These funds will be used for new start construction. Built in 1936, Montgomery Locks & Dam averages about 300 commercial lockages every month, plus another 150 lockages of pleasure craft during the busy summer months.

“This funding announcement is a big win for southwestern Pennsylvania,” said Mary Ann Bucci, Executive Director of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission. “The Port of Pittsburgh is a driver of jobs and economic prosperity in the region, and by completing the much-needed construction on the Montgomery Locks and Dam, we will be able to safely bring goods in and out of Pittsburgh.”

This announcement is the result of the USACE’s (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Work Plan, which will provide \$17 billion in funding for the USACE’s civil works projects. President Biden signed the IIJA into law in November 2021, and the plan was submitted to Congress on Friday, January 14. The Montgomery Locks & Dam was the region’s only project to receive the new construction designation in the FY2021 work plan.

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### **3 RIVERS, 3 QUESTIONS**

with *Devlin Robinson*

Pennsylvania State Senate



*Senator Robinson represents Pennsylvania’s 37th Senate District including parts of Allegheny County and Peters Township in Washington County. Senator Robinson currently serves on the committee for Community, Economic & Recreational Development and the committee for Labor & Industry, among others.*

**1. Congratulations on your first year in office! Let us know what your first year has been like, and what your experience has been like so far?**

It’s hard to believe that I’ve already completed one year in office. My goal at the beginning of my term was to get to know my district even better and learn how I could best serve the constituents that reside in our communities. Although Covid-19 may have provided challenges, I was able to tour 66 businesses, corporations, nonprofits, and manufacturing plants during the first year. I also attended 325 community events including parades, festivals, and grand openings. As I mentioned already, meeting the people of the

(continued on page 2...)



### Montgomery Lock funding continued

The Montgomery Locks & Dam project funding would not have been possible without support from US Senator Robert Casey and US Representative Conor Lamb. "This is fantastic news for the region and our inland waterways," said Matt Smith, President, Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce, an affiliate of the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. "Southwestern Pennsylvania's rivers provide the region's businesses a competitive advantage and access to a global marketplace. We are grateful for our partnership with the Port of Pittsburgh Commission and key infrastructure stakeholders across the region in advocating for these necessary improvements critical to our region's success. We look forward to continuing our efforts and realizing the reconstruction of the Upper Ohio Navigation System Project at the Montgomery, Emsworth and Dashields locks & dams." The Pittsburgh Chamber has been and remains a pivotal partner to PortPitt in our infrastructure advocacy efforts.

Bucci added, "Senator Casey and Congressman Lamb brought US Secretary Pete Buttigieg to Pittsburgh last Spring and we had the opportunity to show him the importance of our inland waterway system and the need for investment for our aging lock and dam infrastructure. Not only are our waterways critical to the movement of freight in the region, but also the quality of life throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania."



### The Port of Pittsburgh Commission welcomes its newest board member PA Representative Jessica Benham!



Representative Benham serves the 36th Pennsylvania House District. She serves on the committees for Aging & Older Adult Services; Health; and Human Services.

Benham's background is in advocacy for health care, education and worker's rights, with experience advocating for legislation on the federal, state and local levels.

Prior to holding public office, Benham was Director of Development for the Pittsburgh Center for Autistic Advocacy (PCAA).

Benham has B.A. degrees in Political Science and Communication Studies from Bethel University, an M.A. in Communication from Minnesota State University, and an M.A. in Bioethics from the University of Pittsburgh.

The PPC looks forward to having Representative Benham serve on our board of commissioners.

### 3 Rivers, 3 Questions with Devlin Robinson continued

37th district was my top priority. My team and I attended 283 in-person meetings and 156 zoom meetings! I'm proud to say that we were able to advocate and award \$6,923,645 worth of funding towards district projects. This money will enable municipalities and boroughs in the 37th district to create green space, improve flooding and stormwater conditions, and enhance recreational trails and parks. Legislatively, I had four bills passed by the Senate of Pennsylvania, which are SB 403, SB 706, SB 550, and SB 96. SB 550-Act 89 and SB 96-Act 55 were even passed into law! This has been a wonderful learning experience, and I'm looking forward to another year ahead.

### 2. You serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee, as well as Local Government, Labor & Industry and Community, Economic & Recreational Development. Can you tell us a bit about those roles and your responsibilities, and your priorities for those committees?

I'm fortunate to serve on seven committees including Law & Justice (Vice Chair), Appropriations, Community Economic & Recreational Development, Game & Fisheries, Health & Human Services, Labor & Industry, and Local Government. Right now, Appropriations is keeping me busy as we begin our meetings hearing from each of the state agencies. They provide their operations reports and data, so we can see how programs are being carried out and how funding is being used. This will then help us when it's time to pass the state budget. This is a very important committee for the Commonwealth. Game & Fisheries may be my favorite committee! I love the outdoors and know how important hunting and fishing is to residents of the 37th district. One of my favorite memories was having the opportunity to stock various bodies of water in our area with trout. I've also been able to explore Pittsburgh by boat to learn how the rivers have a tremendous impact on our region. I'm proud to serve on such meaningful committees and am excited to see what we will accomplish in the new year.

### 3. Additionally in 2021, we were pleased to welcome you to the Port of Pittsburgh Commission Board. Where are some areas that the PPC and its stakeholders can offer support to the efforts of your office in terms of the items we discussed earlier?

Being part of the Port of Pittsburgh Commission Board is an exciting opportunity! I'm ready to connect with local businesses and community members to discuss ways to support and provide resources for waterway projects in our region.



## President Biden Visits Pittsburgh to Promote Infrastructure Bill Amid Fern Hollow Bridge Collapse; Discusses \$857 Million to Fund Montgomery Locks & Dam



President Joe Biden visited Pittsburgh on Friday, January 28th to promote his \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure law. His previously scheduled visit coincidentally occurred in the wake of the Fern Hollow (Frick Park) Bridge disaster which happened on the morning of his official visit. The president, joined by elected officials including U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, D-Scranton, U.S. Rep. Conor Lamb, D-17, Gov. Tom Wolf, Lt. Gov. John Fetterman, and Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey, said his \$1.2 trillion bipartisan infrastructure law will help prevent disasters like the one in Frick Park.

At the end of his speech, Biden turned his attention to the \$857 million in infrastructure spending awarded last week to complete the aging Montgomery Locks in Beaver County. The \$2.6 billion Upper Ohio Navigation project involves replacing and expanding chambers at the Emsworth, Dashields and Montgomery locks and dams along the Ohio River.

Biden mentioned that Senator Bob Casey has long been an advocate for the project, and his involvement was key to the funding award for the Montgomery Locks & Dam.



## Port of Pittsburgh Commission awarded \$6 million in new CMAQ funding

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission has been awarded \$6 million in funding under the region's CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) program. The new project, entitled the Marine & Landside Equipment Re-Power Program has received approval from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission (SPC), will look to continue the work of repowering diesel marine vessels, with the addition of repowering landside diesel equipment such as cranes and other large scale material handling equipment. The emphasis will remain on upgrading existing vessels and equipment to improve regional air quality and further strengthen the competitiveness of our regional stakeholders through improvements to freight movement through our waterways.

The overall program will be similar to the previous round of funding with qualifying applicants providing 50/50 matching funds for projects located in the Pittsburgh District. In addition, qualified projects will be required to demonstrate emissions improvements by updating engines and related equipment which will improve emissions and overall efficiency.

The new round of funding will be programmed as part of the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program, and new funding is expected to be available after October 1, 2022. Over the next few months, interested applicants can expect a comprehensive rollout of the new program to assist in the application and reporting process, as well as a webinar to inform and introduce interested parties to the overall process. The Port of Pittsburgh Commission is pleased to be the recipient of these funds, and looks forward to working with its partners to continue this crucial program.



## Port of Pittsburgh Commission announces new Small Grants Program

The Port of Pittsburgh Commission will be offering a Small Grants Award Program beginning in February 2022. The program will have a maximum grant amount to not exceed \$10,000. Eligible projects will seek to enhance the utilization of our waterways for the betterment of our communities. This will include: water stewardship, advocacy, outreach and education, safety and/or environmental measures, and increase awareness of our rivers and their impacts, and the use of new concepts and ideas.

Applicants may be from commercial or non-profit entities, including municipalities and counties, community or volunteer-based organizations, as well as educational and academic entities which will use this grant to augment their existing resources to help further the Port of Pittsburgh's mission of assistance to our waterways and communities. Additionally, projects which demonstrate additional resources, such as match funding from other sources will receive additional consideration. The application period will close on March 18, 2022 at 5pm.

Awards will be announced after the PPC Board meeting on April 22, 2022.

If you are interested in applying for the Small Grants Program, you can find more information at our website, [www.portpitt.com](http://www.portpitt.com) where you can download an application. For additional information on the Small Grants Program, please contact Matt Pavlosky, Public Relations Manager: [matt@portpitt.com](mailto:matt@portpitt.com) or at (412) 480-0388.



### Port of Pittsburgh Commission to expand focus on virtual meetings in 2022

As part of our commitment to informing our stakeholders, the Port of Pittsburgh Commission will be conducting Virtual Meetings during 2022. With the launch of multiple grant programs during the year, including a new round of CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality) funding for our Marine Diesel and Landside Retrofit Program, viewers can expect to see interactive virtual programming which will inform our constituents about our latest program offerings, allow participants to ask questions and have dialogue with our staff, and continue to provide the best in information and education about the issues and programs which will affect and sustain our waterways.



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## OUR PORTPITT TEAM

**MARY ANN BUCCI**  
Executive Director  
[mary-ann@portpitt.com](mailto:mary-ann@portpitt.com)



**SCOTT HARSHMAN**  
Marketing/Program Manager  
[scott@portpitt.com](mailto:scott@portpitt.com)



**MICHA**  
PortPitt Mascot



**MATT PAVLOSKY**  
Public Relations Manager  
[matt@portpitt.com](mailto:matt@portpitt.com)



**MIKE BRINZA**  
Port Analyst  
[mike@portpitt.com](mailto:mike@portpitt.com)

