RAD ADOPTS $93.7 MILLION BUDGET FOR 2015; NEW GRANTS FOR ACCESSIBILITY, SHARED

At a December business meeting, the RAD Board of Directors approved a 2015 budget totaling $93.7 million, which is $2.5 million more than the 2014 adopted budget. The final budget provides grants to 90 organizations. Included in the budget is $4.4 million in discretionary capital grants, including several key grants that will provide important leverage for other funding:

- A grant of $86,000 to the Pittsburgh Symphony will complete the local match needed for a state grant of $1.5 for accessibility and audience support facilities at Heinz Hall;
- A grant of $50,000 to the Frick Art and Historical Center is completing a $15 million renovation, part of which requires local match.

These grants, along with increased funding for the Allegheny Heinz History Center and WQED, join the prior recommendations for major capital investments at the Pittsburgh Zoo, Phipps Conservatory, National Aviary, and regional parks and trail projects.

The budget would be funded by an estimated $90 million in new sales tax receipts with the balance coming from the District’s grant stabilization fund. According to a report by the Allocations Committee, which recommends the budget, an examination of revenue since the preliminary budget was released indicates that revenue estimates are sufficient to support the 2015 plan.

In the 2015 budget, libraries will continue to receive the largest share of funds at 30%, parks and trails 30%; sports facilities and the convention center 15%, the Zoo, Phipps and Aviary are slated to receive 9%, arts and cultural organizations 11%, and transit would see 3% of the spending. Funding for District operations would remain at under 1% of budget.

The 2015 budget includes increased operating grants to 40 of the region’s cultural and recreational assets, including:

- a 6.5% increase in support for the library system’s Electronic Information Network that links all library card holders to the collections of 72 locations around the county;
- funding for $2.1 million in new capital projects in our regional parks and trails, such as playground and pavilion improvements, and equipment purchases;
- a $250,000 allocation for Special Projects to enhance accessibility and inclusion, and asset collaborations.

At the same meeting, the RAD Board approved four Special Projects grants from the 2014 budget to enhance accessibility and shared services of the regional assets.

- An accessibility grant of $60,000 to the Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh – The Andy Warhol Museum (pictured at right; courtesy Abby Warhola) to support a number of accessibility improvements including assistive listening devices in the galleries and theater. The grant is a match for other private funds.
- An accessibility grant of $25,000 to the Pittsburgh Zoo for manufacture and installation of accessibility enhancements in a new exhibit area, including way-finding and Braille signage. A connection grant of $25,000 to the Allegheny County Library Association for development of a web-based individual giving program for each library.
- A connection grant of $10,000 to the Society of Contemporary Craft for hiring a shared chief financial officer for their organization, working together with the New Hazlett Theater, Pittsburgh Glass Center, PICT and the Union Project.

Additional information is available on the RAD’s web page radworkhere.org, or by calling the RAD office at (412) 227-1900.

FINANCIAL UPDATE: SALES TAX COLLECTIONS, MUNICIPAL COMPLIANCE RE-

The District’s share of the county sales tax revenue for 2014 is $92 million, 4% higher than 2013. This means that Allegheny County government received $46 million and the other municipalities shared another $46 million. A spike in auto sales fueled the higher than average growth. Monthly budget updates, audits and annual reports are available at radworkhere.org.

Municipalities are reminded that Act 77 has a number of requirements to remain eligible for distribution of the sales tax including the timely filing of the annual report with the state, participation in a low income senior citizen tax relief program and dedicating a portion of the tax in the tax to intergovernmental programs. Municipalities are encouraged to have their solicitors review compliance with the Act.
20 RADICAL DAYS CELEBRATES TWO DECADES

RAD, funded assets and the public celebrated the 20th anniversary of RAD this fall with the annual RADical Days event, filled with free admissions, exhibits and performances at more than 40 locations around the county. Nearly 50,000 attend RADical Days, seeing and experiencing their sales tax dollars at work. It all kicked off with free tours at PNC Park the day after they clinched a playoff berth, and concluded with free admission at the Pittsburgh Zoo.

RADical Days took place both indoors and out, including guided walks with the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania and Hay Day at Hartwood Acres. This year, there was additional focus on special events at the libraries, including a staged reading of Jekyll and Hyde by Prime Stage Theater at Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh – Main.

There were additional performances at different free admission sites by Allegheny Brass Band, Children’s Festival Chorus, South Hills Chorale, Pittsburgh CLO Mini-Stars, Three Rivers Young Peoples Orchestras, Gateway to the Arts, Bulgarian Dance Ensemble Otets Paisii, and Edgewood Symphony Orchestra.

To receive RADical Days email alerts for 2015, look for the sign-up link on RADical Days of RAD’s web site radworkshere.org. RAD thanks all of the participating assets!

IN THE SPOTLIGHT  :  PITTSBURGH ZOO & PPG

RADical Days visitors enjoyed seeing the sun-basking Amur tigers, one of the Pittsburgh Zoo’s 475 species.