

LINDA BOXX PART II INTERVIEW

Avigail Oren: Alrighty. So, it is Sunday, November 10, 2019. I am here with Linda Boxx and Susan- how do you pronounce your last name, Susan?

Susan Wiedel: Wiedel.

Avigail Oren: Wiedel, okay – and Susan Wiedel. And, it's about 1:20 p.m. We're at the Beauty Shop Liberty Bank Building in East Liberty, Pittsburgh. All right. So, today we're here because we're going to ask Linda to share more of her recollections about the gaps in the GAP, meaning, really, the very challenging sections between McKeesport and the Point in Pittsburgh. And so, why don't we start, Linda, with you telling us when attention turned to the gaps in the GAP. What do you recall being the major challenges as in what, at the time, did you perceive the big problems were going to be?

Linda Boxx: Well, the big problem was there was no real estate acquired, there was no corridor at all to work with. And, that was one of the main reasons. In the '90s, I turned the ATA vote toward Somerset and Allegany County, Maryland, and felt that we needed to connect McKeesport to the C&O Canal Trail and then we would have this nice length to McKeesport to D.C. And, then, that would give additional interest to really charge through the Mon Valley and get that last section done. So, there were nine miles left. The City of Pittsburgh's piece had already basically been done. You talked to Mayor Murphy, or Eric did...

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: ...and understand how that all was done – Eliza Furnace piece and so forth. ATA helped with the Hot Metal Bridge with funding, but that was really the City of Pittsburgh piece. And, the URA was very, very important in getting that whole thing constructed. So, there we were right at the edge – it was actually involved in the borough and there were nine miles to McKeesport that wasn't acquired or built. So, 2003, Big Savage Tunnel was completed and we had a little extra money in our pocket. We'd raised money – and I'll talk a little bit about that later. We ended up with a nice legacy amount that we were able to really get started on the gaps in the GAP

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section. And, also, at the same time, Hannah Hardy had been working for PEC- and that's one thing I wanted to- I don't think I really talked so much in my first interview, but our foundation was, in a way, the fairy godmother of the whole project and our foundation had underwritten Hannah's work to work at PEC on the Great Allegheny Passage, just like we had underwritten Brett's salary to be the circuit rider in Somerset County. So, we were no longer giving money directly to the Regional Trail Corporation for ATA's needs, but we were also tucking money in other places so that other people could be involved. And, Hannah was just a jewel to work with always, and so glad that she was able to commit that time. She also had responsibilities in water trails but basically, she- once we got going, she was spending an awful lot of time working on this. So, in 2004 – I think, like, March – the **Steel Industry Heritage Corporation** finally released proprietary ownership, so to speak, of the coke-gas pipeline, which allowed us to step in and work on acquiring that piece of property, which was critical. That was the first piece of property that we were able to buy and that was 1.89 miles. And, it took some amount of time to get that concluded. Jack Paulik was on board by the time we finished that acquisition, but he wasn't on board when we started.

Avigail Oren:

Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx:

But, that was two miles of the nine. That was a big win if we could get that done. We didn't know how we were going to connect it on either end, but let's get something going here. So, that acquisition was done in 2006 or '05. I'll figure that out. But, like I said, it was our start. We brought Jack on in 2006, which was, again, another godsend. And, I really appreciated working so closely with Jack. We'd known each other for years, we have common interests, personality-wise – we're not terribly different, and we just got along well, but we had different strengths. And, together – I look at it as the perfect yin and yang, really, because he was great at on the ground, plowing through the details, just very conscientious about the details and keeping things moving. I was more the communicator, the writer, trying to get the word out there, trying to build up the support, make sure that the funding kept

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going. I was the one hauling off to Harrisburg all the time, begging for money, or going to the Pittsburgh foundations. I mean, Jack would be along on some of those, of course, because he had great credibility because he had such a long career in trail building. But, the two of us just worked together so well. A lot of times, we'd be coming home from a meeting and whether it was with the county, or with the contractor, or an engineer, and there'd be these six to-dos. And, Jack would be driving back from Pittsburgh and I'd get on my phone and I'd call somebody and I'd get one thing checked off and we'd say, "Okay, let's call so-and-so and get this done." And so, by the time we each got back to Latrobe, we'd already have five of the six things done and the sixth thing might have been something we just strictly we had to do at the office. So, we really made good use of all that driving time. And, on the way in, we'd say, "Okay, what do we need to get out of this meeting?" "What is the action element that we have to make sure gets accomplished?" And, we would be focused on, "This thing has to move" and we would go for it. So, really, like I always spent a time in the car – it was very productive work.

So, when we received the coke-gas pipeline – we had a nice event at the U.S. Steel facility at the Waterfront. And, I always felt badly because Dan Onorato and John Surma, at that point, had been named co-chairs of the Pittsburgh 250. So, this was sort of a big event to transfer that property. And, Hannah was president at the time of RTC and I was, of course, president of ATA. And, we had this really nice event – lots of people – but I never thanked... You know, we had a lot of people that helped out of the goodness of their heart. At that event, Farley Toothman, who was the Greene County Commissioner at the time, also an attorney, and right now is one of the Greene County judges – he negotiated the sales agreement with U.S. Steel on our behalf. And, it was really fascinating because I knew him as a county commissioner but when he became our lawyer, it was a whole different story. And, I felt like this is why Rivers of Steel had trouble closing because once you get a lawyer looking after your best interests, and the liability, and really making sure you're safe, things got tough. We got to the point where I said like, "We could accept that level of risk." "We can accept that level of risk." "That's okay. We don't have

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to go down that road.” But, it was great having someone who was civic-minded – obviously if he is a county commissioner as well as a nice legal mind to help us out.

Susan Wiedel: Could you clarify me what exactly- why was the risk something you didn’t have to worry about?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Well, the risk was contamination.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: It was a coke-gas pipeline and there could be any kind of contamination at the site.

Susan Wiedel: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: Our risk mitigation plan was – and we worked with someone in DEP about this as we were going along – they called it “pathway to contamination” – I think was the phrase. So, we knew we were going to asphalt pave it so that if the soils came out and you weren’t going to inhale anything or little kids weren’t going to start chewing on the dirt, or whatever.

Susan Wiedel: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: So, it had to be asphalt paved. There was one hot spot that the Phase I came up, but U.S. Steel took care of that and I think they ended up doing actually a Phase II on the whole property. They wanted to make sure that they were not held liable either in the future.

Susan Wiedel: Phase II was in a [inaudible 0:10:46.5]?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: But, that’s an environmental... Yes. Yeah.

Susan Wiedel: Okay.

Linda Boxx: I mean, they didn’t have to do the cleanup, it’s a study.

Susan Wiedel: Oh, okay.

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Linda Boxx: You know, soil samples and so forth. Probably the bigger problem with the whole site was there was an auto repair shop up on 837 who, when he had his 55-gallon barrel drums – he'd just throw them over the side.

Susan Wiedel: Oh, no.

Linda Boxx: He'd just roll them down the hill. And so, there was a big dump of these 55-gallon barrels with residue of oil and so forth. So, U.S. Steel took care of that for us and remediated that site. And, I'm sure they knocked on his door and told him to cease and desist – enough was enough.

Susan Wiedel: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: But, that was one of the surprises when the weeds cleared out. There's also a rail car down there.

Avigail Oren: Really?

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: I've never heard that.

Linda Boxx: And, we were trying to do something with this because it was sort of cool – there's this rail car sitting there.

Avigail Oren: How did it get up there?

Linda Boxx: Yeah. Down. It was down on the coke-gas pipeline at the road. How it got down there – because that wasn't a railroad.

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: Right. It was on the [inaudible 0:12:09.5].

Linda Boxx: It was pretty close. Yeah, right. It was pretty close to whatever run that is that comes through there.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. Right. If you ever ride that section – you get to a point where it's very visibly wet.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: So, there's the old car barn, which is a rail car barn and so there was railroad tracks down there somehow. And, this was

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one of the other things I remember Farley telling us. Because we said like, "Oh, we could do something..." "No. No. You getting rid of that. You don't know what's in there." "Oh, but it's so cool." "No. No."

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: So, that was... One of my questions...

Linda Boxx: I'm sure I have a picture of it.

Avigail Oren: I would love to see that. That sounds very cool. Yeah, as you were talking about Farley and going through the risks, one of the questions I had was, yeah, what exactly are the risks. Were you talking about the environmental risks? And, the other question I had was why was Rivers of Steel getting hung up on those risks?

Linda Boxx: Because they did not want to accept those risks.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Linda Boxx: And, because we were already in the business of owning abandoned rail corridor which could have some historic issues with them and risk associated with it, but we were already in that business. We'd been doing it for years – taking on that elemental risk and dealing with it appropriately.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Linda Boxx: So, this was just a little more jagged than some of the pieces that we had taken before but it wasn't- it was in our wheelhouse to do this.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: So, we did it. And, Rivers of Steel protects buildings and so forth. This was not in their- what they did for a living, really.

Avigail Oren: Not in their toolbox.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, exactly. So, when we- and we're assured and certainly having a partner, a very powerful partner like U.S. Steel on our side and wanting to make sure that they were never held liable

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for a problem, we felt that we were in very good standing environmentally.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: And, like I said, we had someone in DEP that was coaching us as we went along. But, again, another one of our secret weapons. He was a gem.

Avigail Oren: Who was it?

Linda Boxx: His name is John Matviya, M-A-T-V-I-Y-A, I think is how his last name is spelled. But, he has since retired from DEP. I'd meet him sometimes. I can remember a couple times downtown, in coffee shops and he would whisper in my ear different things and help me out with some different problems over the course of things. He was always...

Avigail Oren: Always on the gaps in the GAP or in other points, too?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: No, no. Gaps in the GAP. Well, I got to know him when I was building my trail in Latrobe.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Linda Boxx: That's when we first hooked up because I was dealing with 750,000 cubic yards of industrial waste.

Avigail Oren: Right.

[Laughter]

Linda Boxx: He was helping me out there.

Avigail Oren: All right. So, you went to him when the pipeline was becoming a challenge? That's how he was great?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Yeah. He was part of the team. He really was part of the kitchen cabinet on how to approach this, how to make sure that... Because, if I didn't say this before, I'll say it now – safety was always my number one concern. I wanted a trail built, but it had to be safe and safe in terms of traffic, in terms of

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visibility, and good surface, but safe in terms of his environmental risks that might in the corridor.

Avigail Oren:

Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx:

So, I never once veered off of that – that strong driver. If I had a value, it's safety first.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah, yeah. No point in attracting people outside to be...

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx:

I don't want anyone step on my shoulders.

Avigail Oren:

Yeah. Absolutely. Right, right.

Linda Boxx:

I mean, it was a fun thing, but it wasn't fun and games.

Avigail Oren:

Right.

Linda Boxx:

It's a very serious business that we were undertaking.

Avigail Oren:

Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think that's important to recognize.

Linda Boxx:

So, and I'm sure Jack told you this – so when he nudged me at a... I think I had said we'd offered the position to Brett...

Avigail Oren:

Right.

Linda Boxx:

...and Brett turned it down. And, I was reporting to the Regional Trail Corporation Board that, "Oh, Brett turned this down." And, Jack was sitting beside me, the characteristic nudge. He said, "I'll do that. I'll take that on," not knowing that we didn't have any property and that it wasn't just building. And, he knew I had money raised, but he didn't know the size of the challenges – thank goodness. But, it was acquiring those 30 properties and building that 9 miles was easily the most complex and vexing piece of building the whole Great Allegheny Passage. We had a lot of sort of second runners-up, but there's none that even begins to come up to the complicated standards that that had.

Susan Wiedel:

What was your reaction when he's like, "Hey, I could do that?"

Linda Boxx:

I said, "Great. Sign on the dotted line."

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Avigail Oren: Right. Just go for it. You want to do mine.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Well, I'd worked with Jack for years. And, he'd just retired from Westmoreland County and he'd done a little bit of traveling, a little bit of mission work, and I don't think he knew it was going to consume the next whatever...

Avigail Oren: Five years.

Linda Boxx: Well, mm-hmm. Yeah, yeah.

Avigail Oren: Oh, yeah. Seven, right?

Linda Boxx: Yes, but he enjoyed it. I think it was sort of a capstone of his career, for sure.

Avigail Oren: Uh-huh.

Linda Boxx: But, before Jack was involved and you've read the Larry Ridenour, you know who Larry Ridenour is – county planner for Allegheny County. He had been working for Rivers of Steel at the time and I'd have to check on those years.

Avigail Oren: It was a circuit rider [inaudible 0:19:25.6], right?

Linda Boxx: Could have been. It could have been. He worked for Rivers of Steel for just a couple of years. And, he was charged with building the trail. So, he was my contact with the Steel Valley piece. And, I can remember it was a really hot – probably August – Friday afternoon and we had a meeting with Brooks Robinson, who was the president of the RIDC, and we wanted to approach him about how we're going to get through the McKeesport RIDC. And, I can remember Brooks – it was so hot and I remember we were upstairs in this fifth floor somewhere, wherever his office was – and they were, at the time, courting EchoStar, which was a call center, I think, to go into the RIDC Industrial Park. And, we started talking about trail and all this national significance the trail was going to get and he immediately perked up because I think EchoStar's corporate headquarters was in California and he agreed this was going to be a great amenity to help sell this site to them and it's going to have this great trail amenity that's going to be

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on the nation's radar, and so forth. And so, he said, "Well, let's figure out how we can snake you through the RIDC park.

Avigail Oren: That is the first time I've heard this story and I've always wondered how that negotiation went. So, was that the first time you met with them?

Linda Boxx: Well, I was on the RIDC board.

Avigail Oren: Oh.

Linda Boxx: Well, maybe not then, but shortly thereafter, I guess, I got on. But, I had known Brooks – have to think how and why – for a long time. His wife was on the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Board with me.

Avigail Oren: Ahh.

Linda Boxx: That's how I knew Brooks. And so, Jean – a wonderful person – and I were colleagues of WPC and then I got to know Brooks through Jean.

Avigail Oren: Ah, I see. So much of this story is dependent on these networks. I mean, I think it's remarkable.

Linda Boxx: Absolutely. Yeah. Would Brooks have taken the meeting? Maybe not. But, his wife would have yelled at him if he hadn't.

[Chuckle]

Perhaps? I don't know.

Avigail Oren: Right, right. Okay. So, it wasn't difficult to get in the door there.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Avigail Oren: So, then it really just became – once he saw it as an amenity and as a value add to the RIDC, what did negotiations then come down to?

Linda Boxx: Well so, I guess one of the things I'm most proud about – my role in the whole thing was, besides being a safe trail, I wanted a really great trail. I did not want any part of it to be mediocre. We talked about the Big Savage Tunnel thing; I didn't want a 3,300-foot long MRI...

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Avigail Oren: Dart... Right, right, right.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: ...cavern, you know. Time and time again, I said to myself, "No, this is not a good..."

Avigail Oren: Design.

Linda Boxx: "...design or solution. I'll raise the money. I'll put it on me. I'll raise the money and I'll make sure it's better. I'll make sure it's good, if not better."

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: So, Larry's alignment through the RIDC was going down the road, which is called Industrial Boulevard and going all the way to the McKeesport Duquesne Bridge, building a switchback ramp up to the bridge, using the sidewalk, going across the McKeesport-Duquesne Bridge and then doing another ramp down at the other end.

Avigail Oren: Yes. It's crazy talk. Right, yeah.

Linda Boxx: And so, I said, "Well, or we could use the railroad line," because there was plenty of space there... There was, basically, an unused section of rail line in McKeesport that wasn't being used. It was sort of storing cars on there if they needed to back things up, but it never went anywhere near the Riverton Bridge. And, I said, "Why can't we use this? There's weeds three feet high growing through the tracks – obviously, it's not being used."

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, I said, "And, I'm going to talk to..." and I began a "pester campaign" – I'll call it – with U.S. Steel about can't we build a hang-off structure on the Riverton Bridge...

Avigail Oren: Yeah, right.

Linda Boxx: ...much like they have in Harpers Ferry, even though the bridge is a different design, I was sure there was some engineering solution where we could get up to the Riverton Bridge and then using their piers and the structure of the

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bridge and get to the other side. So, that was my plan. So, we started working with Maureen Ford, who was the real estate person at RIDC, and walking through and walking the site back and forth – how we could make the connection and so forth. And, it all seemed very doable. So, that was our plan. We skipped Larry’s Industrial Boulevard and by that time, actually, Larry had left Rivers of Steel...

Avigail Oren:

Okay.

Linda Boxx:

...so we didn’t have to “duke it out.” Which was good because he’s a great friend and wonderful, but to me, that wasn’t a trail.

Avigail Oren:

It wasn’t good design.

Linda Boxx:

No.

Avigail Oren:

Any rider would approach that and think, “Oy.”

Linda Boxx:

Well, there’s still not a lot of traffic back there, but still – here’s a rail line with weeds growing through it. Let’s use that corridor if we can.

Avigail Oren:

Right, right.

Susan Wiedel:

Why make them ride on a sidewalk on the right side of the road, yeah.

Linda Boxx:

Right. Exactly. Well, I don’t even think it was going to be a sidewalk. I think it was just going to be a bike lane zooming down the middle.

Susan Wiedel:

Bike lane, okay.

Avigail Oren:

Linda, keep talking, I’m just going to go...

Linda Boxx:

So, I think the next thing that really came to play was, then, Pittsburgh 250. So, sometime in late 2005, I got a call from Laura Fisher from the Allegheny Conference of Community Development who said- and I knew Laura because I was on the French and Indian War 250 Board, which was sort of an ancillary, affiliated organization with the Pittsburgh 250. And, she said, “Oh, good news! We’d like finishing the GAP to be one of our legacy projects for the Pittsburgh 250 celebration. And, we want to work with you – team up – bring resources to

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bear and really help you finish the Great Allegheny Passage.”
And, we said, “O-o-kay.”

[Chuckle]

“Thank you.” So, I had my first meeting, sort of official meeting, in February of 2006 then, with Michelle Febrezie – she’s with MARC USA and she was- so many executives were donating so much of their time and energy to making sure that this Pittsburgh 250 celebration was going to be really, really important.

[Interruption]

Avigail Oren: So, the MARC USA.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. So, “How can we publicize this? How can we work with you?” And, she was all about trying to elevate the story, and how do we get the word out, and what’s our marketing strategy going be? And, I’m there like, “Well, we need a construction strategy, too, not just a marketing strategy.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, there was a lot of- it put pressure, good pressure on all of us because the conference wanted to publicize something that wasn’t there. Bill Flannigan, who works for the conference still, had this vision of like, “Wow. It’d be really neat if we could get all these construction companies. Each one would take a section and we’d have instantaneous building of the rest of the GAP.” And, I’m like, “Yeah, but we don’t own any of the property yet.”

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: “We sort of can’t do that.” And, it preceded, step-by-step-by-step, section-by-section-by-section, and it happened really quickly, but it didn’t happen quickly enough for the Allegheny Conference, nor did we, of course, make October 2008 with completion.

Avigail Oren: Right.

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Linda Boxx: October 2008, we had the piece – the old rail line in McKeesport, had built a ramp up to the Riverton Bridge, but we didn't do a hang-off off the Riverton Bridge, we got the whole Riverton Bridge. And, that was one of these remarkable stories. I still don't quite know why it was given to us because it's such an asset for any company. Perhaps they saw that they didn't really need it.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, the maintenance and upkeep of that would be worth it to offload it to somebody else. It was given to the county. But, I got a call – I remember, it was a Monday morning and I'm driving around – and you know what cell service is like in Western Pennsylvania hills – and I see that it's – probably my bag-phone at that time. I don't know. But, I see that the call is from Tom Sterling who was the executive vice president at U.S. Steel and he was, like, John Surma's go-to point man for this whole thing. And, he said, "Linda. We're going to give you the Riverton Bridge." And, I'm like, "Okay. I wonder what he really said." And, he said, "Linda, did you hear me? We're going to give you the Riverton Bridge."

[Interruption]

Avigail Oren: Okay, we're good.

Linda Boxx: So, I was just dumbfounded. I had no idea what kind of response I babbled to him because I was, literally, in shock because I ask him to please abandon the rail line for us. I said, "We just want to merge in [? 0:31:24.6] beside you." So, that started a whole series of activities. We were working with the county. U.S. Steel made it clear they were not going to give the bridge to the Regional Trail Corporation but to Allegheny County because they could do the inspections, and they would have the wherewithal to actually own a structure like this – like the bridge.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, again, I don't know – I don't want to repeat this if Jack talked about this a lot, but that was a real headache because as soon as they gave us the bridge we go, "Well, okay." So,

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we got- I think it was Kimball designed the ramp, “Okay. We got on a bridge.” So, we started designing a ramp to reach, how it’s going to tie-in and so forth. And, meanwhile, tic, tic, tic, tic – the clock’s ticking – and the county has not accepted the bridge. They wanted to do a full-scale inspection and there was this issue, and, “We need to search this and that.” They were just dragging their feet. And, meanwhile, Jack’s going a little nuts because he’s managing construction. And, he was told by the contractor – which I think was PJ Dick Trumbull – that if they didn’t begin – whatever – Monday morning, next Monday morning was, so we have to pull off and go to a different job.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And so, I gave Jack – because I was president of ATA and I guess I learned this from my father – sometimes you just have to make an executive decision and go for it. I said, “Jack, we’re going to build the bridge. We have the money. Go. Give them the signal to go, even though U.S. Steel still owns the Riverton Bridge. We will assume that it all takes place.” But, he had to get that ramp going and it’s on those – it’s a big structure. It’s nothing you put up overnight.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: So, it was probably the wildest, riskiest thing that I ever did. I took responsibility for it and set Jack loose to do it, and I just hoped it didn’t backfire and, we had built this big structure to nowhere.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Wow.

Linda Boxx: So, the ramp is coming along and then it’s getting to the point where we need to start rehabbing the bridge itself. And, Tom Besselman from Transtar, which is a division of U.S. Steel – which is the railroad division – was getting really... He did not want the bridge to be abandoned. He wanted to keep his railroad in operations, but his boss, John Surma said, “This is what’s going to happen.” And so, he called Jack – probably Jack because I don’t think he called me – and he said, “If the

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county doesn't close on this bridge..." Because there was already a sales agreement, everything was all ready to go. It just needed to be signed by the county and recorded. "If you don't get this spot, I'll say within a week, we are going to write another deed and we're going to deed it back to ourselves and record that, which will make your- if the county does it afterwards... It can't be done." So, we had, literally, days, to try to get the county sign the deed and get it recorded. So, again, secret weapons were invaluable. Kathy McKenzie, who worked for Dan Onorato – sort of a chief of staff position – she was on our side. We did not over abuse out calling of her because it just wouldn't have been... But, this was an emergency. So, I called Kathy and I explained the situation to her. I think she talked to Chris Masciantonio at U.S. Steel about how this was going to work. And within days, she called back. She goes, "Done. We got it done."

Avigail Oren: Ah.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: "We pried it off the bureaucrats – out of their fingers – and said, "We're doing this. We have to do this. I know everyone wants to be cautious about everything, but we're doing this. We're just moving forward." So, it was done and the decking was done and, literally, that October day when we all rode across the bridge, it was almost- I think it probably was less than 24 hours prior that the work was finished.

Avigail Oren: Oh, wow.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. There was no spare time to think about anything really. It was amazing. So, we got that done. So, the event – we went across the Riverton Bridge and went on the rail line and dropped onto 837, and rode up 837, and ended up in the city. And, it was a beautiful day and it was very exciting. But, as I'm biking up 837, I'm thinking, "Oh, man – this is not going to be nice." We've been trying to work with the railroads about trying to stay somewhere through the Duquesne RIDC Industrial Park, and then get to the end and then maybe do a switchback up the hill and then get on 837 and get to the Waterfront that way. But, nothing was pretty. It wasn't a good alignment, but

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we were just trying to make the connections as best we could. With all this energy, again, John Surma came to our rescue and talked to Norfolk Southern and said, "If they can meet all of your requirements – safety, design, so forth – we would appreciate it if you would listen to them and see if you could work something out." And so, we worked with a great team – Tom Bracey... I can picture the other gentlemen – a couple fellows from Norfolk Southern were, I'll say, sympathetic but, of course, their first loyalties were to the operations of their railroads. Again, Jack was key in that and I'm sure he spent a bit of his interview talking about that.

Avigail Oren:

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Linda Boxx:

Because negotiating with Norfolk Southern was critical. But, John Surma gave us the green light to even enter into those agreements.

Susan Wiedel:

And, he really made the- I'm going with the Yiddish word – like the **shadkhn** [? 0:39:02.7]. He was the matchmaker who brought the two parties and the conversation...?

Linda Boxx:

That's not quite... I think U.S. Steel accounted for one-third of Norfolk's Southern's business.

Susan Wiedel:

Okay.

Avigail Oren:

Ah. Okay, got it.

Linda Boxx:

So, they had a strong voice.

Avigail Oren:

Got it.

Linda Boxx:

It was more than a matchmaker.

Avigail Oren:

Okay.

Linda Boxx:

It was the matchmaker with the shotgun.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren:

The most effective kind.

[Laughter]

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Susan Wiedel: I was going to say, why would John Surma have that kind of sway over Norfolk Southern, specifically?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Yeah, yeah, yes. I mean, John was very passionate about trying to get this done. He saw it as being good for Pittsburgh, and giving- well I'm, perhaps, putting words into his mouth or thoughts into his head – the Mon Valley had been so depressed since big steel left. And, Edgar Thompson existed still in the Mon Valley, but hundreds of acres were abandoned and hundreds of thousands of people were no longer working in the steel industry and it was tremendously depressed. And, this trail might be a little bit of a ray of hope – a nice give-back to the Mon Valley community. If we can do something nice, even though it's not their job, but it's something that we really can- a gift back to the Mon Valley. And, it truly is. I think it will just continue to grow in its importance.

Avigail Oren: So, I'm going to play a little bit of a cynical devil's advocate and ask, did U.S. Steel have financial, like, stand to be in financially by divesting of some of this property or from being perceived as...?

Linda Boxx: A "good guy."

Avigail Oren: A "good guy", yeah.

Linda Boxx: Well, it was a rail line they did not have to continue to maintain.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: I'm sure there are PUC or Surface Transportation Commission – I'm sure for every mile of rail that you own, you probably have to pay some sort of tax on it. I don't know that business, but certainly eliminating mileage from their system would have saved them a little tiny bit of money.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, we did pay them for the coke-gas pipeline - \$550,000. But then, they ended up doing a million or two remediation on

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the site. But again, they didn't have that hanging over their head, which is always a good thing, too.

Avigail Oren: Right. It did finally get them out of that liability. Right?

Linda Boxx: Yes, yes.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. Okay. So, let's go – yeah – go back to the Norfolk Southern conversations.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. So, John Whaley – was that his name? But, he was getting ready to retire and Tom Bracey was taking over his position. And, we also had a local Norfolk Southern fellow in the Pittsburgh area who did the real estate. So, those were the three people we worked with primarily. And, it really turned out to just be sort of a design issue. We had to have a 23-foot clearance for the double-stack tracks. And, it was almost comical when we set them in place on that magic day and they had this – it looked like a 23-foot high yardstick and it was sort of wiggling in the...

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Susan Wiedel: We all... What's going on?

Linda Boxx: So, that's what they used. They picked up this rod that's sort of like...

Susan Wiedel: Oh, their measuring stick?

Linda Boxx: Their measuring stick. A 23...

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: Is it- that's it does- so, like, wiggles to it?

Linda Boxx: Well, yeah, because it's 23-feet long.

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Linda Boxx: So, it has to be light enough for the person who would actually pick it up. So, when they set the bridges over the tracks – if that stick had touched the bridge, the bridge would... They hadn't even unhooked the harness from the cranes.

Avigail Oren: Right.

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- Linda Boxx:** And so, if that touched, that crane was ordered to pick that bridge back up and put it back down on the ground.
- Avigail Oren:** Uh-huh.
- Linda Boxx:** But, that stick didn't hit.
- [Crosstalk]
- Susan Wiedel:** So, someone was holding that **step [? 0:44:11.2]**?
- Linda Boxx:** Yes, yes. Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** Isn't that amazing?
- Linda Boxx:** I know, I know.
- Avigail Oren:** You'd think there's some high-tech solution, right? Like, they'd like...
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** You would think. Nope. It was their stick.
- Susan Wiedel:** That's a little bit nerve... That's super nerve-wracking.
- Avigail Oren:** On the other hand...
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, yeah. We were all like, "Oh... It cleared." And, the rest is history.
- Avigail Oren:** All right.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. So, that was...
- Susan Wiedel:** What was that made of?
- Linda Boxx:** I don't... It was probably metal because I don't think wood would... Yeah.
- Susan Wiedel:** Yeah.
- Avigail Oren:** So, funny. Yeah. I had just assumed that they had...
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** They had some sort of survey work – high-tech...
- Avigail Oren:** Right, exactly.

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- Linda Boxx:** No, but those maybe weren't accurate enough.
- Avigail Oren:** I mean, look, the low-tech, there's something to it, right?
- Linda Boxx:** Exactly, exactly. I'm not going to cover that because I'm sure Jack covered that whole amazing process because he was really the one.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** We had a year and a half, basically, lead time before this – what they called hell week – July...
- Susan Wiedel:** Fourth.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, they closed for the 4th of July. It was July 7th.
- Susan Wiedel:** Okay.
- Avigail Oren:** Right. But, it's always that week. It's like all of track maintenance that's happening, yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** Right. Because the coal mines, a lot of times, coal mines will close down for the 4th of July, and so there's less traffic on the lines during hell week.
- Avigail Oren:** Uh-huh.
- Linda Boxx:** And, that's when they get to do a lot of their track repair and maintenance work – the railroads do.
- Susan Wiedel:** Okay. And, who coined the term "hell week"?
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, that's the railroad. They told us that's what they call it.
- Susan Wiedel:** That's a railroad thing? Okay.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah, yeah. I mean, I don't know what it means exactly. But, maybe it means that they have to work really hard, that the crews are... They don't get time off.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** I'm not sure where that came from.
- Avigail Oren:** Maybe it's hot as hell, as well.

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- Susan Wiedel:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. Something.
- Avigail Oren:** The only thing I wanted to ask you about the flyovers was if you remember – were you there that day?
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, gosh, yes.
- Avigail Oren:** And, what your recollections were, and who else was there?
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, everybody was there.
- Avigail Oren:** Who's everybody?
- Linda Boxx:** Everybody. Everybody! Oh, my goodness.
- [Crosstalk]
- Avigail Oren:** Anybody who was anybody, yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. We probably had – we had some people watching at Port Perry, but most people were watching the Whitaker Bridge go up because there was still the pedestrian bridge across the track so people could get up there and that's the little time-lapse video that you've probably seen. It's so charming. But, there were dozens and dozens of people on the bridge.
- [Interruption]
- So, the trail groups were there and all our publicity people, anybody who did any writing for us. And, of course, Jack and I had our named hard hats. We were right down on the site.
- Susan Wiedel:** You had hard hats with all the names on them?
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. And, we used them all the time.
- Susan Wiedel:** I'm sure. Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** I forget who gave them to us. I think we got those from Latrobe Steel, actually. We got those as a gift. But, they had our names on it so we looked pretty darned official.
- Susan Wiedel:** That's awesome.

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- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. But, it was a foggy July day. And, the sun wasn't- we couldn't see the sun because it was so foggy.
- Susan Wiedel:** It was in the morning.
- Linda Boxx:** Yes, 7:00 in the morning. And, we had a two-hour window. They would stop. This is the main line of Norfolk Southern. This is big. And so, they gave us two hours to get the job done – both bridges being done simultaneously. And, we got it done in, like, an hour. We had plenty of time to spare. And, no sooner had we- people cleared off the tracks and the trains started running through. We were still on what we call – you'd be trespassing.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** We were still out there and they said, "Go ahead. Trains can run through."
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. I think it's just if you're someone who has never been around railroads or doesn't understand construction – this story is just so remarkable. Like, this was able to be completed, once you understand the structures of the railroad system and how... They really- they have a timetable and they have to stick to it...
- Linda Boxx:** Right.
- Avigail Oren:** ...or everything comes apart.
- [Chuckle]
- Linda Boxx:** Right. And, I think there was a lot of interest. And, of course, our engineering company – the crane operators, Century Crane, Century Steel, I guess they were called. There were a lot of technical people, but there were so many other- I'm not sure if there were PennDOT people, but I know just about every engineering firm that we worked with wanted to be down there and watch this because it was really pretty darned spectacular to watch these bridges being put in place.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** And, I'm sure Jack told you, again, how the county was holding up the process for getting the approvals.

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Avigail Oren: Yes.

Linda Boxx: They wanted the aerial right-of-way and Norfolk Southern...

Avigail Oren: Okay. Actually, I don't know if... Do you remember if...?

Susan Wiedel: He didn't talk... I read through his interview again last night and I didn't [inaudible 0:50:02.8]

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: [inaudible 0:50:03.8]

Linda Boxx: So, we're moving all the pieces along and it is sort of like rolling up dough with lots of stuff in it. And, every piece has to keep rolled up. And, we're sitting at the meeting and our dear friend, Dave Wright, who works for the County said, "Well, if we're going to own those bridges, we need an aerial easement equivalent to 25 feet on either side of the bridge, and that has to be included in the easement." And, the railroad said, "No. We're giving you the 12 foot or 15 feet," whatever we need for the bridge, "We're giving you that easement and that's it." And, they said, "No, no. We need an aerial easement for inspection." And, they said, "You can't inspect that bridge without our permission anyhow so an aerial easement isn't going to do any good. No, we're not giving you the aerial easement." "Well, we're not signing the deed unless we have an aerial easement." "Well, you don't get it if you don't..." So, it's going back and forth. I think Jack and I – I'm not sure how we finally got Dave to relent. And, I don't even know if we had to go over his head. Jack might remember how we finally got that resolved. But, it was like, "Dave, Dave, what are you doing?" But, he was doing his job. He wasn't trying to be obstinate.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: But, that was the whole problem with, I'll say, the bureaucracy of things, is they had their rules that they were trained to adhere to.

Avigail Oren: So, there's precedent for getting aerial right-of-way? Like, you can't go down...?

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- Linda Boxx:** Well, I guess maybe on highway bridges maybe that's standard or something.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Linda Boxx:** But, an inspection easement, which makes sense, but when the railroad says, "You don't need that. It's a moot point because without our permission for you to get over our tracks – you're not doing anything if you don't have our permission."
- Avigail Oren:** Right, right.
- Linda Boxx:** So, this little argument went back and forth for way too long. And, meanwhile, Jack and I are like [sigh] we don't need another pothole. We're trying to... We thought we had a clear shot here.
- Avigail Oren:** Right. Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** So, that almost ended the whole discussion because Norfolk Southern said, basically, "Don't you realize we're being nice to you?"
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- [Chuckle]
- Linda Boxx:** "We're doing something we never do. Would you just take what we're offering and say 'Thank you'?"
- Avigail Oren:** Right. And, were the bridges under construction at the time? Had you already let the...
- Linda Boxx:** We'd probably started the engineering.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay, but not...
- Linda Boxx:** But, we wouldn't have started construction on the bridges until we had the easement.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay, okay.
- Linda Boxx:** And, there wasn't that they were all pre-fabricated. There was, obviously, lead time, but there wasn't extraordinary lead time.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.

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Linda Boxx: We knew everything had to be lined up for that July date and so everything was backed... And, probably Jack, we Jack- but Jack had probably already contacted, contacted, said, "What's your lead time? Here's what we want to do. Here's about how long. This is sort of the design we'll give you when we place the order." Just getting things...

Avigail Oren: The legwork had been done.

Linda Boxx: Yes.

Avigail Oren: No orders had been signed?

Linda Boxx: No, no, no, that was one that we did not order before we had the easement.

Avigail Oren: Right, okay.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

...was his point of view.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. No. And, that wouldn't have been them. I mean, yeah, "We just blown a quarter-million dollars."

Avigail Oren: Oh, just a quarter of a million.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: So, we did real work, but we also wasted – I'll say wasted – we also had to spend an awful lot of time going to meetings that were really non-productive. I won't say non-productive entirely, but I went to so many meetings with the Allegheny Conference as a [inaudible 0:54:50.0] to give an update about how we were making progress on our legacy project, which they were helping us with, which I felt I had to do. But, it's an hour in and an hour out, but it's really an hour and a half in and an hour and a half out, and until you park, and then you give your five-minute presentation. The morning is shot. And, that happened quite a bit. I never begrudged those meetings with the conference because they were such good partners. I mentioned Bill Flannigan and Laura Fisher. Then Jim Rohr was the chairman of the Allegheny Conference at the time and he was the great cheerleader for the whole thing, really keeping energy and excitement to it. Mike Langley was the

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president of the Allegheny Conference and very super supportive of the whole thing. So, they were definitely part of our team, but I had to do the dog and pony so many times, but it paid off. But, truly, without the conference, without the Allegheny Conference taking on Pittsburgh 250 in the way they did, I have no idea what the Great Allegheny Passage would look like through the Mon Valley.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: I said this when I introduced John Surma – Pat gave him an award – and, I said, “You know, the trail would have limped into Pittsburgh.” It could have been really awful.

Avigail Oren: Mostly on road. Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, there were sidewalks, and hills, and traffic signals. It just would have been a really anti-climactic – and it would not have served Pittsburgh well. Pittsburgh was the destination. And, if you had to go through limbo to get to this destination, it just would have been...

Avigail Oren: People would have bailed in McKeesport.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, exactly, exactly. Or stopped in West Newton.

Avigail Oren: Right, right.

Linda Boxx: But, one of my favorite moments probably the whole thing – except for the bridges. That was just too spectacular. But, I remember going to one of those the Allegheny Conference Pittsburgh 250 meetings and it was the big room, like, 30 or 40 people in the room. And, I had to do my little five-minute where we were and so forth. And, it was a lot of the corporate leaders and people from all- the whole Pittsburgh 250, not just the gaps in the GAP. So, there were a lot of other things going on. There were probably 10 to 15 other initiatives that were going on at the same time. And, I remember talking- we didn't have the Norfolk Southern okay yet so the price wasn't- \$11 million is only \$9 million at the time. I remember saying that we were raising \$9 million to build the nine-mile section through the Mon Valley. And, somebody, a gentleman, piped up and said,

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“You mean, you’re spending \$9 million on a trail through the Mon Valley?”

[Chuckle]

And, I said, “Well, we spent \$12 million on 3,300 feet in the middle of nowhere; I think we can spend \$9 million in the Mon Valley.”

Avigail Oren: Perfect.

Linda Boxx: And, I surprised myself because I’m usually not so quick on my feet with retorts like that. But, I just couldn’t believe it. I said, like, “This is an \$80 million trail. We’re spending a lot of money here. This isn’t like a...”

Susan Wiedel: I mean, it’s like he didn’t know what you were talking about.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, he did not. No, he did not. He did not.

[Laughter]

But, I never knew who that was. I should have circled back with Laura and said, “Who was that guy because I want to send him clippings. Yeah, I want him on our clipping service and see how great this was.”

Avigail Oren: Funny. I want to make sure that we talk about the Waterfront because I think it’s something that’s not really discussed in any of the other interviews, partially because it seems like they weren’t friendly and made it easy, but I was wondering if that’s actually the case and if you could just speak a little bit to the relationship with that development?

Linda Boxx: Sure. Well, that’s an interesting story. Larry Ridenour did get that section behind the apartments and behind Eat’n Park done before he left. And, the trail started and ended, you know, it didn’t have a nice end, but there was trail built in the middle.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, it was a very expensive trail. It had this beautiful ornate fence along the river. They’re actually working on reconstructing it now because the drainage was never really

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done very well. Larry was a landscape architect – wasn't an engineer – but, he should have known about the drainage issues. But, Rivers of Steel, Steel Industry Heritage Corporation got an easement from the Waterfront for that property but also had an agreement with Steel Valley Trail Council, who really hadn't even really been invented at that time – it was just in its very infancy – that they would be the ones responsible for long-term maintenance. The Waterfront folks thought they were responsible, which was great – and they still do manage the landscape back there. They keep the grass mowed and when the knotweed comes up from the river, they keep it chopped back, and keep the weed trees, like trees of heaven, and so forth come up – they keep it very nice, but they do not do anything about the trail surface.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: So, that piece was done and it went from Munhall to Homestead. And, where Mitchells is – Mitchells is partially... Part of the parking lot is in – most of it's in Homestead and then West Homestead is right there. So, West Homestead – did Darla talk about Mayor "I Hate the Trail" Dindak? Did she talk about him?

Avigail Oren: A little bit, I think.

Linda Boxx: Okay.

Avigail Oren: You don't know? Okay. Someone did, but it might not have been Darla.

Linda Boxx: Well, Darla was the only one... When the Waterfront was being developed, it was some sort of enterprise zone. I don't know if it Alerta or something, but Allegheny county was working with the three municipalities to create that whole development. And, in the plan was room for a trail, but it wasn't mandated, there was no specific requirement. But, Munhall and Homestead went along with keeping a space open for a trail. West Homestead said, "No, we don't want a trail. We don't need a trail. Actually, we'd like to have our own river access without bicycle people hanging around," and so forth.

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Susan Wiedel: Oh, I remember this part.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: Okay. So, they allowed Costco...

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: ...to build right to the edge of the property and did not allow for- 10 feet, 12 feet is all we would have needed to go through there. So, the trail as you see it now makes a sharp left turn as soon as you hit the municipal boundaries and then it goes along the sidewalk.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: And, when we were working with – Continental Development was the company that developed the Waterfront – they said, “Well, you know, there’s a trail easement for the sidewalk.” So, what we ended up doing is taking that six-foot-wide sidewalk and widening it to a ten-foot-wide sidewalk, so that that would be the trail. But, it’s in front of the businesses, so we’re crossing all the driveways of the hotel, and Costco – those are the two big ones – which was unfortunate, but it was the best we could do. Now, Costco wants us to figure out how to go behind because they don’t like the fact that we cross all their driveways. And, it’s like, “Well, we’re on your side. We were there.” We wished that we could have convinced West Homestead to allow for the trail to go behind them to get to Sandcastle. It would have been less expensive for us and less hassle for them right now because now they have a lot of bike traffic, vehicular traffic – interaction that’s not good.

Susan Wiedel: Their reasoning was, “Well, we want to maintain the river [inaudible 1:04:58.6]”?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Yeah. So, Costco probably didn’t know anything about the trail because West Homestead didn’t really make it an issue. It would have probably meant the loss of – whatever – probably even no parking. You just would have configured things differently where the gas pumps are.

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Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: There's a lot of room back there. So, it was really West Homestead's lack of belief in the trail, that it was actually going to happen probably, not feeling any sympathy to bicycle use because they didn't think that was going to be an issue for the Waterfront, that it was just an annoying dream that somebody had but they weren't going to go along with it. I think Dindak is still mayor of West Homestead. But, I think Darla went to bat for the trail in those early years when she was with the county, and she's the one who came up with that – his middle name.

[Laughter]

But, I think, he probably has to be very happy. I met him at many of our ribbon-cuttings and he's always very happy about things – as he should be because other people invested in his community and they didn't have to raise a dime or raise a political finger about the whole thing. We did it all for him. We carried the load. So, it wasn't great and then the Sandcastle alignment – Darla helped with that negotiation, with the CSX sliver. And again, we tried as best we could to put the trail on the other side of the roadway so that people parking at Sandcastle could also use the trail to get to the park entrance. What a joy that would have been. But instead, we had to put up the chain-link fence between the trail and the railroad and then the guardrail fencing between the road and the trail to protect the trail users. And, again, it was a liability. There's lawyers for Parques Reunidos who own Sandcastle, and Kennywood, and Idlewild. The lawyers got a look at it and said, "We do not want a crossing of the trail on our property." So, we crossed at that little cul-de-sac by Costco, which is not their property, so we cross there and then we are on our corridor, which we acquired a little bit from Sandcastle and little bit from CSX. So, if anyone got hurt, it wasn't their responsibility. But, that's the second one where, I guess they approached the Steel Valley Trail Council and said, "Is there any way we can get the trail closer to our parking lot?" It's like, "Well, we tried that and y'all didn't want it. You wouldn't let us." In the future, it could happen – that's for sure.

Avigail Oren: Right.

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- Linda Boxx:** It's just a matter of flip-flopping the road and the trail – a lot – yanking out all those- the guard rail and so forth. I mean, it's not easy, but it certainly can be done. It's a correction that's relatively easy to do. It would be costly, but it could be done.
- Avigail Oren:** Right, right, if they wanted to invest in it, they could invest in it.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, and I think the trail, ATA, the county – I think others could be convinced to reinvest in it, especially if it were around the time when it needed to be surfaced or something and there needed to be some upgrade – it would be a great time to revisit that. But, that might be in 10, or 15, or 20 years.
- Avigail Oren:** Right. Can I quickly ask you to geographically backtrack to the on-road section leading into the Waterfront?
- Linda Boxx:** Yes.
- Avigail Oren:** What's the story with that little section?
- Linda Boxx:** Well, that was beautiful. So, we drop off the Whitaker Bridge and then we get onto property that the county-owned. There was a railroad back there and it was part of the other side of the Carrie Furnace – we used to call it Carrie South because it was property that was owned by part of the Carrie Furnace Mill but it was on the south side of the river. It ended up being owned by the county. So, we built the trail on county property, went underneath the Rankin Bridge, and then peel into the Waterfront. We tried to go behind **Marson Gailia [? 1:10:22.7]** – now called BresMed, or something. It changed its name or it's been acquired – and they just put in some sort of high-pressured gas pumping system in the back and they didn't want us anywhere near it. So, we ended up having to cross their very, very wide driveway into their plant, but it's public right-of-way and we got permission from Munhall to do that. And, people used to zoom through the back end of the Waterfront to get over the little bridge onto 837. And, Munhall was very happy with our proposal to narrow the road, which would naturally slow traffic down and keep everybody safer. That road was like a superhighway with 20-foot lanes of traffic so you could really zoom. So, we compressed them. We have two 12 travel lanes and then we took 12 or 15 feet and created what was called a "cycle track". And, it was the first cycle track

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that was done in Allegheny County. And, we brought the bike-ped coordinator for the City of Pittsburgh out because it was new – it was brand-new. He’s all, “Oh, I don’t think this is going to work.” And, pretty soon, of course, that’s what’s all through Pittsburgh – the same design.

Avigail Oren: Yes. Right.

Linda Boxx: So, it really worked out well. I remember when we went to the – I don’t know if it’s a “we” – if I had to do this by myself or Jack was with me – but we had to go to two back-to-back meetings. We had to go to the Planning Commission to present it and then go to the borough meeting. And, I think I went to that borough meeting myself, which probably worked out to the trail’s advantage because I’m just a girl and they’re not going to pick on me.

[Chuckle]

Really, it was sort of funny in that respect. But, they passed it. And, I remember, it was the fifth-grade civics class was actually running the meeting.

Susan Wiedel: What?

Avigail Oren: Say what?

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: So, you had all the council members sitting behind here and in front of them was – I think it was fifth-grader or eighth-grader, whatever grade it was – and they were, basically, being the council members. And, somebody was banging the gavel, and so forth. It was so great.

Susan Wiedel: That probably the best time to possibly try and be like, “Will you pass this, please?”

Linda Boxx: Yeah, exactly. Exactly.

Susan Wiedel: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: “Don’t you want bike lanes, kids?”

[Chuckle]

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Linda Boxx: But, it was the kind of thing – I’m thinking I hope this counts.

[Laughter]

Is this legal? Can these kids really pass these...? Because we needed approval.

Avigail Oren: It’s null and void, right.

[Chuckle]

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Susan Wiedel: From a local civics class, you said?

Linda Boxx: Yeah. It was great.

Avigail Oren: What do we call it – a kangaroo court?

[Laughter]

Linda Boxx: Yeah. So, after those kids – that’d be, actually, sort of interesting to follow-up with them. They might be out of school by now, but if they haven’t graduated from high school, we can still know who they are and say like, “Do you remember? You were the ones who helped get this passed.”

Susan Wiedel: That’s fantastic.

Avigail Oren: We can do a Craigslist “missed connection”.

Susan Wiedel: Right?

Linda Boxx: So, we were able to – I think very elegantly – put in that cycle track and then it’s tucked in behind the apartments and connected in. And, I think it’s changed the Waterfront.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: The Waterfront is definitely more pedestrian – bicycle and pedestrian-oriented. The fact that it slows traffic down is a great thing and the fact that you see people on bicycles all the time in the Waterfront is a real statement because that development has often been pointed to. It was like, “We don’t want to be like the Waterfront,” which is, basically, you’re

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building a suburban strip development, like on Route 30 or something.

Avigail Oren: Right. No, absolutely. And, I see all the time when I'm down there, people have driven there just to access the trail because the parking is nothing if not ample.

Susan Wiedel: Yeah, right.

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: And so, if it does seem like it draws a second audience so people might not be going down there for the movies or Lowes, they're coming down to bike.

Linda Boxx: Right.

Avigail Oren: But, it means that space is getting used.

Linda Boxx: Mm-hmm. And, people are getting comfortable with driving into Homestead and West Homestead.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: It's not a scary place riddled with crime and drive-by shootings. It's a place that they go to on a Sunday afternoon

Avigail Oren: Right. Okay, so do you want to talk- since we talked a little bit about Sandcastle, do you want to talk a little bit about the negotiation preceding the purchase by Parques Reunidos?

Linda Boxx: Well, the discussions had started and Darla should really have covered this in her interview because she was with the mayor's office – with Mayor Murphy at the time.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: So, this discussion took 20 years or so from the very first time we started talking with Kennywood about the Sandcastle property.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm. Right.

Linda Boxx: We had a number of very acrimonious meetings when it was owned by...

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Avigail Oren: The Henningers?

Linda Boxx: ...the Henningers, right. And, their president was totally against the trail. There was not a lot of support from within. Pete MacKinniny was his name. And, we showed up with the engineers to talk, to show his design – he couldn't make the meeting and he said, "Well, it was either come to this meeting or get a root canal and I chose the root canal."

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: I don't know, I kind of like the chutzpah of it, right? It's direct.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. So, we went round and round. Again, I figured, you know, just wear them down. Just wear them down. But, we weren't making, really, any- weren't getting any success. And, it wasn't until they were bought out by a multinational entertainment company, and they were excited about the idea of a trail.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: They thought this was great! They're worldwide, their headquarters were in Spain. "Doesn't everybody in the world bicycle? Of course, we want bicycles to have access to our..." So, it went 180 degrees different – the negotiations. All of a sudden, it's just like, "Okay, let's do it." But, of course, they wanted their risk minimized as much as they could. But, at least we were talking to people who were interested in coming up with a solution and not just saying "no".

Avigail Oren: Right. This might be like asking you to speculate. It was out of your hands whether Kennywood got bought out or not, right?

Linda Boxx: Absolutely. Although we were- I was doing some investigation on the side because I thought maybe – and I talked to Jim Rohr about this – maybe somebody else could buy Kennywood.

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Are you telling me that you contemplated engineering a sale of a unique Pittsburgh institution in order to get through – what is it – .25 miles?

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- Linda Boxx:** No, it was more than that.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- [Laughter]
- Linda Boxx:** But, I was thinking maybe... And, then, we could do it right and turn this property back over for sale.
- Avigail Oren:** Oh, my God.
- [Laughter]
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. Well, I mean, no stone left unturned. Right?
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Susan Wiedel:** Got to cover all your bases.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. Exactly.
- Avigail Oren:** It's sort of the power that you and the conference had to even be thinking that way, and also when you want those things...
- Linda Boxx:** Power, yes. Yeah. Access... But, the other thing was we were so close to being done.
- Avigail Oren:** Right, right. And, you then wanted construction.
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** It was going to make a huge difference in the quality of life for Pittsburgh, and Mon Valley, and the rest of the region.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** And, it was worth an investment like this. It was worth a discussion anyhow about like, "Is there another way out of this?"
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Well, thankfully it did not...
- [Laughter/Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** I didn't have to buy Kennywood.

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- Avigail Oren:** And, I do think it's interesting to think about one classic Pittsburgh institution that would definitely contributes to the quality of the life of the city pitted against another one.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, and there was another interesting thing because they were selling to Parques Reunidos the property that CSX owned. Sandcastle had built a road on CSX's property, but they didn't own it, but yet they were selling what they didn't own to Parques Reunidos.
- Susan Wiedel:** Oh, I think someone else mentioned that.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah, it's shady.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah, yeah. And so, I can't remember which lawyer I was talking to about this and I said, "Suppose they knew that Kennywood was bargaining in bad faith and selling them-misrepresenting" Oh, I remember who I called. He said, "Do not go there. Do not go there, because if you sour the deal with this information, you could be held liable for this." He said, "Do not say a word, you just have to let the chips fall where they may."
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah. Well, did you, when the sale went through, did it have any effect on your negotiations with Parques Reunidos?
- Linda Boxx:** Oh, when the deal went through, no, immediately. They were all- we got in touch with them right away.
- Avigail Oren:** Had they figured out, that they had bought property...
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** They knew at some point.
- Avigail Oren:** They figured it out.
- Linda Boxx:** Well, they probably did figure it out because when we started talking to them, we said like, "We're working with CSX to try to buy this sliver anyhow," just so they knew that we knew. And, if they didn't know now, they knew.
- Avigail Oren:** Okay.
- Susan Wiedel:** So, it was like, hint, hint, wink, wink – you know what...

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Linda Boxx: Well, it wasn't any wink, wink. We just told them that we were negotiating with CSX to get this long sliver of property that their road was on.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Susan Wiedel: Got it, okay.

Avigail Oren: Okay. Do you want to chat about Keystone Metals and the process of working with them?

Linda Boxx: Yeah, well, so, that's really a Jack story. But again, this is why – it was the trust between the two of us. I trusted him and... So, we had private money – we were using federal money to do the wall. It was a multimillion...

[Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: [inaudible 1:23:22.3]

Linda Boxx: Between Keystone Iron Metals property and the trail.

Avigail Oren: And, the trail.

Linda Boxx: We had to build- that was their condition – that we had to build some sort of barrier.

Avigail Oren: And, you used federal money for that.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, it was a Transportation Enhancement-funded project. We had right close to \$2 million left in that bank account and we decided that was where we were going to use that money. But, before we got the PennDOT on-site, we did some remediation of Keystone Metals – moved material around. And, I think we spent – I want to say close to \$200,000 to do some preliminary grading work on Keystone Metals, which saved us, probably, \$6 million because if we had to do it with federal money, it would have just been ridiculous. So, we moved material back. We got everything all clean and ready for PennDOT to start looking at the site.

Avigail Oren: I understand. Okay.

Linda Boxx: Yeah. And so, that money- I knew these numbers at one point and I can look it up very easily, but it was really well-spent

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money. So, I had money and I said, “Jack, go do what you have to do. You work with Keystone Metals.” And, I think that’s how he built that relationship that he had with them. This guy – he says he’s going to do something, he does it.

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: He’s a credible person and he’s helping us, he’s working with us, and so forth. So, this initial design of the wall was awkward because it had sort of a bend in it and we were going to have to put a lot of revetment material, build up the berm close to the railroad because of the way the property was. We asked for a corridor – let’s say 20 or 30 feet wide – but it bent around. So, Jack took the plans in. Jack surely covered this. So, Jack took the plans into Keystone Metals and showed it to them and said, “Well, why don’t you just straighten this out?”

Avigail Oren: Right. And, give it a little more. Right, yeah.

Linda Boxx: “We’ll give you this piece in the middle so you don’t have to bend the wall like this.” And, Jack said, “Okay. Thanks.”

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: So, it was really from that perspective, then, that we started doing the rough grading and the preliminary work and getting the site suitable so that when PennDOT came in, there weren’t too many issues.

Avigail Oren: Right. They just had to put up the wall.

Linda Boxx: Right. But, seriously, we had bids – or estimates, not bids – estimates that would be \$10 million or \$12 million to do this wall.

[Crosstalk]

Susan Wiedel: From the county [inaudible 1:26:38.2]?

Linda Boxx: Yeah. Some different... Right. And so, this project came in at around \$2 million, which was expensive, but it wasn’t \$12 million.

Avigail Oren: Right. Yeah. And, do you think just by this privately funding the beginning of the grading and remediation at a price...?

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- Linda Boxx:** Well, it was a private contractor.
- Avigail Oren:** A private contractor. Right.
- Linda Boxx:** I think we actually even had – we had a real good relationship. Caruso was there and Keystone Metals. And, the two of them – the shared property and they were very cordial with each other. And so, we probably hired Caruso to do the work and Keystone directed it.
- Avigail Oren:** Got it. And so, that saved money in this.
- Linda Boxx:** It saved money. And, they were happy.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** It gave them a little bit different kind of layout in their yard and so forth.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm. Great. So, how about the Hot Metal Bridge?
- Linda Boxx:** So, the Hot Metal Bridge was a great project. Melissa Billock and John Coin, with the URA, were the managers of that project. It was city-owned property – it was a city bridge. And, our role was as a funder. And, we had received money from the Heinz Endowments and the Richard K. Mellon Foundation and put some of that into- all of the Heinz money and some of the Mellon money into the Hot Metal Bridge. The rest of the Mellon money went to the Big Savage Tunnel. But, what was the most creative about that whole project was we used our global match to fund that project, but we didn't have to put any money up. It was a Transportation Enhancement-funded project and so it's 80/20. You spend 20, the Feds put 80 in. Well, because the Hot Metal Bridge was part of the alignment of the Great Allegheny Passage, our friend, Dana Accurti, at PennDOT – who's now retired – pointed out to me that, "Well, this is one system. It's just like a highway. Every section of a highway is done – is an 80/20, 80/20, 80/20. As long as, at the end of the day, the whole thing is 80/20, you're good to go." And so, we were able to use our... There was limited Conservation money in the Big Savage Tunnel, but there was plenty of state money – \$10 million, 100% private money, but non-federal money – in Big Savage Tunnel. So, \$10 million –

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that leverages a lot of 20%. So, we used the match – the state money that was spent...

Avigail Oren:

On the tunnel.

Linda Boxx:

...on the tunnel to fund the non-federal match part of the Hot Metal Bridge so they could use, basically, 100% federal-funded.

Avigail Oren:

Right.

Linda Boxx:

And, we gave them money. The money we gave them was used for design and engineering and also removing the last span on the south side. Because what it did is as it crosses, then it actually went up in the air and it was going off to the mill. And so, we had to take that last span off. It was going in the wrong direction.

Avigail Oren:

Got it.

Linda Boxx:

And, that was another thing. I said like, "Well, can we just put it over Hot Metal Street? Since we're up that high, can't we just take that span and plop something down?" But, there was that piece of artwork that was already there. It was like, "Oh, I can't make Mayor Murphy mad again."

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren:

Right, right.

Linda Boxx:

It was that. But, I thought that would have been so nice to have instead of the ramps that you have to do to go up and you have to cross Hot Metal Street, that we could have done something. It's easier said than done. It was one of those ideas that "Pfft, yeah, I don't know, it's probably not going to work."

Avigail Oren:

Right, right. So, I'm curious – we covered the bigger challenges because then you get to the Eliza Furnace and then, basically...

Linda Boxx:

Yeah. And, that was done in the '90s.

Avigail Oren:

Right, right. And, then, basically, it's just the Mon Wharf piece at the Riverfront. No, it wasn't Friends of The Riverfront?

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- Linda Boxx:** Riverlife Task Force did the Mon Wharf.
- Avigail Oren:** That's what I meant – Riverlife Task Force, right. And, then the Point, like, the park.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. And, Riverlife Task Force and, I guess, the city and the state park worked on the ramp that goes down to the Mon Wharf and then DCNR – I don't know where that is – that last little connector that'll be on the stones – those Belton block stones, the hard armor, the side of it – they're going to create a bench so the trail can continue through there.
- Avigail Oren:** Right. But, those weren't major ATA challenges, right? It was pretty much you decided on the marker at the Point.
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. Well, we actually tried to interject ourselves into the switchback because it was proceeding so slowly. It was just going nowhere and Tracy's staff from DCNR told Jack, "How can we get this project in your hands?" But, it's okay. We didn't need another big hassle because it had a lot of regulatory issues – Corps of Engineers, as well as PennDOT, and DEP. I mean, everybody was involved in that one.
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm. And, by the time you get down to the end of Eliza Furnace, there's plenty of ways that you can navigate by bike to the park, right.
- [Crosstalk]
- Linda Boxx:** Yeah. Are you going to Market Square? Are you going to the North Side?
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** It sort of depends on where you want to go. But, people do want to get to that medallion. So, there were two other legacy projects with Pittsburgh 250, and one was the completion of the fountain. The fountain was turned on the week before we had the big ride, the 2008 ride. So, they were the first week in June and we were the second week in June for the big celebration. Wait a minute – October – I'm sorry. Not June, October. I should look at my dates. I know our ride was October of 2008. I'll check out some dates on that one and make a note.

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Avigail Oren: And, I guess, now I wanted to zoom out – not quite the bigger picture but longer-term – and just ask you where the gaps in the GAP fits into your own personal narrative of working on the trail, or maybe even the trail’s narrative. Obviously, it’s the last piece and it was a challenging piece, but on the project, it’s pretty long and challenging – 13 years of, what, more or less, was a four-year project isn’t that big. So, sort of your...

Linda Boxx: So, when this whole notion – I was on the Board of the Regional Train Corporation in ’93. And, this whole idea of getting this whole trail done – I was most intrigued with the Steel Valley piece...

Avigail Oren: Okay.

Linda Boxx: ...because that was very similar to what I had done in Latrobe. I had gone, knocked on the industry’s door. I said, “I need some of your properties’ backend. You won’t notice I’m using it and can I get an easement?” And, “We’ll put up a fence. Our trail users won’t be able to bother you.” And so, my little creek-side trail was only a mile plus, but it was all industrial property. And so, I felt like, “Oh, I know how to do this.”

Avigail Oren: Really, actually, you sort of relished the challenge?

Linda Boxx: Oh, yeah, yeah. No, I was eager to get it going. I realized in ’95 when ATA started and ’96 when we started doing the master implementation plan and so forth, and really trying to come down with what’s it going to cost to finish this trail? I just got so consumed in putting the whole package together, and selling that package, and raising the money for it, and elevating the conversation – getting people familiar with Great Allegheny Passage, and talking about this dream we all had. I didn’t have time to really spend fussing with the Steel Valley section because there was so much more than was consuming my time. But then, when Rivers of Steel backed away and I thought, “Oh, time is perfect. I’m done with Big Savage, Maryland’s set – we got them their money – they’re ready to roll. But, they can manage that on their own. They don’t need me.”

Avigail Oren: Right.

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Linda Boxx: I'm going to Pittsburgh and get that piece done. And, like I said, I was eager, willing to do it – it wouldn't have happened without the team of Jack and me, really. We were both enthusiastic and committed, and we fed off each other, and it was like, "Who's going to do more work?" It's a competition. Who's going to get more done? Ha, ha, ha.

[Chuckle]

And, we used to have this joke about, "Well, that's a good Friday." "Well, that's a bad Friday." "What's a good Friday?" Because things always – stuff would happen and then by Friday something would happen.

Avigail Oren: I mean, you guys really are such a well-matched pair in terms of, I think, definitely skillset, but also, like you said, you're very good at keeping your eyes on the future and not getting bogged down in the present with whatever the challenge of the day is, particularly if it was fairly unusual.

Linda Boxx: Well, that was Jack's skill because he would just work through the problem, work through the problem. If he ever felt overwhelmed, he wouldn't let himself. He would go out and hunt or something. I don't know what he would do – or fish. But, he just was very linear in his approach and when he got to the next thing that needed to be done, he'd rest it and went onto the next thing that needed to be done, and then the next thing, and then the next thing. And, it was always the next thing. The acquisitions – I asked him when we started, I said like, "Jack, you really need to keep a really extensive notebook of all these meetings that you're going to because no one will believe- you won't believe it." It's amazing to think about it. But, every property had to go through whatever organization we were buying it from – there was all that negotiation and getting a sales agreement. And, then, we had to go to the municipality and those were at least two meetings with the subdivision that was required and then so we had to go to the planning and then the council, and sometimes there were more because of whatever, then lawyer's meetings and engineer's meetings and so forth. But, just getting those properties because everything had to be surveyed. And, it was funny because the Steel Valley group – we tried to get them to

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help. We'd go to their meetings and they'd listen eagerly about like, "Oh, that's great. You're making all that great progress." I remember, this one guy said, "Yeah, ATA's doing it." And, I said like, "What do you mean ATA's doing it? You mean that invisible group of people that's downtown Pittsburgh in the Grant Building or something? It's us. It's just us. We're the ones doing the work. "It's not like, 'ATA'."

[Chuckle]

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: It's always sort of amusing. But, I wanted them to learn how to do the fundraising and make those relationships so that when we left, they would continue. And, Jack wanted them to be involved and so forth. So, when the thing was all done, one of the gentlemen on the Steel Valley Trail Council said, "Well, we need to know what property RTC owns." And, Jack said, "From one fence to the other side of the fence – that's what we own. You can get a survey if you want, but just look at that fence pole and that fence pole, and that's what we own. And, that's what we ended up carving out. We weren't given any more land than we needed.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: And, that's what we owned. And, it's sort of amusing. He kept saying, "Well, we need to see what we own." And, it's just like nothing could be clearer.

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: [inaudible 1:41:34.5] eyeballs.

Linda Boxx: It really should be very obvious what is owned.

Avigail Oren: Reminds me of that classic Monty Python sketch, "All this can be yours. The curtains...", you know?

[Laughter]

It's quite simple. Just look, right.

Linda Boxx: Yeah, yeah.

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Avigail Oren: There was something you said that I had a follow-up question about. Oh, yes. So, this is a question I asked Jack and I'm going to ask it to you as well because I'm sort of fascinated. So, at the very end is this at least two-hour conversation where he outlines all of this. I just looked at him and said, "How the heck did you keep track of this? Did you have the ultimate Excel spreadsheet? Did you have 8,000 Post-It Notes? Did you have – what are those called – not Filofax. Is that a Filofax, or a day planner?" So, I asked the same to you – how did you...

Linda Boxx: Oh, I was a spreadsheet. Oh, I was all about spreadsheets. I had an Excel spreadsheet for the funding. You should see it. You should see it.

Avigail Oren: Uh-huh.

Linda Boxx: Because I had to track Hillman money goes to this, to this, and then we'll have to report to Hillman that we spent their \$50,000 doing this or \$200,000. So, I kept the funding all on a big spreadsheet with the different projects. And, I had to also keep those up-to-date for the Pittsburgh 250 people in a very compressed form.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: That was the big thing- and how many miles, and what we were doing, and which the contractors were... I think Jack really sort of did one project after another. And so, he would do one project from start to end and that'd be done and then he'd start the next one. So, it was a very linear thing for him – I think. Much more than me because I'm looking at the whole project at one time, trying to, "Where we going to put this money? We've got this money? Where we going... How're we going to make it all come together?" And, then, end of the day, "Uh-oh, we need \$2 million more dollars."

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Avigail Oren: Right. Who are we calling for it?

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Yeah, here we go. Who still has some blood left?

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[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: Right. Susan, I wanted to let you asked any questions if... No pressure.

Susan Wiedel: I'm still trying to...

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Well, let me go back to something that I skipped over because it's really- maybe it's too complicated to even talk about. But, when we did Big Savage Tunnel and I found out that it was going to be taken out of John Oliver's budget, it broke my heart. We're not doing picnic tables for kids and swing sets, and we're taking money out of your park budget. Whatever Big Savage costs is coming out of his budget. And, that just flabbergasted me, like I said. I felt so badly about that. So, that's why Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation was created. I said, "Well, I'll make it up to you. We'll replace all this money." But, I also said, "Well, we'll raise private money and then we can put that in PFFF, too." Let's say we raise \$1 million ourselves, privately.

Avigail Oren: The trail, you mean?

Linda Boxx: The trail – ATA – "we". And, we'll put that in the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation and then, John, you can have it to do the things that you weren't able to do with the state capital money that you were supposed to get.

Avigail Oren: Right.

Linda Boxx: So, we pledged \$1 million to DCNR. And, we sent the first \$500,000 to DCNR and had raised the second \$500,000 and I was getting ready to send it and Larry Williamson called. He said, "You crazy? What are you doing?" I said, "What do you mean?" He goes like, "You said you were going to give us money, but I never thought you were actually going to do it." And, I said, "What do you mean, Larry?" He said, "Don't give us any more money." I said, "O-o-kay."

Avigail Oren: You already raised it.

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Linda Boxx: Yeah. And, I didn't want to say, "Is it okay with John?" But, I was like, "Okay, okay, let's hang up real quick before you change your mind." So, we ended up with a half a million dollars that we didn't have to spend that we were going to give back to the state. We were told we didn't have to and so that was our seed money for the gaps in the GAP. So, we walked into that already with a half a million in the bank – and more, actually, because we started raising money for the gaps in the GAP already, too. But, that was a big boost...

Avigail Oren: Right.

Susan Wiedel: A nice cushion.

Linda Boxx: ...a nice cushion. So, we had one of these early meetings with the conference. I remember Cliff Raul from PJ Dick Trumbull and Bob Luffy from American Bridge were there and they were going to help out with the trades and help coordinate because they knew we needed bridges and they knew we needed paving. So, these were the two guys, and they were wonderful to work with. I remember, again, they were like, "Oh, yeah... These people don't know what they're doing."

[Chuckle]

"They don't even own the land yet. What are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to do this?" So, I had my little spreadsheet – my little finances. And so, Cliff says, "Well so, do you have any money?" And, I said, "Oh, yeah. We have \$6-1/2 million." And, he said, "Okay, let's get going." And, that's when they started – we were in a position at that point to start the paving in the McKeesport RIDC.

Avigail Oren: Uh-huh.

Linda Boxx: And, then, because they wanted to get going, we actually ended up paving part of property in Duquesne – there was the flyover bridge that went into the Duquesne RIDC that sort of held things out. But, we paved from the backend of the flyover to Grant Avenue. They were just interested, and Jack was, too, "Let's get some work done. I don't care if it's only a half a mile. It's a half a mile that we won't have to do later."

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Avigail Oren: Right, right. And, is this also when they had culvert that's [inaudible 1:49:05].

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: Yeah, that's what this is. This is the flyover.

Avigail Oren: Oh, right. I got it.

[Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: That's another Dave Wright story because there was the railroad – CSX there, too. I think that's CSX's line there. And, there's a lot of space and we thought they could just put the spans – instead of it being here, just make them 10 feet wider and we could just slip the trail right through there. It turned out we couldn't do that and ended up spending- that project cost an extra million dollars – like \$997,000 additional to build that culvert through there.

Avigail Oren: Oh, my God. Yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, that was just what the railroad wanted and what the county wanted. But, Dave Wright, the same Dave Wright with the aerial easements said, "Well, you don't need to go through. You can just make a right turn and go to the end of the turn and then come back and go..." And, we said like, "No. No, we're not doing that." And, he said, "Well, we can put a corrugated metal culvert through there." And, we said like...

Avigail Oren: You want to ride the...?

[Laughter/Crosstalk]

Linda Boxx: And so, it was like, "Well, that's better than going around it." And so, Dave engineered it and then the PennDOT guys took one look at and said like, "No. There's no way we're doing this. There is no way we're doing this." And so, that's why they put the concrete culverts through there. So, it's relatively nice. It's short and you blink three times and you're through it, but it costs a million dollars and it would have been horrible if we'd taken the cheap way around.

Avigail Oren: Right, yeah. Like you said, that design matters.

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- Linda Boxx:** Yes.
- Avigail Oren:** If you're going to do it, do it. Right.
- Linda Boxx:** Yes. A trail that goes from Pittsburgh to Washington, D.C. is worth putting a little extra money in to make it nice and make it right.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah, yeah. Well, I think that one of my last questions is you built a lot of new relationships through this process and you also strengthened a lot of existing relationships. I guess I ask you to reflect on that now that the trail is finished. What does that say to you about what trail-building means?
- Linda Boxx:** Well, I don't know if it says what trail-building means. I think any project that comes your way and you're able to have the fortune of resources, relationships, or whatever, to bring to bear and weave them together for success...
- Avigail Oren:** Mm-hmm.
- Linda Boxx:** And, any project can follow that mode. The value is the fact that this turned to be a project that, basically, generates in spending every year what the total capital cost was.
- Avigail Oren:** Right.
- Linda Boxx:** If \$80 or \$100 million is spent trailside every year, and it costs \$80 million to build – the investment was worth it.
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah, absolutely.
- Linda Boxx:** I've said this before, I'm sure, it was a joy. It was hard. Every day wasn't happy, for sure. If I was a wall-kicker, I'd have holes all over my house.
- [Laughter]
- But, you just settle yourself down, think, "How are we going to solve this problem? How are we going to stand up to this challenge?"
- Avigail Oren:** Yeah.
- Linda Boxx:** My cause is good. I'm going to keep working at it, figure out the solution. The only thing I wanted... I was rereading my

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other interview and maybe I could just change it there, but I probably didn't characterize my father's role at Kennametal – his early role – well. There were 12 people in his early days, and I talked about sales, but Dad really was the business side of Kennametal. Phillip was the genius behind the patent, but somebody had to run the business, and that was what my father was doing. And, he really taught me, I think, through good example of making decisions. You can't study something forever, or you can't say, "I'm going to go out on a limb and I'm going to make a hard decision because somebody has to make the hard decision."

Avigail Oren: Yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, I had learned that from my father about you just have to face reality, you can't run away from it. You just have to move on because things have to keep moving. You can't stop while you stew about whether it's the right thing to do or not. Sometimes be reflective and be smart, but you can't be paralyzed by a lack of decision.

Avigail Oren: Right, yeah.

Linda Boxx: And, that's really, I think, like okay, "Jack – go ahead and build a ramp to nowhere," you know?

[Laughter]

Avigail Oren: I know, right. There were so many moments like that in the gaps in the GAP, right? I mean, even if it wasn't a ramp to nowhere, there were times where you just had to make calls.

Linda Boxx: Well, the Big Savage Tunnel had those kinds of challenges, too.

Avigail Oren: Absolutely.

Linda Boxx: Yeah.

Avigail Oren: I mean, many points in the trail.

Linda Boxx: Sure.

Avigail Oren: But, just the multitude of sections in Steel Valley I think.

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Linda Boxx: Right.

Avigail Oren: It brought a lot of game-time decisions.

Linda Boxx: Right. Exactly, exactly. Yeah.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. All right. Are there any last thoughts or ideas you want to talk about?

Linda Boxx: No, I think that pretty well covers my... Well, Hannah, of course, had left and I wanted her to take over ATA. I wanted her to be my heir-apparent. But, she had other career things in mind and just wanted to do something different.

Avigail Oren: Mm-hmm.

Linda Boxx: But, I loved working with her, too. She's just a charming individual and sorry to see her go.

Avigail Oren: Yeah. All right, so I'm going to turn off the recording.

[1:56:25.8]

jvh-t/cr-p

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