

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Jodi L. Gauker called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:02 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams.

The following members were present:

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman  
Christopher J. Spohn, Vice Chair  
Lisa J. Weaver, Secretary  
Glenn R. Knoblauch  
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB

Also Attending:

David Peris, Assistant County Solicitor  
David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director  
Ashley J. Showers, Assistant Director  
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst  
Shanice E. Ellison, Planner I  
Michelle D. Franklin, Subdivision Planner III  
Taylor Lawrence, Planner II  
Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III  
Richard L. Royer, Design Planner  
Pamela Shupp-Menet, Director of Community and Economic Development  
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator  
Jaime Perez, Housing Planner, Redevelopment Authority  
Devon Hain, Transportation Planner II  
Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II  
Deb Millman, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance  
David Myers, Berks Alliance  
Heather Berger, Information Systems

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. REPORT OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

A. Executive Director's Report

David Hunter began his report by summarizing the Imagine Berks “Capitalizing on Your Municipality’s Opportunities” regional meetings. He noted that of the meetings they had to date have been very successful discussions. Specifically, several municipalities have followed up about updating their joint comprehensive plans.

Mr. Hunter also announced the formal hire of Jaime Perez as the Housing Planner who will be working closely with the Planning Commission staff to address the ever-growing housing situation.

An update about the Main Street managers meetings was given. Mr. Hunter noted that these meeting are put on in collaboration with GRCA to support the programs in the County’s Boroughs.

In conclusion, Mr. Hunter summarized the Berks Municipal Partnership meeting which was recently held and was also attended by Intergovernmental Planner Laura Mursch. Mr. Hunter noted that Chip Bilger, Chairman of the Water and Sewer Association, will be supporting the BMP in becoming more structured with content to share at the meetings.

4. STAFF REPORTS – CONSENT AGENDA

A. Shanice Ellison

Maple Avenue Apartments

The project was submitted as a Preliminary plan. The plan consists of a proposal for 34 apartment units located in Robesonia Borough. The proposal shows the 34 units being split into two buildings. The site is located within the Existing Development and Environmental Hazard area. The Environmental Hazard area is identified within the Special Flood Hazard area (100-year floodplain and floodway), as identified on the 2012 FEMA FIRM panel 42011C0457G. The proposed land development is located south of the identified FEMA floodplain.

The Environmental Hazard areas designation in the Future Land Use section of the Berks County Comprehensive Plan states that: *“The primary purpose of this designation is to encourage their proper management and sustain their natural functions and values. In most cases, these areas should not be disturbed, nor developed, because of their natural environmental importance, the associated environmental constraints, and the substantial public interest in preventing damage due to floods, minimizing sedimentation and erosion, and enhancing water quality. The exception would be for the development of properly elevated/floodproofed buildings within redevelopment areas that are part of an economic revitalization initiative. Such redevelopment should be designed, located, and constructed to have a minimal effect upon the flow and height of flood waters and does not increase the flood hazard to properties located upstream or downstream of the redevelopment site. Floodplains were delineated using FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) issued on July 3,*

2012.” The proposal for the subdivision and land development is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030.

There were comments in regard to traffic.

B. Michelle Franklin

Apartments On Van Reed

The project was submitted as a Preliminary/Final Plan. The proposal calls for 210 apartment units in a six-story building located in Wyomissing Borough. There is underground parking proposed. The site is in a Designated Growth area and therefore is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030. Comments included in the review were that consideration should be given to provide a pedestrian connection between the building and the proposed sidewalk along Van Reed Road as well as consideration should be given to providing sidewalk along the Greenwich Street side of the project to connect the site with the adjacent neighborhood sidewalk system.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of April 12, 2023, Minutes

B. Reports for Approval

- Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary
- Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity

C. Pioneer Crossing Major Permit Modification for Leachate Management

D. Pike Township Conservation Easement - Blank Family Whispering Treetops Tree Farm Forest Stewardship Plan Consistency Review

MOTION: Christopher Spohn made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Lee Olsen and passed unanimously.

6. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. Lee Olsen - “The ABCs Of Design + Architecture” with Lauer’s Park Elementary

Mr. Olsen introduced his presentation with a background summary of how the ABCs of Design and Architecture came together. Specifically, Mr. Olsen was approached by the Lauer’s Park Elementary principal to participate in a career day at the DoubleTree with 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. Upon Mr. Olsen’s participation in the career day, it was clear the students in attendance wanted more understanding of architecture. Understating that the student’s interest was piqued, Mr. Olsen along with members of the Lauer’s Park staff spent the summer creating a 16-week course which would provide the students the very basics of designing a home. The course included interactive sessions with the students building marshmallow cubes and cookie towers as well as creating

sketches of buildings in the City of Reading. The students also used their math skills in measurement to create their homes. The students were organized into four different families and each family had a different locale and home which they had to design. At the conclusion of the course the students presented their homes to their peers and school staff. The presentations were recorded by BCTV so that a special screening should be shared with the students and their families. Upon the conclusion of the Mr. Olsen's presentation, Mr. Hunter asked if it would be a possibility to not only have a course for architecture but also land use planning to tie the two themes together. Mr. Olsen welcomed the suggestion and said he would entertain another discussion about developing such a course.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Lee Olsen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:51p.m. The motion was seconded by Lisa Weaver.

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Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman

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Lisa Weaver, Secretary