

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
BERKS COUNTY SERVICES CENTER
633 COURT STREET, 14TH FLOOR.
READING, PA 19601-4309

February 14, 2024

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Christopher Spohn called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, February 14, 2024, as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams.

The following members were present:

Christopher Spohn, Chairman
David H. Turner
Glenn R. Knoblauch
Jodi L. Gauker
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB, Secretary
Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez, Vice-Chair
Miguel Herrera
Sarah Phillips

Also Attending:

David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director
David N. Peris, Assistant County Solicitor
Ashley J. Showers, Assistant Director
Shailyn Hernandez, Administrative Assistant
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Michael D. Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler
Taylor Lawrence, Planner II
Laura Mursch, Intergovernmental Planner III
Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III
Matthew McGough, Transportation Planner III
Michelle Franklin, Subdivision Planner III
Devon Hain, Transportation Planner II
Richard Royer, Design Planner
Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II
Pam Menet, Executive Director Community and Economic Development
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator
Jeremy Zaborowski, Industrial Development Authority
Jaime Perez, Housing Planner, County Redevelopment Authority
Deb Millman, GRCA, Vice President of Development, President Greater Berks Dev. Fund
Kayla Hayick, GRCA, Director of Lending and Business Outreach
Melissa Lewis, IS Department
Joshua Macel, Assistant County Solicitor
Emily Wangolo, Executive Director Dept. of Agriculture
Aaron Gantz, GRCA, Senior Director of Economic Development
Jeremy Zbaraowski, Executive Director, Industrial Development Auth.
Ken Pick, Executive Director, Redevelopment Auth.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. REPORT OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

A. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Hunter began his report by giving an update on the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority and the upcoming goals for the year under the Corridor Identification and Development Program. Also, Mr. Hunter discussed the upcoming meetings that will take place with FRA and Franklin Station working group to discuss station locations in Reading.

Discussion ensued about passenger rail in Berks County and how this will affect the County's Comprehensive Plan update starting in 2025. Mr. Hunter invited Board members to a couple of educational conferences and meetings coming up this year. Mr. Hunter also announced Mark Mohn as the new chairman of the Smart Growth Alliance.

Executive Director Hunter ended his report with giving an update on Joint Comprehensive Planning for this year and a Housing forum that will be held this year by Jaime Perez to educate municipalities and developers on everything housing.

B. STAFF REPORTS

a. **Michelle Franklin – Villas at Maxatawny**

The proposal was submitted as a Preliminary plan and the site is located along the western side of Hartman Road and on the eastern side of the Kutztown Bypass (S.R.0222). The site is proposing 118 townhouse units. The site is in a Future Growth area and Environmental Hazard area. The Environmental Hazard area is identified within the area of the 100-year floodplain associated with the Saucony Creek within the site, as identified on the 2012 FEMA FIRM panels. No development is proposed within this area. The proposal for the townhouse development with public water and sewer service and associated improvements is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030.

Discussion ensued regarding the plan, site area, and public transportation routes to Kutztown.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of January 10, 2024 Minutes

B. Reports for Approval

- Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary

- Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity

MOTION: Lee C. Olsen made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Jodi L. Gauker and passed unanimously.

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. **Ken Pick – Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program (RCI)**

Mr. Pick spoke on the history of the RCI law and how it was proposed and created. Mr. Pick explained the process on how it is conducted and the reason of adopting the RCI. It allows for the Redevelopment Authority to not be restricted by the Urban Redevelopment Area and restrictions that usually come with a redevelopment area. The Redevelopment Authority makes sure when using RCI that is consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. The program is looked at every 10 years for any updates that need to be made. The RCI allows for the Redevelopment Authority to do projects at a more reduced rate and at a faster turn around time.

Discussion ensued on some examples of projects where RCI was used by the Redevelopment Authority.

MOTION: David H. Turner made a motion to approve the use of Residential, Commercial, Industrial Redevelopment Program (RCI). The motion was seconded by Glenn R. Knoblauch and passed unanimously.

B. **Devon Hain & Amanda Timochenko – Safety, Pavement and Bridge Reports**

Devon Hain presented about the Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report expanding on the data provided by PennDOT for the PM2 Pavement and Bridge Measures. These measures assess the conditions of pavement and bridges on the National Highway System (NHS). As Reading MPO's interests extend beyond those included in PennDOT's Performance Measure Annual Reports, the data was analyzed not only for road and bridge groups for PennDOT-owned assets but Local Federal Aid (LFA) roads and locally owned bridges. Devon explained the data collected between the years 2018 - 2022 and the tables to show the data, along with the analysis made on the data and a summary of the findings.

Amanda Timochenko presented the Traffic Safety Report. This report includes the addition of a table that identifies the predominant collision type for roadway segments where more than 20 reportable crashes occurred. A table that identifies projects that are programmed on the current Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that include elements of safety as part of the overall goal that the project aims to address is included in the report as well.

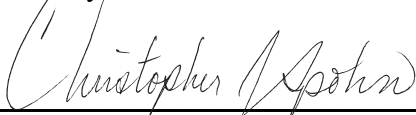
Discussion ensued on the data analysis done on these reports.

C. Christopher Spohn – Imagine Berks Talent & Economic Mobility Implementation Team

Chairman Christopher Spohn spoke about his leadership of the Talent and Economic Mobility Implementation Team of Imagine Berks. Specifically, the group has been discussing the creation of an HR Bootcamp for disengaged youth and young adults who are not participating in the workforce. Mr. Spohn spoke about the reasons why young adults aren't entering the workforce including the ability to get to work due to lack of transportation access or obtaining a driver's license.

5. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Sarah Phillips. made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:17 p.m. The motion was seconded by Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez.



Christopher J. Spohn, Chairman



Lee C. Olsen, Secretary