

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

MARCH 08, 2023

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Jodi L. Gauker called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, March 08, 2023, as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams.

The following members were present:

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman
Lisa J. Weaver, Secretary
Glenn R. Knoblauch
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB
James C. McCarthy, P.E
Miguel A. Herrera

Also Attending:

David Peris, Assistant County Solicitor
David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director
Ashley J. Showers, Assistant Director
Brittany N. Antunes, Office Support V
Cheryl Auchenbach, Planner III
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Shanice E. Ellison, Planner I
Michelle D. Franklin, Subdivision Planner III
Michael Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler
Taylor Lawrence, Planner II
Matthew F. McGough, Transportation Planner III
Laura F. Mursch, Intergovernmental Planner III
Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III
Richard L. Royer, Design Planner
Heather Berger, Information Systems
Deb Millman, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator
Emily Wangolo, Executive Director of Dept of Agriculture
Barbara Lopez, Executive Assistant to Comm. Michael Rivera
Lynne Burns, Executive Assistant to Comm. Lucine Sihelnik
Jeremy Zaborowski, Director of Industrial Development Authority
Pamela Shupp-Menet, Dir. of Community and Economic Development

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 updating the Planning Commission on the first of ten Regional Municipal Meetings that was held on February 28, 2023, at the Grand Central Taproom in Fleetwood with 44 attendees. The next meeting will be held for municipalities in Region Two including North Heidelberg, South Heidelberg, Lower Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Marion, Womelsdorf, Robesonia, and Wernersville. The Meeting will be held at Ozgood's Restaurant in Robesonia.

A briefing was held at Reading Area Community College Campus Schmidt Center regarding the restoration of passenger rail to the City of Reading. Tom Frawley, Executive Director of the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority, gave a presentation on the necessary steps required for acceptance into the Federal Rail Administrations Corridor Identification Program.

Mr. Hunter also followed up on Tom McKeon's question from February's Planning Commission meeting regarding how Berks County assesses solar farms. The Chief Assessor, Susan Kissling, confirmed that Berks County does not assess structures but only the use of the land.

4. STAFF REPORTS – CONSENT AGENDA

A. Michelle Franklin – 1931 Schubert Road

The project is not an official submission and is in the sketch plan phase. The plan consists of a proposal for an 84-unit townhome development located in Bethel Township. The project is proposing public water and sewer. The project site is listed in Bethel's Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use as Agricultural Preservation. In 2021, the municipality rezoned the site to Commercial use. The site is designated Agricultural Preservation and Existing Development in the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update and therefore the proposal is not consistent.

Pamela Shupp-Menet asked if the proposal aligns with Smart Growth because the site is adjacent to other residential uses. David Hunter replied that there is an inconsistency due to the municipality not amending its comprehensive plan to align with their amended zoning but, residential would be appropriate for this location.

Glenn Knoblauch asked if the site aligns with Bethel Township's 537 Plan and if the site is in a public sewer proposed area. Michelle Franklin replied she was unsure because the sketch plan does not provide those details. James McCarthy recommended including the subdivision review letters in the monthly board meeting packets.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of February 08, 2023 Minutes

B. Reports for Approval

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

MOTION: James McCarthy made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Lisa Weaver and passed unanimously.

6. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. 2022 Annual BCPC Report

Ashley Showers presented the 2021 Berks County Planning Commission Annual Report. The report is in digital format and will be circulated on the Planning Commission’s website, Facebook page, and sent out to the Planning Commission Board Members and Municipalities.

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B. Pamela Shupp Menet – Imagine Berks 6-month report

The plan uses data points from the local job market, land availability, and housing activity to maintain the economic sustainability of Berks County to make sound land use decisions and public policy decisions.

The implementation teams represent more than 75 community members, business owners, and industry leaders. The members of the implementation teams review action steps and metrics to

ensure inclusivity. The project team is comprised of Pamela Shupp-Menet, David Hunter, Ashley Showers, Jeremy Zaborowski, Ken Pick, and Derek Harris. The project team meets regularly to ensure all the activity is being captured.

The Planning Commission staff have been integral in compiling data for the implementation teams. The Planning Commission Staff completed the Sewer Capacity Study and are also hosting 10 Regional Municipal Meetings. The Placemaking Implementation Team has been divided into 2 working groups. The Greenway, Park, and Recreation Plan working group will be guided by Ashley Showers. A total of \$250,000.00 has been set aside specifically for identifying and implementing the Greenway, Park, and Recreation Plan projects. The second working group is comprised of the Main Streets Managers.

An Economic Impact Dashboard will be established and function as a resource while providing real-time information. IMAGINEBerks.org should be visited for more information and resources.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: James McCarthy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:50 p.m. The motion was seconded by Glenn Knoblauch.

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman

Lisa Weaver, Secretary