

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

JANUARY 11, 2023

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, January 11, 2023, in the Berks County Planning Commission Office on the fourteenth floor of the Berks County Services Center, Reading, Pennsylvania.

The following members were present:

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman
Christopher J. Spohn, Secretary
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB
Glenn R. Knoblauch
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CEcD
Lisa J. Weaver
Miguel A. Herrera

Also Attending:

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
Devon B. Hain, Transportation Planner II
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
Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator
Pamela Shupp-Menet, Dir. of Community and Economic Development
Jeremy Zaborowoski, Exec.Dir. of Berks County Industrial Development Authority

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. REPORT OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

A. Election of Officers

Glenn Knoblauch and Tom McKeon recommended the slate of officers for the 2023 nomination. The Officers recommended are as follows; Jodi Gauker as Chair, Christopher Spohn as Vice–Chair, and Lisa Weaver as Secretary.

MOTION: Glenn Knoblauch made a motion to close the nominations. Tom McKeon seconded the motion to close and it passed unanimously.

MOTION: Lee Olsen made a motion to accept the slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee. Glenn Knoblauch seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

B. Executive Director’s Report

David Hunter began his report by informing everyone that the February and March Berks County Planning Commission Meetings will be held virtually, and the April meeting will be in-person.

Amanda Timochenko is celebrating 15 years of employment with Berks County.

Mr. Hunter welcomed a new Board Member, Miguel Herrera. Mr. Herrera provided some background information. Originally from Columbia, Mr. Herrera has lived in Reading, Pennsylvania for the last 24 years. He currently works for Milan Consulting Group and provides architectural consulting services.

Mr. Hunter recognized Kevin Barnhardt as the new Berks County Chief Operations Officer and Larry Medaglia as the Deputy Chief Operations Officer.

In December of 2022, the Berks County Commissioners rescinded the resolution which provided for automatic recognition and approval by the County of tax abatements established under the Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance (LERTA) and is now a case-by-case decision and approval process.

Planning Commission Staff are working on a policy that will distinguish letters of consistency from letters of support. The letters that are submitted to Planning Commission Staff are reviewed for consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan Update, 2030. Any

requests for letters of support should be directed to the Berks County Commissioners. A memo distinguishing the two will be forthcoming.

The Imagine Berks Economic Development action plan 6-month report has been scheduled and will be presented to the Berks County Commissioners on February 28, 2023, at 9:30 am.

The Imagine Berks Regional Meetings are scheduled to begin on February 28, 2023. The first meeting will be held at The Grand Central Taproom 45 W. Main Street, Fleetwood at 5:30 pm. The Municipalities that are invited in Region One are Bern, Muhlenberg, Laureldale, Ontelaunee, Leesport, Maiden creek, Richmond, and Fleetwood. The meetings will be a collaborative effort with the Industrial Development Authority, Redevelopment Authority, Reading-Berks Association of Realtors, and the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance. Planning staff will call all the municipalities to further understand what their needs and wants are for their municipalities. The information obtained will be used to form the basis of the discussion at the meetings. The Save the Dates will be sent out to the Planning Commission Board and all Municipalities by January 17, 2023.

The Muhlenberg-Laureldale Joint Comprehensive Plan Meeting will be held on January 11, 2023, and the topic of discussion will be Future Land Use.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of December 14, 2022 Minutes

B. Reports for Approval

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

C. Letters of Support, See Appendix A

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

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. Jeremy Zaborowski – Berks County IDA Annual Report and County Infrastructure Fund

The Berks County Industrial Development Authority's (IDA) mission is to promote collaborative, long-term, quality job creation and retention in Berks County through site development, redevelopment, financing programs, and access to government funding such as the Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program Grant (RACP). The RACP Grant is a Pennsylvania grant program to provide funding for the acquisition and construction of regional improvement projects.

Active Infrastructure Financing Projects include Amity TIF, several RACP grants, and Penn Optical. Currently, there are no timelines for the completion of the projects. Site Development for Berks Park 183 is ongoing. The Berks IDA's role in the project has been to design and subdivide the property, environmental remediation, obtain grants and financing, build infrastructure, and market and promotion of the site. The site will produce 200-400 jobs in the next few months.

Christopher Spohn asked what type of technology is going to be used inside of the Berks Park 183 structures and whether Berks IDA has an influence on what is used as he is concerned about how it may affect the Work Force Development. Mr. Zaborowski stated the Berks IDA can only control what is included in the term of sale.

Berks IDA's responsibility within the Imagine Berks Plan is the improvement of under-utilized and undervalued land to create job opportunities and raise the tax base through Land Development and Infrastructure Financing.

Further discussion ensued regarding infrastructure funding and future capacity for industrial use. Lee Olsen also expressed concern regarding there being a balance of agriculture preservation and economic development.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Christopher Spohn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Lisa Weaver.

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman

Chris J. Spohn, Secretary