

# Berks County Planning Commission Annual Report for 2018

## Highlights

The Berks County Planning Commission (BCPC) and staff are actively involved in many projects throughout Berks County and beyond. Many of these programs and projects are dependent upon funding and regulations beyond our control. One of these key programs relates to Transportation which not only has an impact on our roads but projects involving economic development, recreation and almost every other project the BCPC is involved with. The SR 222 & SR 662 round-a-bout and Fleetwood Borough Main Street reconstruction projects were both completed in 2018. The staff continues to partner with the economic development and business community to track infrastructure availability and identify areas for new or expanded economic development opportunities. These Economic Development Areas are proposed for addition to the Berks County Comprehensive Plan Update, currently underway. The BCPC staff continues to promote intergovernmental cooperation through all of its programming and projects wherever appropriate.

## Introduction

The BCPC serves as the area-wide planning organization for Berks County. The Commission provides a regional blueprint for land use, transportation and community facilities. It assists



local units of government with development and preservation activities and provides assistance to the Berks County Board of Commissioners and other departments of county government. The BCPC and its professional staff also serve as community advisors for modern planning practices and advocates for sound regional growth management. Finally, since the Commission is involved with a range of activities with a number of partners,

it plays a very important coordinating role in community development issues and projects.

## Commonwealth Authorizing Legislation

The Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), Act 247 of 1968 is the legislation that grants authority for land planning in Pennsylvania to municipalities and counties. The MPC sets the ground rules that all municipalities must follow for comprehensive planning, zoning, and subdivision and land development.

Article II of the MPC spells out the options that a governing body has to create a planning agency. A planning commission is just one option. The governing body may also create a planning department or planning committee to directly advise the governing body. Typically, at the local government level, the planning commission makes recommendations to the governing body, which still acts as the approval body. The governing body can appoint a planning commission and

delegate subdivision and land development authority to the commission. The Berks County Commissioners opted to form the BCPC in 1968 and delegated subdivision and land development duties directly to the Commission. Periodically, the MPC is updated or amended.

The BCPC is subject to the Right to Know Law and Sunshine Act. Accordingly, the Commission must maintain accurate files and records, and easy access to these files.

### **Membership and Organization**

The BCPC consists of nine members appointed to four-year terms by the Board of County Commissioners. Initially, the terms were staggered so that each year two or three members come up for reappointment or replacement. The members may serve until they are replaced or reappointed. All members of the Commission must reside in Berks County and at least six must not be employees or officers of the County. In making appointments, the Commissioners try to maintain geographic representation from all areas of the County and ensure that all facets of the community play a role in planning decisions.

Each year the BCPC elects a Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. The Commission's bylaws limit the Chair to only two consecutive terms. The BCPC also has a number of standing committees that meet separately and report back to the full Commission.

During 2018, the officers and members were:

Barry L. Schlouch, Chairman  
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CEcD, Vice-Chairman  
Jodi L. Gauker, Secretary  
Douglas R. Myers  
Douglas Paul Rauch, Esq.  
Peter F. Giorgi  
Glenn R. Knoblauch  
James C. McCarthy, P.E.  
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB

### **Planning Commission Staff**

In order to accomplish its duties, the BCPC retains a staff of eleven professional planners, three office support and technicians, and the planning director. During the summer two seasonal planning aides are hired to help complete traffic counts and each are required to complete a planning project. The staff is divided into four primary work groups: subdivision and land development, transportation, community planning, and administration. The planner positions require a four-year college degree with specialized skills in geography, environmental science, landscape architecture and transportation. Zachary Kopinetz, Planning Technician, resigned in March 2018. A new Planning Technician was hired in July 2018, Shanice Ellison graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, May 2018. The following individuals were staff to the Commission during 2018:

Shannon L. Rossman, AICP, Executive Director  
Cheryl A. Auchenbach, Planner III – Community Planning  
Elizabeth A. Burkovich, GISP, GIS Analyst

Michelle D. Franklin, Planner III – Subdivision & Land Development  
 Shanice E. Ellison, Planning Technician  
 Michael D. Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler  
 Devon B. Hain, Transportation Planner II  
 Pauline R. Klopp, Office Support V  
 Zachary Kopinetz, Planning Technician (resigned)  
 Matthew F. McGough, Planner III - Intergovernmental Cooperation  
 Laura Mursch, Transportation/Subdivision Planner I  
 Jamie L. Passon, Planner II  
 Alan D. Piper, Planner III - Transportation  
 Ashley J. Showers, Planner II  
 Amanda M. Timochenko, Planner II  
 Regina F. Zdradzinski, Office Support III  
 Vacant, Planning Aide

The County of Berks J. Chadwick Schnee, Esq., First Assistant to the County Solicitor serves as the Commission's Solicitor.

**Planning Commission Budget – Revenue & Expenditures**

The Berks County Board of Commissioners allocates funding for staff and related expenses. The BCPC also receives revenues from a variety of government agencies and fees. A summary of the BCPC's budgeted expenditures and revenues for 2018 is as follows:

**EXPENDITURES\*\***

Wages - Staff	\$905,353
Wages - Part time no benefits	\$35,126
FICA	\$71,947
Fringe	\$352,632

<b>Sub Total – Personnel (sub total – personnel actuals)</b>	<b>\$1,365,058 (\$1,204,824)</b>
Operating Expense	\$144,942
<b>Sub Total – Operating (sub total – operating actuals)</b>	<b>\$144,492 (\$114,863)</b>
Building Indirect Costs	\$83,612
Other Indirect Costs	\$234,457
<b>Sub Total – Indirect</b>	<b>\$318,069</b>
<b>Total Budgeted Expenditures (Total Actual Expenditures)</b>	<b>\$1,667,385 (\$1,637,756)</b>

**REVENUE\*\***

CDBG	\$60,000
FTA Revenue	\$99,704
RATS State Revenue	\$59,035
RATS Federal Revenue	\$388,890
BCMS4 Cooperative Ed Program	\$10,000
UCC Fees	\$9,400
Intergovernmental Cooperation Joint Comprehensive Plan Updates	\$4,474
SALDO Fees	\$75,000
Maps Other	\$250
SALDO Recording Fee	\$1,320

<b>Total Budgeted Revenues (Total Actual Revenues)</b>	<b>\$708,073 (\$647,839)</b>
--	----------------------------------

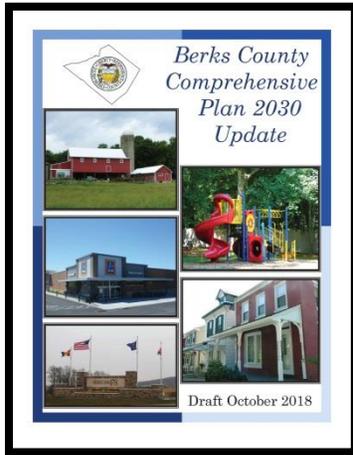
\*\*Expenditures and Revenue contains pass through funding for SCTA/BARTA

<b>2018 BUDGET</b>	<b>\$1,828,069</b>
<b>2018 ESTIMATED BUDGET ACTUALS</b>	<b>\$1,638,024</b>

## **Duties, Responsibilities and Work Program**

The BCPC's 2018 work program consisted of duties proscribed by the MPC and directives from the Board of Commissioners and are summarized as follows:

### **County Comprehensive Planning**



As required by the MPC, the BCPC prepares the Berks County Comprehensive Plan, which is adopted by the Board of County Commissioners. This regional plan uses demographic, economic and geographic information, and citizen input to formulate recommendations for future land use, transportation and community facilities. The plan is a statement of our community goals and serves as a template for local governments

to use in designing local plans and ordinances. The Plan was last updated in 2013. The draft Plan incorporates the adopted Long Range Transportation Plan of 2017 in addition to updating and expanding the economic development goals and policies. The staff met with many of the municipalities during five regional meetings held from January-March to gather input and comments for inclusion the draft Plan. BCPC staff and representatives of the board met with Berks County Department of Agriculture staff and representatives of the Agriculture Land Preservation Board to discuss a proposed policy change in the Comprehensive Plan Update for the purchase of agriculture preservation easements in the County. The policy change was proposed to address the issue of conflicts occurring between easement purchases and land with economic development growth potential near existing or

proposed infrastructure. The Commissioners instructed the BCPC and the BCALPB and their staff to meet and discuss the issues and present them with a proposed solution. The municipalities, school districts and surrounding adjacent municipalities were given the opportunity to comment. A public meeting was advertised and held in July. Presentation of the municipal, school district and public comments along with discussion occurred at the BCPC meetings in August and September. The draft Plan was forward to the Commissioners for the adoption process. The adoption was postponed until language regarding agriculture easements, future growth areas and landfills is clarified.

### **Subdivision and Land Development**

The MPC mandates that if a local municipality has not adopted its own development regulations, then the County's adopted ordinances have authority and the County becomes the approval agencies for development decisions in those municipalities. Currently, only the Boroughs of Lyons and Lenhartsville do not have their own development regulations. During 2018 the BCPC did not review any approval plans.

The MPC further mandates that if a local municipality has adopted its own development regulations, the County must be afforded an opportunity to review all development plans and offer recommendations to the local governing body. During 2018 the BCPC staff reviewed a total of 153 subdivision and/or land development plans, 11 sewer planning modules and 11 municipal subdivision and land development ordinances.

Prior to officially recording a plan with the County Recorder of Deeds, the BCPC staff must endorse the plan as having been reviewed and approved in compliance with the MPC and recording requirements. During 2018, the staff endorsed 128 plans prior to recording. All plans submitted for recording are now digitally scanned in our office as part of the endorsement

process. Once they are scanned in, which include all documentation in the file and the reviewed version of the plan, the documents are available to be viewed on the Recorder of Deeds website.

SALDO Plan Review Summary:

Total Plans: 153

Residential Plans: 29

Total Units: 315

Single Family – 51

Semi-Detached – 10

Townhouses – 23

Apartments – 231

Industrial Plans: 7

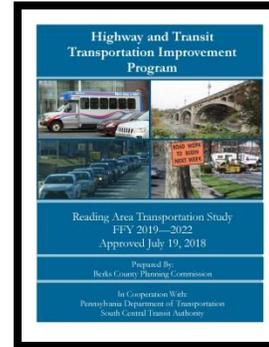
Commercial Plans: 37

Agriculture Plans: 10

This is a fairly significant drop in number of Plans from 2017, when the BCPC reviewed 180. The total number of residential units dropped from 570 in 2017, to 315 for 2018. Industrial, commercial and agriculture plans also drop from a combined 84 in 2017 to 54 in 2018.

The Recorder of Deeds keeps backup digital copies of all of the submitted records in two off-site places in addition to the on-site back-up. This process allows the BCPC to request permission from the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission (PHMC) to destroy the paper copies of all previous plans. The staff periodically reviews the additional stored plans and other documents at the County Archives to determine what is eligible for destruction and submits an application to the PHMC once they are inspected. This process helps the county to manage its archive needs.

## Transportation Planning and Reading Area Transportation Study Duties



The BCPC transportation planning staff had a very busy year in 2018. These planners serve as staff to the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) which is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Berks County. Over the course of the year, staff conducted six meetings of the RATS Technical Committee (advisory), five

meetings of the RATS Coordinating Committee (policy) and one joint meeting of the two Committees.

Staff prepared and/or helped coordinate the following programs and plans:

- MPO adoption of the following documents:
  - FY 2018 – 2020 Unified Planning Work Program – 1/18/18
  - FFY 2017-2040 Long Range Transportation Plan Update – 7/19/18
  - FFY 2019 – 2022 Transportation Improvement Program – 7/19/18
  - FFY 2019 Air Quality Conformity Analysis – 7/19/18
  - FFY 2019 Environmental Justice Summary – 7/19/18
- MPO Adoption of the following Performance Measures and Targets:
  - Transit – 7/19/18
  - Asset Management – 9/20/18
  - System Performance – 9/20/18

- Safety (2019) – 11/15/18
- MPO Acceptance of the following:
  - South Central Transit Authority Transit Asset Management Plan – 7/19/18
  - South Central Transit Authority Transit Development Plan – 9/20/18

Staff continued its involvement in the planning and programming of improvements to Berks County-owned bridges through participation in bi-weekly project meetings. The collection of the \$5 Fee for Local Use as allowed under the State's Act 89 of 2013 has allowed the Berks County Commissioners to address structurally deficient county-owned bridges. Additionally, participation in this program allowed the County to receive \$2 million in bonus funding under PennDOT's Road Maintenance and Preservation (RoadMAP) program.

Staff continued to participate in its role on the Board of Directors of the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership which does business as Commuter Services of Pennsylvania. This organization is staffed under agreement with AECOM consultants to promote commuting options that reduce congestion, conserve natural resources and improve safety and mobility through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs.  
<https://pacommuterservices.org/>

Throughout the year, the staff continued its participation in the ReadingBridges.net group. This public / private partnership was created by the County Commissioners and the Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry to provide valuable information to the citizens of and visitors to Berks

County and the business community on the status of improvements to major bridge crossings and alternative routes in the Reading urban area. The group continued to monitor the Penn Street Bridge rehabilitation progress, the gateway to the City of Reading. The project continues to progress and is expected to be completed on time. The group also continues to coordinate and involve the greater community to provide input into PennDOT's West Shore Bypass design process. Numerous meetings were held to discuss the preliminary design and allow stakeholders to present their issues and discuss them with PennDOT representatives. Details and updated information on this project can be found at PennDOT's project web page: [www.422westshorebypass.com](http://www.422westshorebypass.com)

<http://www.readingbridges.net>

Staff participated with, attended and/or reviewed the following:

- Participated in 10 PennDOT Connects meetings with municipalities, conducted one PennDOT Connects Municipal Outreach Meeting at Berks County Ag Center (4/28/18), and participated in 2 state-wide PennDOT Connects training sessions
- Participated in PennDOT Scoping Field Views for 25 projects, 2 PA PUC Field Conferences, 2 PennDOT Section 106 Consulting Party meetings, and attended 2 PennDOT Project Plans Display meetings
- Participated in bi-weekly County Bridge Progress meetings
- Participated in monthly PennDOT Penn Street Bridge project meetings
- Participated in Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Transportation Committee meetings

- Participated in 6 Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership (dba Commuter Services of PA) Board meetings
- Attended the Pennsylvania Autonomous Vehicle Summit in Pittsburgh in April, the Eastern Pennsylvania Freight Summit in Bethlehem in June, and the Penn DOT Planning Partners Meeting in State College in October
- Participated as presenter in Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Transportation Breakfast (Transportation Priorities - 2/13/18), Berks County Water And Sewer Association Conference (PennDOT Connects – 7/25/18), and Center for Excellence in Local Government (Transportation Funding – 9/25/18)

Other groups / organizations that the transportation planning staff participated in throughout the year are as follows:

- Greater Reading Chamber of Commerce and Industry Transportation Committee
- PennDOT Safety Planning Work Group
- PennDOT Financial Guidance Work Group
- PennDOT HPMS Work Group
- Pennsylvania Air Quality Interagency Consultation Working Group

Staff has also continued its efforts in data collection by conducting:

- 75 traffic counts
- HPMS Inventory review of 175 segments
- 16 county bridge counts



### Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

PennDOT’s Local Technical Assistance Program with oversight and coordination from BCPC staff started in June 2017. Under this program, Matt McGough coordinates with Berks County municipalities to identify their highway and bridge maintenance training needs and to coordinate with PennDOT trainers to offer the necessary courses locally. The Berks County LTAP program expanded to six courses in 2018.

### LTAP Expenditures

In the 2017-2018 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the BCPC staff (RATS transportation staff) received an allotment of \$15,000 for the administration of the LTAP program. However, because of a rollover of \$4,722 in funds from the previous fiscal year the total available to administer the LTAP program for 2017-2018 was \$19,722. The BCPC staff spent a total of \$15,842.04 of that allotment on corresponding with municipalities on their training needs, promoting the LTAP program, training courses and reporting on the administration of the program.

### Highlights

Since LTAP program start-up locally, the program has been very successful and well received in the Berks County region. All of the classes offered have had more than the required number of participants register and attend the courses. Total attendance for the six courses held was 110 persons out of a maximum of 180.

The LTAP program has also been a conduit for greater communication between the County and our local municipalities.

### Marketing

The marketing campaign for the 2017-2018 LTAP program consisted of corresponding with municipalities, county facilities and operations, and our local public works organization via e-mail and phone to inform them of training opportunities, inquire about training needs, provide information about LTAP and the Roads Scholar Program, and to answer general questions about training courses and how to register for classes. Each year staff surveys municipalities to determine which courses are of more interest among the municipal road crews and schedule them accordingly.

Information about upcoming LTAP 2019 courses was distributed via a brochure to municipalities and made available on our website at:

<http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/Planning/Documents/Transportation/LTAP/2019%20BERKS%20LTAP%20BROCHURE.pdf>

Also, part of the outreach effort involves reaching out to the County's MS4 steering committee to make them aware of any training programs that may involve guidance on MS4 related stormwater management and operations.

### Looking Ahead

The BCPC/RATS staff are excited about the success of the LTAP program. The RATS staff will continue to grow the LTAP program and add new courses when needed and actively

promote courses offered in Berks County. The staff anticipates holding between 8 and 10 LTAP courses in 2019.

### Historic Resources Update

Historic resource identification, mapping and database updating is a continuing effort. To date, there are over 5,900 historic resources and districts identified in our database. We continue to monitor and update this database through joint comprehensive plan updates, historic preservation coordination, and volunteer assistance.

Of the 72 municipalities in the County, only portions of Reading remain to be entered in our database, mapped, and field checked by staff. Upon completion, staff will continue coordination efforts with municipalities, historic preservation organizations, and volunteers to ensure that the mapping and database information is continually updated. Historic resources information and mapping can be found in the left navigation panel on our website.

Also, staff will continue to work with PHMC staff to share data. The historic resources mapped locations and survey information can be found at [www.countyofberks.com/planning](http://www.countyofberks.com/planning)

### Zoning and Local Comprehensive Planning

The MPC requires that the BCPC be given the opportunity to review all proposed zoning ordinances, amendments and comprehensive plans that apply in Berks County. The BCPC staff reviews the ordinances and plans for conformity to the County Comprehensive Plan, modern zoning techniques, new development trends and changes that will affect land use. The Commission staff reviewed and offered comments on 55 proposed zoning amendments, 1 official map, 1 road vacation,

1 landowner curative zoning amendment, 1 comprehensive plan, and 1 joint comprehensive plan.

During 2018 the staff continues to track any changes FEMA made to the floodplain maps for Berks County. As changes are made by FEMA staff updates the flood plain maps located on the BCPC's website for the public to view

### **Other Reviews**

The BCPC reviews a variety of programs, plans and grant applications for consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan. Quite often state and federal grant requirements stipulate that proposed projects must be consistent with regional plans. During 2018, the Commission reviewed 2 Act 97 solid waste applications, 1 Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plans, in addition to 38 grant applications for various projects; including economic development, water and sewer infrastructure, trails and parks. The BCPC also provided comments on PUC/PennVEST/106 applications, other local ordinance/codes reviews for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Federal Executive Order, watershed protection grants, various right-to-know requests, and 7 Agricultural Security Area reviews.

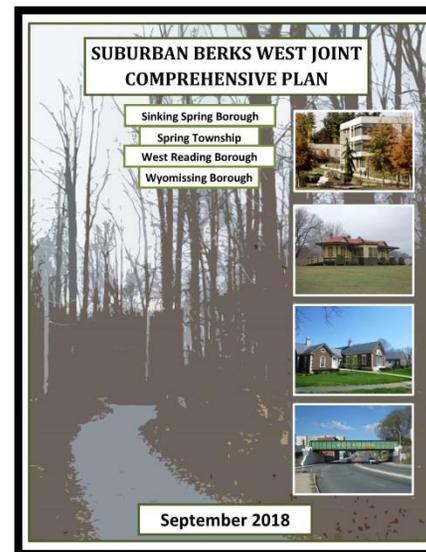
### **Intergovernmental Cooperation Act 67/68 Reviews**

Act 67/68, are amendments to the PA Municipalities Planning Code. These require state agencies to consider comprehensive plans when reviewing applications for permitting of facilities and infrastructure. These two acts specify that state agencies may rely upon comprehensive plans under certain conditions as specified in the Municipalities Planning Code. There are certain permits that are required to get County approval for consistency with the Berks County

Comprehensive Plan. These permit applications are sent to the Berks County Planning Commission office for review and comment.

In 2018, there were 96 reviews conducted under the provisions of these two acts. Projects range from NPDES, to air quality, to stream crossing permits. Even permit renewals must be reviewed. There are several other types of permits that must be reviewed for consistency. The projects are reviewed against the current Comprehensive Plan and determined either consistent or inconsistent with the Future Land Use Plan portion of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **2018 Joint Comprehensive Planning Program**



For the year 2018 the Berks County Planning Commission was involved in updating three joint municipal comprehensive plans. Staff completed the update to Hereford-Washington Townships' Joint Comprehensive Plan. The project started in 2016 and both municipalities adopted the Updated Plan in 2018. The original Plan was dated 2006. The second update involved the

Suburban Berks West Region of Berks County and included the municipalities of Sinking Spring Borough, Spring Township, West Reading Borough and Wyomissing Borough. The project

started in 2017 and all of the municipalities adopted the Updated Plan in 2018. The original Plan was dated 2003. The third update involves the Southern Berks Regional Joint Comprehensive Plan. The Plan includes the Borough of Birdsboro and the Townships of Caernarvon, Robeson and Union. The project began in 2018 and is anticipated for completion in 2019. The original Plan is dated 2004.

All of the plans involve the updating of information contained within existing joint comprehensive plans that were prepared for the municipalities by outside consultants with assistance from planning commission staff. In all cases the plans were over ten years old and new data relating to the economy, land use, demography, and transportation was available to incorporate into the updates. Both the Suburban Berks West Region and the Southern Berks Region planning committees were concerned with the economic vitality of the regions and requested that plans include goals for promoting economic development within the areas. The Hereford-Washington region is more rural in nature and the planning committee was interested in retaining this quality.

### **UCC Appeals Board**

The Berks County Uniform Construction Code Countywide Board of Appeals was formed in 2007. 2008 was the first full year that membership to this Board was offered to the municipalities of Berks County. The creation of this board was in response to the adoption of Act 45 of 1999. This stated that every municipality that adopts the PA Uniform Construction Code must have a Board of Appeals to hear any appeals to the Uniform Construction Code that arise. The idea of a countywide board of appeals began in Centre region of

Pennsylvania. Following this example, The County of Berks approached the municipalities in Berks County to offer this service to them. This takes a large burden off of the municipalities with regard to staffing an appeals board on their own.

The Appeals Board is staffed by professionals in the construction field. These can be many different types of engineers, codes experts, etc. This is an unpaid board, so the members are making a donation of their time for the betterment of the community.

To participate in the Board, a municipality must pay the membership fee. This is currently \$200.00 per year. This fee can change periodically and is dependent upon the cost of the planning staff that handles the administration duties for the Board. The fee is paid to the County. There is an Intergovernmental Agreement that must be entered into between the Municipality and the county. In 2018, there were 50 Municipalities that took advantage of being covered by the Countywide Appeals Board, an increase of three from the previous year. That is nearly 70% of the municipalities within Berks County. All Berks County Municipalities are invited each year to participate. During 2018, the County UCC Board received 1 application and held two hearings regarding the appeal. Also, one hearing was continued into 2018 regarding an application received in 2017

### **Berks County Water & Sewer Association**



The BCPC staff continues to implement the recommendations contained in *The Sewer and Water Regionalization Study Update 2011* through Berks

County Water & Sewer Association. The association's mission is to promote efficient water and sewer service, encourage better administration, expand local training opportunities, and provide the infrastructure needed for economic development through better regional cooperation. The BCW&SA holds an annual conference each year on the last Wednesday of July. The Conference had over 125 attendees.



New for 2018 the BCW&SA started to travel around the county to different locations for quarterly fieldtrips to tour various facilities. Each fieldtrip involves tours of the facility and a presentation regarding water and wastewater activities or equipment related to the

facility. Water and Wastewater Operators receive 1 continuing education credit for their license maintenance requirements. The facilities toured in 2018 were: Sinking Spring Wastewater Treatment Plant, Reading Area Wastewater Treatment Plant, Reading Area Water Authority Treatment Plant and the Western Berks Water Authority Treatment Plant. The BCW&SA plans to tour three facilities in 2019.

In 2016 the BCW&SA formed the Berks County Source Water Protection (SWP) Committee. The Committee with the help of SSM as a consultant and through funding from the PA Department of Environmental Resources created a Berks County Source Water Protection Program, the first Countywide Program in Pennsylvania. The SWP Program was finished in June 2017. The BCW&SA SWP committee meets quarterly to discuss joint projects and programs. The Berks County Conservation District was hired as the Watershed Coordinator for the SWP Program. Each member municipality or authority pays a membership fee to off-set the cost of the position.

The following slate of Association Officers was in place for 2018:

- Chip Bilger, Chairman
- Keith Brobst, Vice Chairman
- Shannon Rossman, Secretary
- Nicholas Johnson, At-Large
- Darryl Jenkins, At-Large
- Brian Hassinger, At-Large
- Bryce Zoehner, At-Large (1-yr)
- Bill Lampe, At-Large (1-yr)
- William Murray, At-Large (1-yr)

In addition the Center for Excellence in Local Government at Albright College was appointed the Fiscal Agent for the Association and Paul Janssen, the Director, was re-appointed Treasurer through 2018.

#### **BCMS4 Steering Committee and Cooperative Education Program**

The cooperative education partners include Berks County Planning Commission, Berks Nature, and Berks County Conservation District. Throughout the course of the year the partners help guide the Berks County Municipalities that are members of the BCMS4 Steering Committee with meeting the requirements of their MS4 NPDES permit. The partners create, distribute, and coordinate numerous education workshops, brochures, quarterly meetings and disseminate key information updates about the MS4 NPDES program. There are 55 municipalities within Berks County that are subject to the MS4 NPDES permit, of those 14 received waivers in the last permit round. Of the remaining 41 municipalities, 37 participate with the BCMS4 Steering Committee and signed new

intergovernmental agreements to participate in the Cooperative Education Program.

### **County MS4 Program**

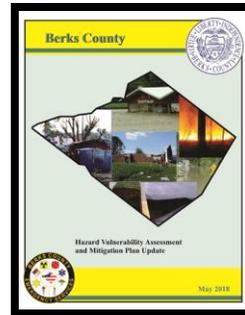
Berks County has been an NPDES permittee since 2004. The permit covers County facilities at North Campus, downtown and two park properties. Each of the properties is within municipalities which are also MS4 permittees. Over the course of the permit various staff members have performed outfall inspections on these properties as well as undertaking the preparation of the Stormwater Quality Operations and Maintenance Manual.

In 2017, the opportunity to request a waiver from the permit program became an option for the new permit cycle. Staff completed the waiver request application during the fall and submitted that along with the required NOI to renew the permit. Berks County received a waiver for its MS4 NPDES permit in 2018. The County is no longer needs to complete certain permit requirements, however staff intends to maintain the facility information along with informal inspections of outfalls.

### **Other Departments of County Government**

The BCPC continues to assist other departments of County government. We provide administrative assistance with grant applications and project management to the County Department of Parks and Recreation for the continued development of Antietam Lake Park. The staff helps manage the administration and reporting for existing grants. The grants are related to the restoration and improvements for Antietam Lake, Angora Fruit Farm and other park facilities.

The BCPC also continues to provide assistance as necessary to the Berks County Redevelopment Authority. The staff has cooperated with the Joint Express Approval Program (JEAP) which attempts to 'fast track' economic development projects by coordinating a timeline for all municipal and agency approvals.



The Berks County Department of Emergency Services finished the update to the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan during 2018. Staff from the Planning Commission participated with the update process.

The staff collaborates regularly with the Berks County Industrial Development Authority on industrial site selection and industrial park development.

### **Collaboration with Non-Profit Organizations & Community Groups**

The BCPC promotes policies and activities that encourage balanced growth and preservation. We play a lead role in cooperative efforts such as the Smart Growth Alliance of Berks County. The Alliance acts as a catalyst and supports innovative strategies that protect the environment and strengthen communities.

BCPC staff served on committees and work groups for conservation efforts such as Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative, Schuylkill River Heritage Area, Berks Nature Land Preservation Committee & State of the Environment report, and the Hopewell Big Woods program. The staff also participates in storm water education and outreach program through the Schuylkill Action Network (SAN).

The BCPC staff serve on the Mt. Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3) and its committees. The MP3 is made up of Mt. Penn Borough, City of Reading, Lower Alsace and Alsace Townships and the County. The goal of the MP3 is to better manage the natural resources and attractions located within the Mt. Penn Preserve. The MP3 created a Council of Governments (COG) to implement this goal and there are two representatives from each entity on COG. One of the assets of the Mt. Penn Preserve is the iconic Pagoda. Shannon Rossman serves as the County representative on the Pagoda Foundation Board.

### **Information Assistance**

The BCPC serves as a repository of information about Berks County and is the local affiliate of the Pennsylvania State Data Center and the Bureau of the Census. As such, we provide assistance and information to other departments of county government, the private sector and the public. We maintain a website ([www.countyofberks.com/planning](http://www.countyofberks.com/planning)) in order to distribute the information and maps.

In addition, the BCPC staff started preparing for the upcoming 2020 Decennial Census. A workgroup was formed to begin preparations for an outreach and effort to Berks County residents similar to past censuses.

### **2018 Construction Update**



Working with the Berks County Assessment Office, the Planning Commission continued to track new housing and non-residential construction throughout the County.

New housing construction fell slightly from last year, as 576

units were constructed in 2018. This is an decrease of 32 units over 2017 construction.

In 2018, 52% of all new housing units were single-family detached houses. Apartment construction accounted for 17% of the new units added to the inventory last year. 19% of the new units were mobile homes, while single-family attached units, which includes semi-detached and townhouses accounted for 12% of the new units.

Examining the location of housing units demolished, 36 of the county's 72 municipalities in the county had demolition of homes. Longswamp Township had the most at 15 units, 14 of which were mobile home with the City of Reading coming in second with 12 units, 11 of which were single family detached.

Examining the location of new housing units, new homes were constructed in 56 of the county's 72 municipalities. Robeson Township had the most new housing at 71 units, 59 of which were apartments. Rounding out the top five municipalities were Washington Township (35 units), Lower Heidelberg (29 units), Douglass Township (28 units), and Union Township (27 units).

Non-residential development, broken down into the following categories: commercial, warehouse/storage, industrial, public and quasi-public (institutional land use) was also tracked in 2018. This data includes new buildings, as well as additions to existing structures. Non-residential construction totaled 3,047,455 square feet of new space. This is a huge increase from the previous year's 1,164,042. Warehouse/Storage dominated the categories with 1,888,504 square feet. Commercial development which includes retail, services and office increased significantly also to 489,061 square feet of space from 182,305 square feet of space. Industrial fell significantly to 156,386 square feet from 601,720. Public/Quasi-Public projects accounted for 513,504 square feet of space, which is also a significant increase.

Not included in the non-residential construction projects are the agriculture related development. In 2018, 2 poultry barns, a layer house, egg packing building, office and agriculture warehouse were constructed.

**2018 Largest Non-Residential Construction Projects in each Category**

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Land Use Category</u>	<u>Square Feet</u>
Kidjoy Co. LLC	Caernarvon	Commercial	46,980
West Reading Hospital T-Building	West Reading	Public/Quasi-Public	373,675
Alcon Research LTD	Spring	Industrial	66,087
DPIF PA 1 LLC Logistics Center	Bethel	Warehouse/Storage	1,081,200

**Municipal Training and Technical Assistance**

The BCPC assists with the training of municipal governments and local planning commissions by conducting workshops on topical planning issues via the Center for Excellence in Local Government at Albright College and the Berks Municipal Partnership. The Commission continues to sponsor the *Berks County Master Planner Program* for local officials in collaboration with the Center. The Center for Excellence and Local Government at Albright College holds its Open House at Roessner Hall, each year in October.

The 2018 CELG/BCS&SA/Smart Growth Alliance Open House, hosted by Albright College, included speaker, Jason Duckworth of Acadia Land Co. Mr. Duckworth spoke about smart growth principles and the change in housing markets due to the demographic change and migration.

Each year the Smart Growth Alliance of Berks County presents an award at the Open House to a person, project or program that provides a community service and/or showcases great places, new development, existing building renovation, municipal planning, energy efficiency and conservation that promote smart growth practices within Berks County. The 2018 Smart Growth Award was presented to two worthy recipients. Berks Nature received an award for their outreach and education programs and their new facility at Angelica Creek Park. Also, Lauers Park elementary school, in the Reading School District received an award for the unique outdoor and indoor education classrooms and curriculum for students. Information about the Smart Growth Alliance of Berks County is found at [www.smartgrowthalliance.org](http://www.smartgrowthalliance.org).

The BCPC staff continues to provide municipalities with timely news and information via our municipal e-mail alert program, E-Flash. During the year the staff has also continued to attend a variety of advanced training workshops and conferences in order to keep current with new planning strategies, legislation and topical issues.

