

Mt. Penn Preserve Steering Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 14, 2017

Reading Pagoda

7 pm

Attending: K. Mallatratt (Alsace & Governance Committee), M. Dudash (Mt. Penn, Governance & Marketing Committees), L. Kelleher (City, CHCC, Governance & Public Safety Committees), M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (City and Pagoda Foundation, Governance Committee), B. Burkovich (County Planning & Marketing Committee), P. Kline (Alsace Twp & Public Safety Committee), R. Rock (Environmental Committee), T. Orth (Lower Alsace & Public Safety Committee), L. Olsen (Co-Chair & Pagoda Foundation), K. Barnhardt (County & Co-Chair)

Mr. Barnhardt called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm. As a reminder, the Master Plan and event calendar is available at www.mtpennpreserve.org.

Public Comment

John King, Chair of Reading Gravity Racing League, stated that he and his colleagues are seeking their race permits for 2018. He questioned the delay in receiving the permits. He explained that his organization began in 1964. In 1966 they began racing on Spring Street. In 1976 the group was relocated to North 13th Street and they have recently restarted racing on Oak Lane, crossing Alsace, Lower Alsace and Reading boundaries.

Mr. Olsen stated that chairs were assigned to each of the five (5) committees and he asked each group to provide an update on their progress.

Governance – Kim Mallatratt & Linda Kelleher, Co Chairs

Ms. Mallatratt reported that the committee held two (2) meetings since the November Steering Committee meeting. The group recently received input on some language in the draft agreement from the Finance Committee and that input helped them finalize the draft COG agreement. The Executive Committee will be asked to vote on the agreement and to present it to the proposed Government Members - Alsace & Lower

Alsace Townships, Mt. Penn Borough, the City of Reading and the County – for their consideration.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that he approached Exeter Twp. Manager John Granger about Exeter's willingness to consider joining the proposed COG and he said that he was open to the issue and would speak with the Supervisors. He stated that the western portion of Carsonia Park is located in Exeter Township and that property is owned by the Mt. Penn Water Authority.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that the group has successfully worked to develop a sound COG agreement that will provide the impetus to move the initiatives in the Mt. Penn Preserve Master Plan forward. He and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to start small to build synergy with the Government Members and the public.

Finance & Development – Jeff Waltman, Chair

Mr. Waltman stated that the Finance Committee met to consider a few issues about the draft COG agreement from the Governance Committee. The group also discussed the need to develop capital initiatives from the Master Plan that are affordable, effective, and executable over a 3-5 year period. He agreed with the need to approach this new organization and mission striking a balance between a cautious and an aggressive approach. He noted that successful implementation of the first few initiatives will build political buy-in and public support.

Mr. Waltman asked the Committees to review the initiatives in the Master Plan and provide the Finance Committee with capital recommendations by the end of January. He noted that Mr. Worrall is a member of the Finance Committee and he brings a wealth of experience in the grant area. He noted that multi-municipal groups like COGs often are favored when submitting grant applications.

Public Safety – Phil Kline, Chair

Mr. Kline reported that the committee met November 30th. Over the past two months the group has spent a significant amount of time discussing the need for improved police enforcement in the Preserve area, especially at the Pagoda. He stated that the

County Park Rangers have a more visible presence and that can be complimented by cross-enforcement by Reading and Central Berks Police.

Ms. Kelleher explained that representatives from Reading and Central Berks have attended the committee meetings and both agree that enforcement could be greatly improved if an agreement is executed by the respective governing bodies to allow Central Berks to enforce local ordinances and summary offenses in Reading and Reading can be provided with the same ability in the Lower Alsace/Mt. Penn areas. She stated that a draft agreement is being circulated for comment.

Mr. Kline stated that the committee sees the need for consistent regulations/laws over the Preserve area in all affected municipalities. Mr. Stress noted the need for complimentary signage in various areas that depict park areas, regulations and municipal boundaries.

Ms. Burkovich stated that various trails are named and information about trail names and locations need to be shared with emergency management centers so they can respond immediately when problems are reported.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed with the need to provide trail information to emergency management from the City and County as many students from the East Reading neighborhood use the trail system on Mt. Penn to travel to Reading High, as it is quicker with no vehicular interference.

Mr. Rock stated that some trail signage was installed by BAMBA. He suggested consulting with BAMBA regarding the trail signage.

Ms. Burkovich stated that she recently created a digital map showing all the trails and roadways in the Preserve area. The map was also shared with Berks County Emergency Management.

Mr. King inquired about the delay in getting his race permits for Oak Lane. He stated that he has 10-11 races planned for 2018 between May and July. He noted the work

those who race perform on the vehicles used in the race and to perform labor to collect trash, pull weeds, etc. at the areas where they race.

Mr. Stress stated that the delay is most likely caused by the need to make sure there are no conflicting events elsewhere on the mountain on those same days. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed, noting that the good news is more people want to hold events on the mountain; however, not all events can occur at the same time. She also noted that the group is trying to avoid events that completely close Skyline Drive.

Ms. Kelleher stated that there has been some discussion about asking Mr. King to relocate his race area to Spuhler Lane, which is located directly behind the Fire Tower. She stated that the Lower Alsace Manager and City Public Works Director need to discuss some issues about Spuhler Lane.

Mr. King stated that he is willing to relocate the races to this area and provide some labor to clean the area. Mr. Rock agreed with the relocation and he also expressed interest in using the lane for the Hill Climb. He noted that he has approximately \$7500 to put toward the repaving of the road.

Mr. Kline stated that the committee has also started to discuss changing the flow of traffic at the Pagoda – rather than having 2 northbound lanes, changing to 1 northbound and 1 southbound lane to the west of the island and eliminating the traffic lane that runs through the Pagoda parking area. Ms. Kelleher stated that only visitors to the Pagoda would be channeled into the Pagoda parking area, which would allow the area to be gated during hours that the Pagoda is closed. She noted that this change may deter partying, dumping and criminal behavior.

Mr. Kline stated that the committee is also beginning to review the installation of new security cameras and call boxes in various areas of the Preserve. The sample security cameras can be viewed live and Central Berks and Reading police have been given access to the app.

Marketing – Beth Burkovich, Chair

Ms. Burkovich reported that the Committee is still working to define the mission and vision statements, and select a consistent name for the Preserve area. The new name can be used to build branding and a logo that will help to enhance the experience of those who consider visiting the area. She stated that the group is also working to develop a user-friendly, searchable calendar of events for the Preserve area.

Mr. Waltman suggested holding a logo contest for local students, as that will increase public awareness about the Preserve and the initiative.

Ms. Burkovich noted the need for coordinated permitting between all municipal partners in the Preserve area, which will help combat conflicting events.

Ms. Kelleher agreed, noting that Ms. Crupi is working with the Reading Traffic Division and Alsace Township to develop a permit for events on the Preserve area. She suggested that the Marketing Group contact Ms. Crupi to provide input.

Environmental – Rick Rock for Mike Frankhouser, Chair

Mr. Rock explained that the weather this past Saturday conspired against the committees plan for a field trip on the mountain trails. He stated that they planned to begin as assessment of the flora/fauna on the mountain.

Mr. Rock reported that Earth Day is scheduled for April 21, 2018 and a clean-up event is planned for the mountain. He noted the degradation of some mountain trails and the improper installation of other trails by unknown parties.

Ms. Burkovich reminded everyone of the need to inform Emergency Management when any new trails are formed.

Mr. Barnhardt suggested that the Public Safety Committee work further with the Environmental Committee on trail issues.

Mr. Stress noted that patrol and enforcement is the only mechanism to stop people from cutting new trails. He stated that increased patrol from County Rangers has stopped this from happening in County parks.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to improve the management of the Mt. Penn forest. She noted the extreme number of downed trees and underbrush. Mr. Stress stated that the County is in the process of creating a forest management plan for Antietam Park.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:15 pm.

Meeting Schedule

- Thursday, January 11th at 7 pm at Mt. Penn Borough Hall
- Thursday, February 8th at 7 pm
- Thursday, March 8th at 7 pm

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk