

Mt. Penn Preserve Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday, February 8, 2018
Mt. Penn Borough Hall
6:30 pm

Attending: K. Mallatratt (Alsace Twp. & 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), M. Reinert (Pagoda Skyline & Marketing Committee), R. Rock (Environmental Committee), M. Frankhouser (Environmental Committee), C. Crupi (Lower Alsace and Public Safety & Environmental Committees), S. Rose (Marketing Committee), J. Blatt (Hessian Camp, Public Safety & Environmental Committees), A. Sellers (Environmental Committee), T. Coleman (Governance Committee and Exec. Committee legal counsel), K. Barnhardt (County & Governance Committee), S. Rossman (County Planning, Governance Committee). D. Barth (Alsace Twp, Governance), R. Johnson (City PW Director)

Mr. Barnhardt called the meeting to order. He stated that after Committee reports there will be a discussion on the finalization of the COG.

Public Comment

None

I. Committee reports

Environmental – M. Frankhouser, Chair

Mr. Frankhouser stated that the committee met and began their assessment of the preserve by walking a portion of the trails despite the inclement weather. In addition to the problems with the spotted lanternfly, invasive plant species and rampant illegal dumping and litter, the group has determined that there are too many trails across the preserve, most forged improperly without permission from the City. He stated that at the forestry management meeting for Antietam last week, he learned that there are 14.1 meters of trails across the 640 acres of Antietam Park. He expressed the belief that the preserve area, outside Antietam Park, contains 30-40% of improper and un-needed trails.

Mr. Frankhouser stated that some of these improper new trails were installed by bike groups unrelated to BAMBA and added hardscapes such as wooden ramps, tracks, etc. He noted that these new trails present a variety of issues that affect the safety and environmental protection of

the preserve, such as runoff problems and eliminating the natural plantings, allowing for the growth with invasive species.

Mr. Frankhouser stated that the committee's priority areas are:

1. Safety – fire safety and safety of people
2. Eliminate litter and dumping
3. Improved programming
4. Trails

The group discussed solutions to thwart the installation of new trails. Ms. Crupi stated that the DCNR Forestry Bureau contacted her this week about having their park rangers stationed in the Fire Tower. While the DCNR rangers will probably not go down into the trail areas, their presence may help to reduce illegal behavior.

Ms. Crupi described the start of a new anti-litter campaign on Groundhog Day for the preserve. The group discussed the need for improved signage across the preserve. The signage should match that installed by the County and the trail markers installed previously by BAMBA. As it is next to impossible for police officers to respond to complaints about issues that occur on trails, the group decided that BAMBA and others who frequent the trails should be asked to become ambassadors who will intervene when they observe problematic activity.

The group discussed the need to install additional security cameras to stop illegal dumping. It was noted that in the past temporary cameras were installed on all outlooks with signage and dumping stopped, but restarted when the cameras were removed.

Mr. Barnhardt referred the Trail Management issue to the Public Safety Committee.

Public Safety – P. Kline, Chair

Ms. Kelleher reported that the committee has spent a significant amount of time discussing the need for improved police enforcement in the preserve area, especially at the Pagoda and the need for coordinated park hours between the City and County. She stated that the committee considered an alternative proposed at their last meeting to have the City and County adopt the same regulations and operational hours and insert the enforcement authority for Reading, Central Berks and State police in the ordinances which would accomplish cross-enforcement without an additional inter-municipal agreement. She noted that the two sets of park regulations are already very similar but the operational hours differ. The County hours are consistent with time of sunset throughout the year; however, the City hours are:

A. Parks are open 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. prevailing time from October 1 through April 30 and 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. prevailing time from May 1 through September 30, except with a permit.

The group expressed the belief that the City's regulation that prohibits parking at the Pagoda at 11 pm has not worked to resolve the issues with littering and partying at the Pagoda, as problems are normally reduced during the cold winter months. The group suggested moving forward with the application for comparable park hours which would easily allow cross enforcement between police departments to occur. It was again noted that the police have discretionary powers that allows them to consider each situation individually.

Ms. Kelleher reported the Public Safety Committee recommends that the group have a traffic engineer consider the committee's recommendation to close the current southbound lane of traffic traveling through the Pagoda parking area and making a new southbound lane traveling to the west of the Pagoda island which currently holds two northbound lanes. She stated that the committee believes that this would allow the Pagoda area to be gated at times when the park is closed or the Pagoda is closed which would deter dumping, littering and partying. If the Pagoda parking area is closed, there are three (3) other outlooks available where people can enjoy the view.

The committee is also addressing the need for wireless connectivity between the Pagoda and Tower which will allow the installation of additional security cameras through the use of an unlicensed microwave channel. The committee is also working to provide live-feed access to the new security camera located at the Pagoda to Central Berks and the Reading Police Departments. She noted that the committee has also discussed the same issues raised by Mr. Frankhouser regarding trail management.

Ms. Kelleher reported that the Lower Alsace Manager and Reading Public Works Director met to discuss issues Spuhler Lane that has been gated since the 1980s. Neither Lower Alsace nor Reading has record of this road being opened or vacated. The need for repaving was discussed at prior Mt Penn Preserve Steering Committee meetings. The Public Works Director and Lower Alsace Township Manager agreed that the lane should remain closed to regular traffic and be opened only for permitted events. The Public Works Director wants to be sure that this area truly belongs to the City. Ms. Kelleher is working with the City's Law Office to resolve this issue. *Note: prior to the meeting Ms. Rossman was consulted about the tax parcel map that shows some roadways with a gray line and some with no gray line. It was determined that roads shown without gray lines are paper or undedicated/unopened streets.*

Mr. Rock indicated that in addition to the Gravity race, the Hill Climb is also interested in using Spuhler Land and would contribute to the cost of the repaving. Ms. Crupi expressed the belief that there are multiple organizations that would benefit from the repaving of this unopened road that those organizations may contribute to the cost of the repaving.

The coordinated permit for events on the preserve is almost completed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested that a Public Safety rep attend the Hessian Camp Community Group meetings to update them on the issues discussed at the committee meetings.

Marketing – B. Burkovich, Chair

Ms. Burkovich reported that the committee is almost ready to release the draft mission statement to get input from the group. She noted that there is currently an attractive logo of the Fire Tower and Pagoda at the base of Duryea Drive, which will be used as the starting point.

Ms. Burkovich stated that a Facebook page was recently created, using the logo mentioned above. She stated that there are already 125 Likes without any publicity. She suggested that those with Facebook pages search for Mount Penn Preserve and like/follow the page. She explained that the page will allow additional engagement, outreach and input. She noted that events can be shared so community members become aware of scheduled events, can consider attending and help spread the word. She added that this will also assist with the updating of the event calendar that is included on the website,

Ms. Burkovich stated that the Mount Penn Preserve webpage is completed; however, Ms. Rossman noted that at some point the page will need to migrate away from its home on the County website. Ms. Burkovich agreed noting that on the County website the page needs to follow the County's standardized appearance. The migration would allow additional features to be added to make the site more inviting. She also stated that as the email address mountpennpreserve@gmail.com was available she reserved it. She explained that many members can be provided with administrative access to this email address.

Finance & Development – J. Waltman, Chair

Ms. Kelleher reminded the group about the Finance Committee's request to assist in the development of a 3-5 year capital plan by making recommendations on the initiatives located in the Master Plan. She stated that a word document with the initiatives was sent out on January 3rd. (*Doc again attached to these minutes*) She reminded the committees to review the initiatives and send recommendations by the end of February so the Finance Committee can begin to develop the plan and its costs.

The Environmental Committee submitted their recommendation to Ms. Kelleher and the Marketing Committee has almost completed their recommendation.

Governance – K. Mallatratt & L. Kelleher, Co-Chairs

Mr. Barnhardt announced that the Commissioners approved the MP3 COG ordinance at their meeting today. He stated that Lower Alsace, Alsace and Reading are all in the beginning stages of the ordinance introduction and advertisement process. He noted that the Mt. Penn solicitor and Commissioner Scott have one similar reservation. He stated that both believe that the terms of the agreement will make the respective government member take on capital costs for facilities that do not belong to the municipality. The language in the agreement states:

ARTICLE V – FINANCING

Beginning in 2019, Government Members in the MP3 COG shall participate in funding the basic cost of the MP3 COG operations. To recognize their joint commitment to the MP3 COG, all five (5) Government Members shall equally share in funding the MP3 COG operations budget by remitting \$2,000 annually.

A prioritized five (5) year capital plan will be drafted and presented to the Government Members for their **consideration and approval**. These costs shall be established by the MP3 COG Executive Committee in the annual budget, adopted by June 30th of each year and submitted to the Government Members by July 30th of each year **for their consideration**. Capital contributions, apart from the annual operations contribution, **will be allocated on a per-project basis based on the nature and extent of each project and impact on the facility owned by the Government Member**. Successful fundraising by the MP3 may reduce the amount of the Government Members capital contributions.

The Government Members shall remit their contributions no later January 31st of the following fiscal year. MP3 COG Government Members shall pay their share of MP3 COG operations and capital contributions within 35 days of the date of billing, no later than January 31st annually. Payments must be received or postmarked by the due date or a penalty of 10% will be assessed

Mr. Barnhardt explained that, for example, if the MP3 COG defines a capital need for wayfaring signs and banners across the preserve area, Mt. Penn would only be financially responsible for the signs to be located on property that is within their municipality; they would not be assessed for the cost of a 1/5 of the signs and banners required across the preserve area. Or if the COG recommended a new roof for the Pagoda, Mt. Penn would not be assessed 1/5 of the cost of the roof project; instead, the City of Reading would be asked to fund the roof replacement and the COG jointly (not each individual municipality) could provide some assistance by fundraising to reduce the cost of the project.

Ms. Kelleher pointed out that although the preserve area as defined by the master plan stretches across land located in Alsace and Lower Alsace Townships, Mt. Penn Borough and the City of Reading, the only two government members owning facilities within the area are the City and County. Therefore any capital expenditures for the other three (3) will be minimal. She noted that the language is clear and simple and does not contain any “gotcha” factor. Mr. Barnhardt agreed noting that there is no intent or desire to hold a government member financially responsible for the maintenance of a facility that they do not own.

Mr. Barnhardt explained that the Mt. Penn solicitor also expressed concern with the language requiring a government member to continue to contribute the amount of funding they previously agreed to if at some point in the future they decide to withdraw from the COG.

ARTICLE V – FINANCING

C. **Withdrawal:** A member shall have the right to withdraw from the MP3 COG at the end of any calendar year by giving twelve (12) months prior written notice to the COG Chair. In the case of Government Members, this notice shall be in the form of an ordinance approved by the governing body of the Government Member. **A Government Member’s withdrawal will in no way eliminate or lessen the financial obligation the municipality agreed to as a member of the MP3 COG.**

Mr. Barnhardt stated that this language makes good sense, as the government member agreed to a certain financial contribution that the operation of the COG relies on and it would be unfair for some new municipal governing body to reconsider and withdraw which could compromise the operation of the COG. He noted that this provision is similar to contracts; contracts approved by a preceding governing body cannot be rescinded by a future governing body just because they do not like them.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that Mt. Penn’s last issue is with membership. The language requires:

ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

A. **Eligibility & Membership:** Voting membership on the MP3 COG Executive Committee shall be provided to **one (1) elected official appointed by the governing body of each Government member, 1 municipal secretary or administrator appointed by each Government member,** one (1) elected County Commissioner, and-one (1) representative of the Berks County Planning Commission, (each, a “member” and collectively, the “members” or the “membership”).

Non-voting membership shall be open to any organization designated by the voting membership.

- B. **Admission:** Each Government Member must subscribe by ordinance to these Articles of Agreement and agree to be bound to the extent provided in these Articles and other agreements adopted by the MP3 COG.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that the Mt. Penn secretary does not wish to be involved. Mr. Barnhardt expressed the belief that another elected official could serve instead if the municipal secretary is unable to be involved. He noted that adjustments can be made to the agreement moving forward, as long as all five (5) governing members agree to the adjustments.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:10 pm.

Meeting Schedule

- **Thursday, March 8th at 6:30 pm at Mt. Penn Borough Hall – note the time change!!**

NOTE: There is consideration to change the meeting dates to the 4th Wednesday of the month – nothing official yet!!

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

High Priority Initiatives from the Master Plan

- **Entire Mountain**

6.1 Extend Municipal Policing throughout Mount Penn Preserve Determine methods and sources to help fund additional policing throughout the Mount Penn Preserve 1. High

6.2 Additional Clean-up Efforts Work with local organizations to clean-up the mountain and the negative perception of the area 1. High

6.3 Friends of Mount Penn Preserve Establish a volunteer organization dedicated to the well-being and preservation of the Preserve - Organize volunteer work efforts 1. High

6.5 Interactive App Develop an interactive app for events, activities and places on Mount Penn 1. High

6.7 Decrease Conflicts between Pedestrians and Vehicles Implement safety improvements and education programs that decrease vehicular and trail user conflicts 1. High

6.9 Create the 'Mount Penn Preserve Partnership' Implement an organizational structure to set priorities for physical improvements and programs, and to organize and disperse information about all events and activities in the Mount Penn Preserve 1. High

6.10 Wayfinding Develop uniform signage standards and locate wayfinding signage at key locations, intersections and trailheads 1, High

6.12 Mount Penn Branding Establish a brand for the Mount Penn Preserve with the creation of a logo and through the use of social media (#mtpennpreserve). Establish identities for individual areas within the Preserve 1 High

6.16 Events Additional Events and Festivals Explore additional event / festival opportunities throughout the entire mountain (i.e. Gravity Railroad Food Festival) 1. High

6.21 Physical Improvement Security Cameras on Mount Penn Begin with security cameras at Pagoda and Fire Tower, tie into police monitoring system 1. High

- **Skyline Area**

1.1 Pagoda Circulation Improvements Improve Skyline Drive vehicular circulation at the Pagoda; create two-way travel lane to reroute vehicular traffic out of parking area 1. High

1.2 Pagoda Event Areas / Site Improvements Create an events gathering area below the Pagoda, improved ADA site access and parking via Bridle Path. 1. High

1.7 Trail Connection from Pagoda to Fire Tower Explore improved routes and signage to connect the Pagoda and Fire Tower for trail users 1. High

1.8 Reprogram the Pagoda Explore additional / different program opportunities and events for the Pagoda (i.e. seasonal fireworks, yoga, art shows, sunset events, festivals, etc.) 1. High

1.9 Extend Pagoda's Hours of Operation Extend the Pagoda's hours of operations 1. High

1.10 Pop-up Programs at Fire Tower Work with partners to schedule regular events at the Fire Tower (i.e. Pop-up food events, seasonal restaurants food vendors and festivals) 1. High

1.11 Boutique Hotel at the Fire Tower Develop a Boutique Hotel and Restaurant at the Fire Tower site 1. High

1.12 Trailhead Improvement at Drenkel Field Develop Ferndale and A-Line Trail trailhead at existing parking lot at Drenkel Field; trail kiosk and composting restrooms. 1. High

1.15 Gravity Sports at Spuhler Lane Repave Spuhler Lane for Gravity Racing (Soap Box Derby) and other Gravity Sports 1. High

- **Gravity Railroad Area**

2.1 Dog Park at Egelman's Park Establish a dog park at Egelman's Park that increases use at all times of the day 1. High

2.3 Egelman's Park Programming Establish programming opportunities at Egelman's Park that increase overall usage 1. High

2.7 Trailhead Improvements at Mineral Spring Park Provide improvements to trailhead parking lots that include trash receptacles, information kiosks, etc. 1. High
2.7 2.8 Physical Improvement Improve Trail Connections to Neversink Mountain Improve connections between Neversink Mountain and the Mount Penn Preserve with improved wayfinding signage, trail routes, and safe road crossings 1. High

2.11 Pendora Park Improvements Seek programming opportunities at Pendora Park 1. High

2.12 Boy's and Girl Club Programs Work with the Boy's and Girl's club to develop programs that involve Mount Penn Preserve 1. High
2.12

2.13 Private Sector Investment at East End Athletic Club Encourage new private sector investment at the recently vacated East End Athletic Club facility adjacent to Mineral Spring Park. 1. High

- **Antietam Area**

3.2 Food Venue at Angora Fruit Farm Work with Berks County to create a permanent, seasonal, or pop-up food venue at Angora Fruit Farm that utilizes locally grown food. 1. High

3.7 Phy Trail Connection from Antietam Lake Park to Lower

Alsace Explore a trail connection from Lower Alsace to Lake Antietam along Antietam Road 1. High

- **Central Mountain Area**

4.2 Open Rotary Park Restrooms to the Public Open Rotary Park to the public including public restroom access, rental opportunities for the pavilion, and additional field programming opportunities 1. High

4.3 Trailhead Improvements at Rotary Park Establish a trailhead at Rotary Park and seek improvements to the existing parking lot including formalizing parking, trash receptacles, information kiosks, and trail connections 1. High

- **Mountain Village Area**

5.1 Events Additional Events and Festivals Explore additional event / festival opportunities in the Mountain Village Area. Work with private businesses to coordinate events and festivals and provide additional opportunities 2. Medium

5.2 Physical Improvement Group Campground Provide for an unformalized group camping area on Berks County land north of Hill Road 2. Medium

5.3 Physical Improvement Additional Restrooms Implement ADA compliant restrooms at trailheads and significant destinations 2. Medium

5.4 Physical Improvement Trail Connection to Lower Alsace Explore the possibility of implementing a trail connection along an existing paper street between Lower Alsace and Berks County owned land along Hill Road (easement required) 2. Medium

5.5 Physical Improvement Community Gardens Implement community gardens and establish an organization structure to oversee management and maintenance of the community garden 3. Low

5.6 Physical Improvement Equestrian Parking Trailhead Explore additional equestrian parking opportunities with ADA compliant restrooms, and connections to equestrian trails 2. Medium

5.7 Physical Improvement Trailhead and Parking Improvements Explore additional parking and trailhead locations with trash receptacles, information kiosks, ADA compliant restrooms, and connections to existing trails. Revisit overflow parking arrangements on County land. 3. Low

5.8 Physical Improvement Frisbee Golf Explore opportunities to implement a frisbee golf course. 2. Medium