



Mt. Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3)

Board of Director's Meeting

Wednesday, September 22, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Members: K. Barnhardt (County), K. Mallatratt (Alsace Twp.), L. Kelleher (Reading), L. Olsen (County), D. Pottiger (Lower Alsace Twp.) – virtually

Members absent: B. Petrov (Mt. Penn), D. Barth (Alsace Twp), J. Oswald (Lower Alsace), T. Goodman (Mt. Penn); M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (Reading)

Others attending: A. Showers, M. Brophy, L. Kissinger - all virtually, D. Hunter – telephone and 11 members of the public - virtually & telephone

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Barnhardt called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Due to COVID-19, the MP3 is meeting in a virtual. He stated that until further notice the meetings will remain virtual due to some technical issues with using the mixed hybrid format. Public comment is invited in writing, via email or through registration via Zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Barnhardt inquired if Ms. Kelleher received any written public comment. Ms. Kelleher replied in the negative. He asked if members of the public present wished to comment and asked them to use the Zoom raised hand feature.

Andy and Bethany Shean, Spook Lane – had technical issues. Mr. Barnhardt stated that he will check back with them later.

Jen Motze, Lorraine Rd. – stated that she will defer until the end of the meeting

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Barnhardt asked the members to consider the minutes from the July meeting and the agenda for this meeting. No modifications were made and the minutes and agenda were approved by acclamation.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Mallatratt, MP3 COG Treasurer, stated that the MP3 had an opening balance of \$32,680.69, expenses totaling \$2,115.02, deposits totaling \$3,552 creating a balance of \$32,206.64. She reported that there are no outstanding bills to pay.

Ms. Mallatratt highlighted the separate spreadsheet for the Music on the Mountain event, noting that the sponsorships solicited covered the majority of the cost of the event, leaving only a \$7.89 deficit.

The Treasurer's Report was approved on motion by Mr. Olsen, second by Ms. Kelleher and approved unanimously.

The Music on the Mountain Treasurer's Report was approved on motion by Mr. Olsen, second by Ms. Kelleher and approved unanimously.

Ms. Mallatratt stated that contributions to the Music on the Mountain included a \$750 contribution from the Reading Musical Foundation (RMF), which requires the approval of an Acceptance Agreement listing the terms for the grant. She stated that the grant can be used only for the musical expenses associated with the event.

Mr. Olsen explained that Mr. Kline suggested applying for the RMF Grant. He noted that the MP3 can apply for funding for future events, adding that the grant amount can be increased. He stated that the grant agreement requires execution with a report on the use of the funding. He suggested that as Treasurer, Ms. Mallatratt should execute and prepare the report.

Mr. Olsen moved, seconded by Ms. Kelleher, to authorize the Treasurer to execute the agreement and prepare the require report for the RMF. The motion was approved unanimously.

MP3 COG REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Deer Management at Antietam

Mr. Barnhardt stated that the County Parks Department, in partnership with the USDA, is conducting a controlled archery hunt to thin the deer herd on the Antietam property. He explained that the trail study provided information about the damage the oversized deer population is causing to the foliage in the area and the need to reduce the number of vehicular accidents caused by deer. He explained the process used to vet the archers who applied. He stated that archers can hunt seven days a week between dawn and dusk.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that the County released information about the controlled hunt in several ways, including signage on the Antietam property. He noted that the City is considering coming on board for the Mt. Penn property in the future.

Mr. Brophy questioned if there are safety issues for those who use the park. Mr. Barnhardt stated that those who use the trails are always encouraged to wear brightly colored clothing.

B. Traffic Shift at the Pagoda Parking Lot

Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Rugis called to provide an update as he was unavailable this evening. He reports that the project will begin on Monday the 27th.

B. Update on Coordinated Approach to Dumping

Mr. Pottiger stated that the RFP is almost completed. He stated that he expects to finalize it within 2-4 weeks.

C. DCNR Grant Trail Feasibility Study and Forest Management Plan

Ms. Showers stated that she hopes to receive a response in the fall.

D. Pagoda Trail Update

Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Rugis reported that McCormack Taylor engineers walked the trail with their trail specialist who will be making some recommendations on making some ADA modifications to the proposed trail.

E. New Year's Eve Fireworks re Berks Festivals, Inc.

Mr. Olsen stated that Bill Koch has been the caretaker of Berks Festivals, Inc., a non-profit organization that organizes the fireworks productions at the Pagoda. Mr. Koch is looking for another organization to take over and he is considering transferring the management of the organization to the MP3. Mr. Koch has secured sponsorships for the 2021 Pagoda fireworks. Mr. Olsen suggested that the MP3 submit a letter of intent.

Ms. Mallatratt inquired about the timelines for fundraising and permitting. Mr. Olsen stated that he was told that it takes 2-4 weeks to obtain the fireworks permits from the Reading Fire Dept. and organizations are contacted about sponsorships 6 months in advance.

Ms. Kelleher inquired if Mr. Koch would assist with introductions to the fireworks company and to the sponsor organizations. Mr. Olsen expressed the belief that Mr. Koch will arrange a smooth transition.

Ms. Mallatratt expressed the belief that the taking over the fireworks at the Pagoda matches the mission of the MP3.

Mr. Olsen moved, seconded by Ms. Mallatratt, to send a letter of intent to Berks Festival, Inc. The motion was approved unanimously.

Other Business

Mr. Olsen stated that he had some recent discussions with Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz about the need for the MP3 to develop a business plan and a strategic plan, along with MOUs with the other organizations that are based on the mountain. He questioned why MOUs would

be necessary and suggested additional discussion at the November meeting. He noted the belief that the Master Plan created by Simone Collins has been the MP3's strategic plan, as the Master Plan divides the preserve into 5 areas with initiatives in each area. He noted that the MP3 has been working on the various initiatives such as implementing the committees suggested and conducting a trail study.

Mr. Barnhardt agreed, noting the need to review the initiatives to determine next steps. Ms. Mallatratt also agreed and noted the need to begin to first look at the organization's progress.

Mr. Barnhardt asked for this issue to be placed on the November agenda.

Mr. Hunter stated that having the Marketing intern was quite helpful as it took some of the workload off of County Planning staff. He stated that there have been internal discussions on the need for the MP3 to retain the help of a paid part-time position to help the MP3 progress.

Ms. Kelleher and Ms. Mallatratt agreed.

Ms. Kelleher stated that she recently was offered an intern paid by a Career Link program and she suggested approaching Career Link to see if there is someone available through that program. Ms. Mallatratt agreed, noting that Alsace Township fills playground positions through Career Link.

Mr. Hunter agreed to follow-up, noting the need to define job duties.

COMMITTEE REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Note: reports from the committees are included with the agenda.

1. Finance & Capital

Mr. Barnhardt noted the need for this Committee to regroup.

2. Marketing & Promotions

Website Migration

- A template for the website has been selected and discussions were had regarding color scheme (earth tones), Link/Navigation titles, and general layout of the site.
- Next steps will be to upload/install the website template and begin migrating the content from the County's server to the hosting site.

MP3 Future Events

- The marketing committee welcomes any input on ideas for future events. Please contact Beth Burkovich with any ideas you may have: bburkovich@countyofberks.com

Nonprofit Status

- The committee discussed the need and importance for establishing the Mount Penn Preserve as a nonprofit 501 c3.

MP3 Contact Information

- Point of contact address still needs to be determined.

3. Public Safety Committee

- **Partying at the Pagoda:** The partying at the Pagoda issue has been resolved, apart from sporadic incidents. The security camera system at the Pagoda is being updated and will be added to the Police Department's VSU operation. There will be discussions with County DES about connecting to the system at the Fire Tower to preempt security issues at that facility.

4. Environmental Committee

- **Dumping of Yard Waste in the Preserve:** Cathy Curran-Myers presented evidence of extensive yard waste dumping in the preserve along Oak Lane in Reading. Not only is such dumping unsightly, but it has led to the flourishing of several invasive species (pachysandra, myrtle, barberry) in the woods along Oak Lane, and the elimination of several native species in the same area. (Dumping along Skyline Drive has led to the same phenomenon higher up on the mountain.) Work to educate residents about the harm yard waste dumping creates is underway.
- **Proposed Stokesay Development in Lower Alsace:** Several Mount Penn Preserve residents are concerned about the environmental impact of Stokesay's proposed development project in Lower Alsace. The Mount Penn Water Authority is also concerned about how the development could impact storm water drainage, erosion, and Crystal Lake in Carsonia Park.
- **Mount Penn Clean-Up on Saturday, September 25th:** The first two "Mount Penn Work Days," facilitated by Bethany Ayers-Fisher and Reading Public Works, were quite successful. Several volunteers from various organizations (BAMBA, Pagoda Pacers, Pretzel City Sports, and others) showed up to pick up trash along Skyline Drive, Oak Lane, and Duryea Drive. The final clean-up in this series is scheduled for Saturday, September 25th, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Volunteers are needed.

Public Comment

Andy and Bethany Shean, of Spook Lane, expressed concern about the proposed Stokesay development project due to increased traffic and increased storm water runoff caused by deforesting.

Mr. Pottiger stated that this project is required to go through the land use process starting with the Lower Alsace Planning Commission and Zoning Board. He stated that he has the Conservation District monitoring the removal of trees from this area. To date 3-4 inspections have occurred and nothing improper has taken place. He suggested that interested parties follow the application process. He reminded the group that this project is proposed on private property and if the use is approved, the Conservation District will continue its review and inspection process.

Mr. Olsen stated that he is a member of the Gulati project team and he noted the wide range of land use regulations and approvals by Lower Alsace and the County that are required before the project can begin. He noted that many hurdles need to be cleared before the project can begin.

Andy and Bethany Shean, in the Zoom Chat, questioned if Mr. Olsen has a conflict through being on the MP3 board and being attached to the project. Ms. Kelleher replied via Zoom

Chat that the project is proposed on private property and that the MP3 organization has no authority over the project.

Mr. Barnhardt clarified that the County Planning Commission and Conservation District only makes recommendations about land use applications; they do not approve/deny projects.

Mr. Pottiger stated that the preliminary sketches for the proposed project can be reviewed at the Lower Alsace Township building. He noted that at the October 6th Planning Commission meeting the September minutes, containing the discussion about the proposed project, will be approved and released for public review. He stated that the agendas for meetings are available on the township website and on Facebook.

Joe Boyle, representing the Mt. Penn Municipal Authority, stated that the authority is concerned about the project as further deforesting will create additional storm runoff issues and jeopardize the Crystal Lake within Carsonia Park. He noted the runoff sedimentation that has already compromised the lake. He also noted similar problems at Antietam Creek.

Meg Archambault, of Spook Lane, expressed concern about the increased storm runoff that will occur with additional deforesting.

Mr. Brophy questioned if the MP3 has any authority over the proposed project. Mr. Barnhardt stated that the MP3 has no authority over this project; however, he agreed with the concerns expressed and suggested that interested parties follow the land use process.

Jen Motze, of Lorraine Road, stated that while she was aware of the deer management program, she interacted with a number of people on the trails last weekend who knew nothing about the controlled hunting. She noted that the signage posted on the property is small and does not contain language showing when the hunting can occur. She suggested improving the signage and doing additional advertisements to advise those who use the trails.

Mr. Barnhardt stated that he would bring these needs to the attention of the Parks staff and the USDA.

Mr. Olsen moved, seconded by Ms. Mallatratt, to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:10 pm.

The next regular meeting of the MP3 COG will be held virtually on December 8, 2021 at 6 pm

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary

Action Items:

1. Don to finalize the RFP re Dumping w/ assistance from PW Staff
2. 501c3 application – does the MP3 need this designation or are we exempt as a governmental organization

3. Letter of Intent to Berks Festivals Inc
4. Executing the RMF Grant Agreement and filing the required report
5. December agenda – MOUs and strategic plan discussion