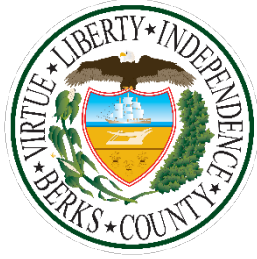


For Release Wednesday, 7/13/2022



County of Berks – Press Release

Commissioners allocate \$450K to PA Americana Region's local tourism efforts

as part of IMAGINE Berks plan

Reading, PA— 7/13/2022 — The Berks County Commissioners recently allocated \$450,000 of County funds to support Pennsylvania's Americana Region, the visitors bureau for Berks County, as part of the IMAGINE Berks economic development plan. The funding is the largest grant the local tourism organization has ever received and will help foster a unified and cohesive marketing strategy that will showcase Berks County's identity and diversity.

PAR encourages local residents and tourists to discover and explore everything Berks has to offer by marketing the County's vast array of arts, culture, outdoor recreation and main street amenities. With this funding, the organization will help to lead several of the placemaking strategies outlined in the first year of the IMAGINE Berks plan. Those strategies include defining and embracing Berks County's identity and cross-promoting county attractions, events and programming.

Crystal Seitz, President of PAR, said there are already several initiatives designed to achieve those strategies, including a branding and marketing campaign refresh, a new tourism website, the creation of several trail apps and videos featuring local attractions. PAR will also work closely with other partners, including the Berks County Parks and Recreation Department, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance, Berks Arts and main street leaders.

“PA Americana has been an important partner to the County for many years and we believe, with this additional financial support, will play a crucial role in helping to implement our IMAGINE Berks plan,” Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt said. “The Commissioners want to make sure this plan brings forth real action that will help propel our community into the future. By working directly with our community partners, we can build from their prior successes and truly maximize these efforts.”

Seitz noted that tourism plays a huge role in the economic development of the community. Even during the outbreak of COVID-19 and the ensuing shutdowns and restrictions, tourism still provided more than \$1.2 billion in economic impact to Berks in 2020, according to the Economic Impact of Travel & Tourism of Pennsylvania 2020 study by Tourism Economics.

“Imagine what these new monies, through enhanced marketing, can do for our businesses and county for the next 3 to 5 years,” Seitz said. “Our marketing not only brings visitors to the area, but encourages talent, college students, and businesses to consider working or growing their business here. It also helps our local communities learn about all the fun things we have to offer. After all, if a place provides wonderful attractions, unique and exciting entertainment, plus great restaurants, you are more likely to consider it a place you want to live, work and play.”

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