

Berks County Operations Minutes
August 2, 2022
9:30 a.m.

The Berks County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on Tuesday, August 2, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. in the Commissioners' Boardroom, 13th floor of the Berks County Services Center, and via Microsoft Teams Live pursuant to due notice to Board members and the public.

Commissioner Chair Christian Y. Leinbach called the meeting to order with Commissioner Kevin S. Barnhardt and Commissioner Michael S. Rivera in attendance. Also present were Christine M. Sadler, County Solicitor, and Ronald R. Seaman, Chief Administrative Officer/Deputy Chief Clerk.

Approval of Minutes

The meeting minutes of June 21, 2022 were approved as presented.

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

IMAGINE Berks Strategic Economic Development Action Plan – Pamela Shupp Menet, Director of Community and Economic Development for County of Berks; decision requested as to formally adopt the IMAGINE Berks plan.

Pamela Shupp Menet began by introducing the team members who were present and acknowledged the participation of Fourth Economy Consulting as well as Lancaster County and briefly described the role they play. The overview of the IMAGINE Berks plan was then presented with an accompanying slideshow furnished with added detail.

IMAGINE Berks is a five-year plan, with a primary focus on the first 3 years. An advisory committee was formed to develop goals, strategies and implementation. Thereafter, stakeholder interviews, an online survey, build sessions and tours were conducted to identify critical insights for review. Upon review, six focus areas were established: **1.** business and industry growth, **2.** Small business and entrepreneurship, **3.** Infrastructure and land use, **4.** talent and economic mobility, **5.** housing, and **6.** Placemaking. Housing is a newly identified and included focus area that is a valuable component.

Partnerships, collaboration, community, and communication are keys to success throughout this process. Current partnerships include Alvernia's O'Pake Center and PA Americana as well as the existing expansion opportunities through Passenger Rail and the Reading Airport, all of which are considered to be significant components of this effort. A related and noteworthy success is that of the 18 million dollars deployed and committed to the community through the ARPA rescue plan, 14 of the projects selected for funding are directly aligned with IMAGINE Berks.

In response to a variety of questions posed by the Commissioners, Pamela Shupp Menet confirmed that IMAGINE Berks will incorporate all local government, providing bidding opportunities for small businesses, local businesses, and local government at municipal and county levels, while recognizing the importance and need to educate small businesses for bidding. Each of the six focus areas will have an implementation team associated with it, comprised of approximately eight purposeful and diverse individuals per team, who will meet on a regular basis. The guidance received from each team will be encompassed in the report-out to be issued every six months.

Pamela Shupp Menet welcomed the City of Reading into the scope of the IMAGINE Berks plan should the city commence their strategic planning activities. It was wholly agreed that the benefit of a county-driven plan to provide opportunity within the community aimed to strengthen and ensure the county's future and growth is of the utmost importance.

A motion to formally adopt the IMAGINE Berks Strategic Development Plan was made by Commissioner Rivera, seconded by Commissioner Barnhardt, there being no further discussion, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

Public Comments

No comments.

There being no further business, Commissioner Leinbach adjourned the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ronald R. Seaman, CAO/Deputy Chief Clerk