

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
BERKS COUNTY SERVICES CENTER
633 COURT STREET, 14TH FLOOR
READING, PA 19601-4309

JULY 13, 2022

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Jodi L. Gauker called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, July 13, 2022, as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams.

The following members were present:

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman
Christopher J. Spohn, Secretary
James C. McCarthy
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CEcD
Lisa J. Weaver

Also Attending:

David Peris, Assistant County Solicitor
David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director
Ashley J. Showers, Assistant Director
Brittany N. Antunes, Office Support V
Cheryl A. Auchenbach, Planner III
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Shanice E. Ellison, Planner I
Michelle D. Franklin, Subdivision Planner III
Michael D. Golembiewski, Trans. Modeler
Devon B. Hain, Transportation Planner II
Matthew F. McGough, Transportation Planner III
Laura F. Mursch, Intergovernmental Planner III
Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III
Richard L. Royer, Design Planner
Heather Berger, IS
Jessica Blausner, Asst. to Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt
Barbara Lopez, Asst. to Commissioner Michael Rivera
Deb Millman, GRCA
Jeremy Zaborowski, Exec. Dir, BCIDA
Derek Harris, Eco Development Coordinator
David Myers, Berks Alliance
Sean McKee, Township Manager, South Heidelberg

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. REPORT OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

A. Executive Director's Report

David Hunter began his report by announcing there will be formal action taken on July 14, 2022, by the Berks County Commissioners to retroactively appoint Pamela Shupp-Menet as the County's Director for Community and Economic Development as of July 1, 2022. The Department of Agriculture, Workforce Development and Planning Commission will be constituting a new department under Pamela Shupp-Menet and report directly to her.

The Long-Range Transportation Plan will be presented at a joint Reading Area Transportation study meeting on July 14, 2022, at 1:00 PM; anyone who would like an invitation should reach out to Alan Piper.

The Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority's first meeting was held on July 6, 2022 and will be moving forward with restoring passenger rail service to Reading.

The Smart Growth Alliance Housing Committee meeting will be held on July 27, 2022, at 2:00 PM. The next steps regarding housing will be discussed at the meeting. The Smart Growth Alliance will be meeting on September 28, 2022. The meeting will include a presentation on updates occurring in Sinking Spring Borough.

Mr. Hunter opened the floor for a discussion of the Imagine Berks report.

Christopher Spohn expressed he believes that the Imagine Berks Plan is well done and he often cites findings from the draft report during his presentations. Mr. Spohn mentioned he has a concern regarding a particular graphic in the plan. The graphic state's quality of life jobs are needed with a minimum salary of \$63,000 a year. The concern is the county currently does not have many jobs paying at that rate, if it is going to be included in the Imagine Berks Report they should be prepared to be held accountable and plans should be put forth to support the graphic.

Tom McKeon added the report is well organized and insightful. Specifically, Mr. McKeon agreed with the findings of the report that stated only 22% of the land in Berks County supports residential and commercial development. Mr. McKeon is pleased the plan includes incentives for multi-municipal planning. Berks County leads the state of Pennsylvania in mergers and multi-municipal plans. Planning Commissioners expressed concerns, including the City of Readings' lack of input and involvement in the plan. An additional concern is funding; suggestions for funding include an annual allocation or a county bond issue for Community and Economic Development.

Lee Olsen commented on the Imagine Berks Report. Mr. Olsen believes the report to be very comprehensive and is a great road map to follow. An area of concern is there may not be sufficient buy-in from the City of Reading and the municipalities. Additionally, funding to implement the plan is imperative and a bond issue has tremendous merit.

Jodi Gauker commented on the Imagine Berks Plan. Mrs. Gauker questioned if the findings of the report that state only 22% of the land is available for residential and commercial development was a valid statement and if there was a plan in place for the land designated as agricultural. There is a concern of conflict with preservation requirements and the mapping utilities already in place.

Additionally, Mrs. Gauker informed the Commission that she reached out to David Hunter regarding the letter of recommendation for the adoption of Imagine Berks. Mrs. Gauker would like the letter to include that the Berks County Planning Commission members will be available and involved in the implementation phase of the plan.

David Hunter shared action steps in which BCPC is the lead organization. One of the action steps for Housing includes hiring a housing planner and that will be a priority. Mr. Hunter opened the floor to the board members and asked if there are any recommendations as to how staff and commissioners can work together to achieve the goals.

Lee Olsen added if committees are permissible, he suggests several small committees be formed with each board member as a chair of each committee. The committees would focus on the individual action items and would report updates at the monthly BCPC board meetings.

Further discussion ensued. Mr. Hunter suggested before committees are formed, he encourages everyone to consider how many people should be on a committee and the requirement to meet and report findings to the BCPC. Mrs. Gauker made a recommendation to add the creation of committees to the August BCPC board meeting agenda.

Derek Harris added that the date for the vote to adopt the Imagine Berks Plan is on August 2, 2022.

Sean McKee, South Heidelberg Township Manager gave a brief overview and background on the Letter of Consistency he requested for a DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund Application. The proposed project would extend Krick Lane to Wernersville Road and a traffic light would be installed at the Krick Lane and Lincoln Drive intersection. The hope is to aid in furthering economic growth by creating easier access to the PA Turnpike and Fritztown Road.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of June 8, 2022 Minutes

B. Reports for Approval

- Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary
- Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity

C. Letter of Recommendation for the Adoption of Imagine Berks

The Berks County Planning Commission has reviewed the proposed Imagine Berks Strategic Economic Development Action Plan and hereby submits this letter of support. The Action Plan is a cooperative effort of many stakeholders and is a fulfillment of a Goal of the Economy Chapter of the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update to expand upon the themes found in Ride to Prosperity.

D. Letter of Consistency for Amity Township – Tollgate Roadway and Culvert Project, DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund

The Berks County Planning Commission is in receipt of the Amity Township application for the Tollgate Roadway and Culvert Project under DCED's Multimodal Transportation Fund Program along with a request for consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan.

E. Letter of Consistency for South Heidelberg Township – Krick Lane Extension and Intersection Improvements Project, DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund

The Berks County Planning Commission is in receipt of the South Heidelberg Township application for the Krick Lane Extension and Intersection Improvements Project under DCED's Multimodal Transportation Fund Program along with a request for consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan.

MOTION: Christopher Spohn made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda with the revised Letter of Recommendation for the Adoption of Imagine Berks. The motion was seconded by Lee Olsen and passed unanimously.

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. Lee Olsen – The art of planning from the architect's perspective Version 2.0 |2022

Lee Olsen gave a presentation about the art of planning and how it correlates to being an architect. Some of the many planning services an architect is responsible for include space planning, long-range, facilities, and strategic planning. A variety of factors contribute to the design of a building including the quality of life within the region. Mr. Olsen emphasized that planners and architects must work together to be successful.

Some key points for planning on any scale include:

Engaging the community stakeholders
Be fair and realistic
Focus on community issues
Develop sustainable recommendations
Respect the environment
Create leadership and capacity to implement the plan

To conclude the presentation, Lee Olsen demonstrated projects he has worked on throughout his career.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Christopher Spohn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:03 p.m. The motion was seconded by Lee Olsen.

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman

Chris J. Spohn, Secretary