1. **CALL TO ORDER**

   James C. McCarthy, Chairman, called the regular monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, August 13, 2014, in the Planning Commission offices on the fourteenth floor of the Berks County Services Center, Reading, Pennsylvania.

   The following members were present:
   
   - James C. McCarthy, Chairman
   - Lee C. Olsen, Vice-Chairman
   - Peter F. Giorgi
   - Thomas C. McKeon
   - Douglas P. Rauch, Esq.

   Not in attendance:
   
   - James L. Mason
   - Mark C. Scott
   - Barry L. Schlouch, Secretary

   Also Attending:
   
   - Heidi B. Masano, Asst. County Solicitor
   - Cheryl A. Auchenbach, Planner III
   - Beth A. Burkovich, GIS Analyst
   - Michelle D. Franklin, Planner III
   - Devon B. Hain, Planning Technician
   - Matthew F. McGough, Planner II
   - Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III
   - Shannon L. Rossman, Exec. Director
   - Ashley J. Showers, Planner II
   - Amanda M. Timochenko, Planner II
   - Pauline R. Klopp, Office Support V

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

   There was no public comment.

3. **REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

   Chairman McCarthy congratulated Shannon Rossman in her promotion to Executive Director.
Mrs. Rossman informed the Commission that the Berks County Water and Sewer Conference on Disaster Planning and Response that was held in July was very well attended with over 140 attendees. Dr. Stanley States did a four hour course which gave the operators water and sewer credits.

She mentioned that there will be a Meet and Greet with the Water and Sewer Assoc. on September 4, 2014 from 5:00 – 7:00 at the new Rossner Building (previously the Rockland Building) at Albright College.

In October, the Center for Excellence in Local Government will have an Open House at the Rossner Building instead of the annual Master Planner Dinner.

4. CONSENT AGENDA
   a. Approval of Minutes of July 9, 2014
   b. Hay Creek Pedestrian Bridge Project Letter of Support

   Birdsboro Borough, with the support of the Hay Creek Watershed Association, is applying to the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) for grants to help fund their project through the Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP). Act 13 of 2012 establishes the Marcellus Legacy Fund and allocates funds to the CFA for projects which involve planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and improvements to public parks, recreation areas, greenways, trails and river conservation. The grant application requires a letter from the Planning Commission certifying that the proposed project is in compliance with the comprehensive land use plans. We are reviewing their project for consistency with our Comprehensive Plan and the Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan.

   Birdsboro Borough, with support from the Hay Creek Watershed Association will purchase and install a prefabricated pedestrian foot bridge across Hay Creek in Robeson Township, providing people easy and safe access to Birdsboro Waters and the Millard House. The bridge will connect the Birdsboro community to the abandoned segment of Route 82, providing safe pedestrian access to the existing trail system and other recreational amenities in Birdsboro Waters.

   The amount of the grant request is $91,771. The required 15% match will be provided through local support, specifically through fundraising efforts of the Birdsboro Woman’s Club, Hay Creek Watershed Association, in addition to in-kind services to unload and set the bridge by the H&K Group of Birdsboro, PA. The total cost of the project is estimated at $107,965.

   Project Findings: In 1987, several vehicular bridges along Route 82 crossing Hay Creek, just south of Birdsboro, were washed out during a flood. This segment of Route 82 has been closed ever since; was officially abandoned by PennDOT in 2007, and converted to recreational use. The proposed foot bridge is the location of the first vehicular bridge that was washed out nearest Birdsboro. Since the bridge washed out, there has been no formal access to Birdsboro Waters, aside from a wire crossing installed by a local volunteer group. This project will replace the wire crossing with a prefabricated foot bridge that will formally connect Birdsboro at Birdsboro’s Rustic Picnic Area to Birdsboro Waters and the Millard House. The project will accomplish
goals of the Birdsboro Water’s Master Site Plan, Millard House Feasibility Study, Hopewell Big Woods Conservation Landscape Initiative and serve as a gateway to Birdsboro Waters and ultimately to the larger Hopewell Big Woods (HBW) landscape.

Birdsboro Waters is a 1,850 acre tract owned by the Birdsboro Municipal Authority, located south of Birdsboro Borough in Robeson and Union Townships. The property contains reservoirs, wooded areas and is the source of public drinking water for the Borough of Birdsboro and adjacent areas. It currently has no formal public access from Birdsboro due to the road closure and removed bridges, but the area has an extensive trail network (27 miles) and is used heavily for outdoor recreational activities, including rock climbing, hiking, mountain biking, geo-caching, horseback riding, fishing, hunting and bird watching. In 2007, Birdsboro Waters was protected by a conservation easement through the USDA Forest Service Forest Legacy Program. Several small areas within the property were excluded from the easement. The proposed project location is within one of the exclusion areas, allowing for the installation of the pedestrian bridge.

Millard House is located on the west side of the Hay Creek and the abandoned portion of Pa Route 82, across the creek from Birdsboro’s Rustic Picnic Area. The property was condemned by PennDOT in 2004 when the adjacent vehicular bridge (location of the project foot bridge) was deemed unsafe and closed as a result of flooding, thereby cutting off access to the property. The Borough subsequently purchased the site from PennDOT in 2007 with financial assistance from the H&K Group, and then conveyed it to the Hay Creek Watershed Association for their headquarters. It is envisioned that the house and property will also serve as an environmental education center, visitors’ center and trailhead; the gateway to Birdsboro Waters and the Hopewell Big Woods.

The project site is consistent with County’s Future Land Use Plan, as it is designated as Environmental Hazard (floodplain) surrounded by Permanent Open Space & Recreation. The project site is also located within The Big Woods Greenway Hub, as designated by the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan. This Hub is comprised of a large forested area with quality waters, valuable habitat for plants and animals, heritage resources and significant regional recreational assets, providing the opportunity for tourism-related activity. The HUB is comprised of Birdsboro Waters, French Creek State Park, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, State Game Lands, and the Horse-Shoe Trail. The County’s Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan, as well as the 2030 Berks County Comprehensive Plan support the pursuit of an open space network comprised of interconnecting greenways, trails and parks. Both plans also support municipal/non-profit organizations efforts to obtain funding to develop and maintain their recreation resources. By making the area’s assets more accessible this project will continue to connect people with the outdoors, and provide the opportunity to stimulate local economic initiatives. Along with the implemented vision for the Millard House, this area will act as a gateway, facilitating visitor access/activities within Birdsboro Waters and Hopewell Big Woods. The collaborative efforts of the local government, non-profit organizations, private businesses and local residents to move this project forward is acknowledged.

Staff prepared a letter endorsement stating that the project is consistent with the recommendations of the 2030 Berks County Comprehensive Plan and the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan.
c. Accessible Trails of Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Letter of Support

Hawk Mountain is applying to the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) for grants to help fund their project through the Greenways, Trails and Recreation Program (GTRP). Act 13 of 2012 establishes the Marcellus Legacy Fund and allocates funds to the CFA for projects which involve planning, acquisition, development, rehabilitation, and improvements to public parks, recreation areas, greenways, trails and river conservation. The grant application requires a letter from the Planning Commission certifying that the proposed project is in compliance with the comprehensive land use plans. We are reviewing their project for consistency with our Comprehensive Plan and the Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan.

Hawk Mountain will construct a fully-accessible and family-friendly trail that meets ADA requirements including switchbacks, benching and proper grading to its closest overlook - the South Lookout. This will allow people with limited or no mobility to enjoy the view of the mountain and raptor migration from the scenic overlook. Construction is estimated to start December 2014 and end spring 2016. The grant request is $250,000.

The South Lookout is located approximately 650 feet from Hawk Mountain Road and a total of approximately 1,000 feet from the nearest parking lot. Even though the trail from Hawk Mountain Road to the South Lookout is groomed, the grade exceeds ADA standards and the terrain challenges people with young children/strollers and all visitors with limited mobility. For individuals who use a wheelchair, the South Lookout is inaccessible except by the very best motorized chairs. Having fully accessible pathways to at least one scenic overlook is estimated to boost tourism by 10% or 7,000 individuals in the first year, based on years of visitor feedback. This accessible trail will compliment the new amphitheater and current ADA walkway project connecting the parking areas to the visitor center, amphitheater, native plant garden and the entrance to the trails. These two projects were supported by the Planning Commission in previous year grant cycles. Operated as a wildlife sanctuary, Hawk Mountain carefully balances human visitors and their impacts with wildlife and habitat protection. The accessible trail project is guided by this planning as the project area is already one of heavy visitor use, thereby having a lower value for wildlife protection.

The Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 supports improvement of park, recreation and open space facilities to accommodate special needs populations, as well as supports non-profit organizations in their efforts to obtain funding to maintain, and develop open space and recreation resources. The County Comprehensive Plan designates Hawk Mountain Sanctuary as Permanent Open Space and Recreation. Additionally, the Sanctuary is located within the Hawk Mountain Ecological Hub and the Kittatinny Ridge Greenway Corridor as designated by the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan. The Greenway Plan recommends continued support for the Sanctuary to protect the habitat of the IBA (Important Bird Area) and to sustain its eco-tourism activities. Improving accessibility and visitor services will increase visitation and allow more people to share the Hawk Mountain experience.

Staff prepared a letter of consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan and the Berks County Greenway, Park and Recreation Plan endorsing the project and recommending the CFA fund the requested grant.
d. **Marion Twp. Act 537 Plan**

The Berks County Planning Commission had received Marion Township’s Act 537 Plan Update for review. The Marion Township Act 537 Plan Update Draft specifies Phase 1A, 1B and Phase 2. Phase 1B and Phase 2 include Stouchsburg Village, Shady Cabins residential area, and the US422 commercial area within the Township to be served by public sewer service. Phase 1A was completed in 2007-2008. This was intended to serve only Dutch Valley Foods. This sewage is conveyed to the Tulpehocken Township Mt Aetna treatment facility. Phase 1B is next to be completed and Phase 2 would be completed in the future.

The current Plan consists of installing a public sewer extension along Canal Road, Sheridan Road, Edris Road, US422 and Main Street in Stouchsburg providing public sewer service to a portion of Marion Township.

The portion of Marion Township to initially be served by public sewer is identified as the Phase 1B Sewage Management Area.

This collection system will serve 185 EDU’s. These consist of 165 residential uses and 20 light commercial uses.

Properties which are adjacent to the sanitary sewer line located within the Phase 2 areas will be subject to compliance with a Mandatory Sewer Hookup Ordinance in the future. This is to promote more affordability by increasing the customer base. However, the Womelsdorf Wastewater Treatment Plant will need more upgrades in order to process this additional wastewater.

A sanitary sewer pump station will be constructed and operated that collects the sanitary sewer flow from the Phase 1B area and conveys it to the Womelsdorf Sewer Authority’s facilities (20” sewer main) east of the Tulpehocken Creek.

The Plan includes system upgrades that are needed to the Womelsdorf Sewer Authority’s wastewater treatment plant to treat an additional 60,000 gallons per day (GPD).

Out of the 97 properties surveyed within the Township, 49% had total coliform (TC) bacteria that was higher than 0 mg/l. 20% had fecal coliform (FC) levels higher than 0 mg/l. Just over 40% of those sampled had nitrate levels above 10 mg/l. These properties were mainly clustered around Stouchsburg.

Construction and implementation costs are estimated to be between $3,220,000 and $3,600,000. Marion Township desires to obtain grants of approximately $3,000,000 and loans of approximately $1,000,000. The Township is currently considering several different funding sources.

The Township is considering three different customer tap in fees of $7000, $9000, and $12,000. These figures are based upon which funding options are chosen / received. Monthly user fees are estimated to range from $41.50 to $92.03.

Staff prepared a letter with the following comments:
- The Berks County Planning Commission identifies the areas proposed for public sewer as Existing Developed, Rural Conservation, Future Growth and Agricultural Preservation. The project is generally consistent with the goals and objectives of the Berks County 2030 Comprehensive Plan. With regard to the eastern most property within the Phase 2 service area, this property is designated as Agricultural Preservation and an agricultural easement is present on the property. The extension of public sewer into the Agricultural Preservation area at a future date would only be consistent with the Plan if the connections are due to well contamination and septic malfunctions.

- The Act 537 Plan Update is consistent with the Sewer and Water Regionalization Study. The Study promotes the multi municipal use of existing facilities instead of constructing an entirely new treatment facility.

e. National Fish & Wildlife Foundation – Chesapeake Bay Program – Executive Order Review

The Planning Commission has received two applications submitted by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for federal funding through the Environmental Protection Agency (Opportunity EPA-R3-CBP-14-04). Both applications are dedicated to protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay by helping local communities clean-up and restore their rivers and streams. NFWF’s Chesapeake Bay Program funds local conservation efforts which emphasize restoring water quality throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed through two competitive grant programs:

- Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants Program - the application for federal assistance is requesting $55,000,000. This request is matched by $18,333,334 for a total of $73,333,334. If received, Small Watershed Grants of $20,000 to $200,000 each would be awarded to nonprofit organizations and local governments working to protect and improve local waters that contribute to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay.

- Chesapeake Bay Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants Program – the application for federal assistance is requesting $55,000,000. This request is matched by $55,000,000 for a total of $110,000,000. If received, Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grants of $200,000 to $500,000 each would be awarded to nonprofit organizations, local governments, universities and state agencies to demonstrate innovative approaches to accelerate adoption of the most cost effective and sustainable nutrient and sediment pollution load reductions to the Chesapeake Bay.

Priority for both grant programs will be given to projects that address at least one of the following three strategies:

- Targeted River and Watershed Restoration - NFWF will invest in 17 targeted watersheds where opportunities exist to achieve measurable water quality, habitat restoration and species (Eastern Brook Trout, river herring and native oysters) recovery goals. The Lower Susquehanna and Conestoga River are one of the 17 targeted watersheds.

- Green Infrastructure in Urban Landscapes - NFWF will invest in projects that build local government capacity for green infrastructure and accelerate adoption of green infrastructure practices on private lands that will result in reductions in the volume of stormwater runoff, and nutrient and sediment loads delivered to the Bay. (infiltrate
and filter stormwater-porous pavements, rain gardens, green roofs, infiltration planters, etc, restore floodplains and streambanks)

- Innovation on Crosscutting Issues - NFWF will invest in innovative methods and new technologies that drive down costs, expand the effectiveness of restoration practices and accelerate the pace of recovery.

If federal assistance is secured, these two grant programs would be available through 2020 for projects located in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including portions of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia and the entirety of the District of Columbia.

Staff prepared a letter with the following comments:

- The conservation and restoration strategies of the NFWF’s proposals are consistent with the goals and objectives of the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030. The protection of water resources and the restoration of degraded hydrological systems is a major Land Use Goal of our Comprehensive Plan. The County promotes good stewardship of the soil and water through the implementation of agricultural and stormwater BMP’s, the protection of wetlands, the creation of riparian buffers, and the conservation of our forest resources.

f. Reports for Approval
   - Land Development & Subdivision Activity Reports 6/18/14 – 7/23/14
   - PADEP Land Use Questionnaire Listing – July/August 2014
   - New Housing Unit & Non-Residential Construction - 2nd Quarter 2014

MOTION: Mr. Olsen made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rauch and passed with Mr. McCarthy abstaining from the vote on Marion Township’s Act 537 Plan.

5. ITEMS FOR REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

   a. July, 2014 Staff Activities
   b. July, 2014 Review Actions

These are just informational items for the Planning Commission to review.

6. Discuss for Review Procedures

   Mrs. Rossman mentioned that our office receives a lot of Executive Order Reviews under different realms. What staff has done in the past is if the review is specifically for a project in Berks County, staff will review for consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan and bring them to the meeting. If the project is a general statewide project staff wasn’t sure if the Planning Commission wanted to see them as well. Chairman McCarthy didn’t feel that the Planning Commission needed to see the reviews unless they are specific to Berks County or if they would impact Berks County in some way.
Mr. McKeon gave a brief update on BCIDA’s Berks Park 78 and their Airport project.

7. Adjournment

MOTION: Mr. Olsen made a motion to adjourn and the meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

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James C. McCarthy, Chairman              Barry L. Schlouch, Secretary