

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Jodi Gauker called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:04 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, September 8, 2021 as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams.

The following members were present:

Thomas C. McKeon, Chair
Jodi L. Gauker, Vice-Chair
James A. Adams, Secretary
Glenn R. Knoblauch
James C. McCarthy
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB
Douglas P. Rauch, Esq.
Christopher J. Spohn

Not in Attendance:

David H. Turner

Also Attending:

Mike Gombar, Masano Bradley
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, Trans. Planner II
David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director
Matthew F. McGough, Intergovernmental Planner
Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III
Ashley J. Showers, Assistant Director
Amanda M. Timochenko, Planner II
Pauline R. Klopp, Office Support IV
Information System Production
Jeremy Zaborowski, BCIDA
Jessica Blauser, Admin. Asst. to Commissioner Barnhardt
Deb Millman, GRCA
Carol DeWolf, NLT
Todd Sampsell, NLT
Jack Stefferud, NLT
Oliver Bass, NLT
Alison Conway, Professor, The City College of New York
Moira Conway, Professor, Kutztown University

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. REPORTS OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES

A. Executive Director's Report

David Hunter informed the Commission that we are currently accepting applications for a Design Planner which is a newly created position. This will basically be a social media position working with staff for advertising, marketing, etc.

Mr. Hunter then discussed the "Imagine Berks" website. There is a questionnaire on the website for anyone to fill out.

Mr. Hunter had attended Hamburger Fest. He stated it was estimated that about 30,000 people attended this year. He reminded everyone of Oktoberfest coming up in Boyertown. He also reminded the Commission of the PA Downtown Center Conference being held at DoubleTree on September 12th – 14th.

Mr. Hunter stated that the next Smart Growth Alliance meeting will be on September 29th. Tim Daley, Habitat for Humanity, will be speaking at that meeting as well at Jack Gombach, West Reading Borough Council.

Mr. Hunter mentioned that the Planning Commission members will be invited to attend the October 5th Tri-County Passenger Rail Briefing on bringing rail back to Reading. He mentioned that this is a specific call to elected and appointed officials in municipalities along the proposed route. The meeting will last from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes of August 11, 2021

B. Reaffirmation of Letter of Consistency for Amity Township Water/Sewer TIF District

Mr. Hunter stated that we need to reaffirm the letter of consistency for Amity Township Water/Sewer TIF District that the Planning Commission voted on by straw poll. He informed the Commission that we will no longer be making straw poll votes because of the amendments to the Sunshine Act.

C. Reports for Approval

- Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report & Summary
- Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report
- New Housing Units and Non-Residential Construction Report – 2nd Quarter, 2021

MOTION: Lee Olsen made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Jodi Gauker and passed with Tom McKeon and Jim McCarthy abstaining from Item 4B.

Mr. Hunter mentioned that, according to Roberts Rules of Order, when voting, the vote is passed by the simple majority of those voting.

5. Staff and Stakeholder Reports

A. Professors Alison and Moira Conway – E Commerce Study Update

Alison Conway, Professor at The City College of New York and Moira Conway, Professor at Kutztown University presented the study they are working on: “E-Commerce Development in Berks County: Issues and Impacts”. The study looks at the benefits and costs of the current warehouse development in Berks County.

B. Oliver Bass, Natural Lands Trust – Mr. Bass gave an overview of the organization. He mentioned that there is approximately 50,000 acres in eastern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey they are responsible for preserving. He stated that outdoor recreation has tripled in the past year.

Carol DeWolf, Director of Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Project, stated that Berks County has been a key stakeholder since the onset of this program when it started in 2006. She mentioned that Land Protection is the main reason NLT is functioning although she spoke about the grants they award and how they work closely with the municipalities and Main Street Programs in the County. She also mentioned how they helped fund the rail bikes for the Colebrookdale Railroad.

Jack Stefferud, Senior Director of Land Protection, mentioned in the past 10-15 years NLT has completed 22 acquisitions totaling 1,344 acres. He highlighted a number of the projects.

Todd Sampson, Vice President of Conservation, stated that some of things NLT will be focusing on in the next few years is climate change, sprawl, accessibility, species loss and water resources.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Tom McKeon made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:35 p.m.

Thomas C. McKeon, Chairman

James A. Adams, Secretary