

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

FEBRUARY 08, 2023

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, February 08, 2023, as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams.

The following members were present:

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman
Christopher J. Spohn, Vice-Chair
Lisa J. Weaver, Secretary
Glenn R. Knoblauch
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CEcD
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB
Miguel A. Herrera

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
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Shanice E. Ellison, Planner I
Michelle D. Franklin, Subdivision Planner III
Michael Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler
Devon B. Hain, Transportation Planner II
Taylor Lawrence, 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
Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II
Heather Berger, Information Systems
David Myers, Berks Alliance
Michelle Smith, Associate Clerk, City of Reading
Deb Millman, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator
Emily Wangolo, Executive Director of Dept of Agriculture
Pamela Shupp-Menet, Dir. of Community and Economic Development
Jeremy Zaborowski, Director of Industrial Development Authority

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 informing the Planning Commission Board that John Kramer is no longer available to join the meeting to provide his overview of Reading - the presentation will be rescheduled to a later date.

The Berks Agricultural Resource Network (BARN) works to connect agriculture organizations in Berks County and will be hosting an event at Oley Valley High School on March 06, 2023 at 6:00 pm.

The annual Municipal Officials dinner will be hosted by the Center for Excellence in Local Government at Albright College on March 16, 2023 at 5:00 pm. The invitation will be sent out for anyone who may be interested in attending.

The first Regional Meeting will be held on February 28, 2023 at the Grand Central Taproom in Fleetwood. Board Members who would like to attend should reach out to Taylor Lawrence.

Planning Commission Staff have been working on a policy that will distinguish letters of consistency from letters of support. The letters that are submitted to Planning Commission Staff are reviewed for consistency with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan Update, 2030. Any requests for letters of support should be directed to the Berks County Commissioners. An E-Flash will be sent out to all of the municipalities communicating the updates.

The National American Planning Association Conference will be held in Philadelphia from April 1st through April 4th.

The We Conserve Land Conservation Conference will be hosted at the Double Tree Hotel in Reading from April 26th through April 28th. There will be several mobile workshops including visiting the Mount Penn Preserve to discuss the efforts through the council of governments, visiting the Boyertown area to discuss agricultural operations, and visiting the papermill dam project to discuss stormwater and water protection.

The PA Downtown Center Conference will take place June 25th through June 28th in Scranton.

The Berks County Water and Sewer Association will host their Conference on July 26th.

The Pennsylvania American Planning Association Conference will be held from October 15th through October 17th in Scranton.

The Pennsylvania Economic Development Association will be in Reading from October 16th through October 18th.

The Director of the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority (SRPRA), Thomas Frawley, will be applying to be included in the Federal Rail Administrations Corridor Identification Program. The SRPRA staff have a working sub-group reviewing several station locations options.

4. STAFF REPORTS – CONSENT AGENDA

A. Michelle Franklin – Morgantown Apartments

The plan consisted of a proposal for four buildings and 77 units. The plan needed to be reviewed for the addition of a lot to the overall site and an additional building. The site is located on the northeast corner of Main Street and Morgan Way in Caernarvon Township. The site is located within an existing development area and a designated growth area which is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update.

Berks County Planning Commission policy is that, if an additional property or building is added to a plan after the original plan has been reviewed, the plan should be reviewed again by this office prior to municipal approval and recording.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of January 11, 2023 Minutes

B. Reports for Approval

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

MOTION: Christopher Spohn made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Glenn Knoblauch and passed unanimously.

6. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. David Hunter and Ashley Showers – A Case Study of Solar Farm Development and Sewer Capacity in Berks County

Mr. Hunter and Ashley Showers presented at the Pennsylvania Planning Association State Conference in Lancaster in the Fall of 2022. The presentation focused on the use of GIS in conducting analyses for Solar Farm sites as well as sewer capacity within the County. The solar analysis involved creating a GIS layer that used previously developed layers with various factors relating to site identification for solar development. The results of the 2021 analysis yielded that there are 826 acres available for potential solar farms in Berks County when Class 1-3 soils are excluded. The results of the 2022 analysis yielded that there are 3,744 acres available for potential solar farms in Berks County when Class 1-2 soils are excluded.

Christopher Spohn asked when a solar farm is located on agricultural land, how it is zoned, and what the Berks County Planning Commission Staff recommend the farm to be zoned. Mr. Hunter replied that the zoning would be on a case-by-case scenario.

Tom McKeon asked how Berks County assesses a solar polar farm, and Mr. Hunter stated he will follow up with the Chief Assessor for an answer.

The Sewer Capacity Case Study provides a better understanding of the wastewater infrastructure of Berks County. The findings from the study are as follows;

- 33 of the 72 Municipalities indicated that there is sewer capacity available
- 11 of the 72 Municipalities stated they are at capacity
- There is still unconfirmed capacity in Municipalities that have growth areas

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Glenn Knoblauch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:47 p.m. The motion was seconded by Christopher Spohn.

Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman

Lisa Weaver, Secretary