

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

June 14, 2023

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman Jodi L. Gauker called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:02 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, June 14, 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  
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB  
James McCarthy, P.E.  
Thomas C. Mckeon, AICP, CEcD  
David H. Turner  
Miguel A. Herrera

Also Attending:

David Peris, Assistant County Solicitor  
David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director  
Ashley J. Showers, Assistant Director  
Cheryl Auchenbach, Planner III  
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst  
Michael D. Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler  
Taylor Lawrence, Planner II  
Laura Mursch, Intergovernmental Planner III  
Alan D. Piper, Transportation Planner III  
Richard L. Royer, Design Planner  
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator  
Devon Hain, Transportation Planner II  
Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II  
Deb Millman, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance  
David Myers, Berks Alliance  
Heather Berger, Information Systems

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 providing the Board with the agenda of the July Board meeting. Specifically, Mr. Hunter informed the Board that there has been a formal request submitted by Ontelaunee Township and Leesport Borough to amend the County's Comprehensive Plan. This request will be presented and reviewed as a special public meeting at the beginning of the regularly scheduled July Board meeting. Additionally, Mr. Hunter discussed the tentative August agenda which will include a presentation from Executive Director Ken Pick from the County Redevelopment Authority as well as Jaime Perez the recently hired Housing planner. These presentations will be directly related to the upcoming annual report out for Imagine Berks scheduled for August 22<sup>nd</sup>. Finally, the September meeting of the Board is tentatively scheduled for a presentation from Michael Golembiewski on the 2020 census.

Mr. Hunter also discussed the recent subdivision and land development review for the Glen Gery proposal in Perry Township. The proposal is for 3 warehouse buildings. The tract is located along the north and south sides of the Shoemakersville Road and the east and west sides of Pottsville Pike (S.R.0061) and adjacent to the existing Glen Gery manufacturing plant.

Executive Director Hunter invited the Board members to the last of the Imagine Berks: Capitalizing on Your Municipality's Opportunities meeting being held at the County's South Campus on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 5:00. Mr. Hunter also discussed that one of the main outcomes of these meetings is the desire of many of the County's municipalities to update their joint comprehensive plans. Board Member Lee Olsen noted that the City of Reading's Comprehensive plan is most certainly overdue for an update. Mr. Hunter responded that the City has recently mentioned updating their comprehensive plan in conjunction with the Downtown Plus ~~P~~lan process they conducted during the pandemic.

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In conclusion, Mr. Hunter shared the status of the recently updated Planning Commission website. Specifically, Mr. Hunter shared the updated layout and "About Us" tab on the Planning Commission landing page which has both the staff organizational chart as well as photos of all current Board members. Mr. Hunter closed with saying the website will continue to be updated in different phases as to provide information which is valuable for all visitors to the website.

Jodi Gauker, Board Chairman invited those in attendance to participate in the ~~B.A.R.N.~~opolopoly program this year which will kickoff on June 19<sup>th</sup> at Lily's ~~V~~ineyard. To register you can visit [berksag.net](http://berksag.net).

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of May 10, 2023, Minutes

B. Approval of Appointments to Reading Area Transportation Study

Mr. Piper took time to acknowledge Glenn Knoblauch's service as alternate to the Technical Committee of the Reading Area Transportation Study. Mr. Piper explained that the submitted memorandum requested that Amanda Timochenko replace Glenn Knoblauch in the role as alternate to the Technical Committee.

C. 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 David Turner and passed unanimously.

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. **Amanda Timochenko – Reading Area Transportation Study – Traffic Safety Report**

Mr. Alan Piper, Senior Transportation Planner, introduced both Amanda Timochenko and Devon Hain. Mr. Piper explained that ~~the~~ Federal transportation planning legislation has established performance-based planning and programming requirements which are used to ensure planning and programming decisions are based on addressing documented needs. The legislation discusses the type of data to be collected (Performance Measures or PM), specific performance targets, reporting of those performance targets and then reporting performance against the targets for tracking critical outcomes. The performance requirements cover four separate areas. PM-1 (Safety), which Amanda will be covering in her report. PM-2 (Pavement and Bridge Conditions), which will be discussed in Devon Hain's report. PM-3 addresses National Highway System travel reliability and the effectiveness of the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program. PM-4 (Transit System Performance) is carried out by the South Central Transit Authority. The reports presented by Amanda and Devon are the first of their kind that we have prepared in response to this legislation and will provide a baseline which will be used to monitor the data over time. These reports provide valuable information for our Transportation Improvement Program and the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Ms. Timochenko discussed the Traffic Safety Report. The goal of the report is to identify ways to reduce the number of crashes on Berks County roadways and prevent the number of fatalities and injuries through the examination of crash trends and identification of mitigation strategies. The report will serve as a guide in determining potential projects for inclusion in both the Transportation Improvement Program and the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The report and its guiding documents address the theme of a Safe System Approach that involves the anticipation of human mistakes by designing and managing roadway infrastructure that reduces and minimizes the risk of potential mistakes. The report is guided by both the Statewide and Reading MPO Performance Measures and targets which the Reading Area Transportation Study adopted in January 2023. Data used in report is from 2017 through 2021. A trend summary report was developed which is similar the State Transportation Commission (STC) scorecard that is developed and provided at the start of their 12-Year Program Update (TYP). The trend summary report is a brief snapshot that identifies indicators that show improvement, remain steady, or have declined. Potential countermeasures are identified in the report that can

help reduce fatal and suspected serious injury crashes. Additionally, maps were created that depict the crash locations with more than 20 reportable crash incidents within the County. The report will be updated annually.

**B. Devon Hain –Reading Area Transportation Study –Annual Pavement and Bridge Condition Report 2021**

Devon Hain began the presentation of the report with an introduction discussing that every August PennDOT provides ~~the~~the Planning Commission with the annual performance measure reports for pavements and bridges that the Transportation staff wanted to expand upon. The goal of this report is to help guide investment decisions to keep Berks County’s roads and bridges in good order. The report expands beyond the annual PennDOT reports to include and analyze the local federal aid for roads and locally owned bridges. Data analyzed is from 2017 through 2021. Like the Traffic Safety Report, a scorecard methodology was used for the County bridge and pavement system. The Bridge data and analysis was broken down into ownership of bridges. Specifically, county owned bridges, township and borough owned bridges and railroad owned bridges. Currently only 12% of bridges are meeting NHS good condition rating and the goal is to have 28% by 2025. The report will be updated annually.

**C. Dan Fogarty – Current Berks County Labor Market Conditions /COVID Recovery**

Mr. Dan Fogarty, Executive Director of the Berks County Workforce Development Board, began his presentation with the statement that much has changed in the last 3 years before, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic in the workforce realm. Workforce trends that existed before the pandemic have either remained or have accelerated post pandemic. Mr. Fogarty explained one of the key workforce data points, the unemployment rate. Mr. Fogarty noted that anything above 6% is considered a high unemployment rate and indicates more workers than jobs available. Berks County was above the 6% unemployment rate from April 2020 through September 2021. The current unemployment rate is 3.8% which is the lowest it has been in 20 plus years. Additional, key data points discussed were that wages increased by 23.6% and primarily in typical low wage or entry-level positions, the County has a deficit of 3,000 to 4,000 employees, 30,000 adults in the County do not speak English well and this presents both a challenge and opportunity, the gap between retirees those 65 and older and those entering the workforce 25-29 is continuing to widen, the upcoming workforce demographic is not achieving numeracy and mathematics standards for the jobs skills needed to enter workforce based on assessment through 8<sup>th</sup> grade PSSA’s, and the vibrant Healthcare sector of the County economic system will possibly take over the long term primary employment sector in Manufacturing in the next 10 years.

6. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION: Lisa Weaver made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:23p.m. The motion was seconded by Lee Olsen.

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Jodi L. Gauker, Chairwoman

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Lisa Weaver, Secretary