



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES: Regular Monthly Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 9, 2019
Approved: February 13, 2019

BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDING: Steven Kline, Chair; Dulcie Flaharty, V-Chair; Charles Tornetta; Robert Blue; David Cohen; Jill Blumhardt; John Ernst

STAFF ATTENDING: Jody Holton, Eric Jarrell, Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, John Cover, Matt Edmond, Scott France, Pattie Guttenplan, Drew Shaw, Henry Stroud, Rita McKelvey, Brian Phillips, Karina Caddick
Henry Stroud

GUESTS: Ryan Beltz – Executive Director, Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy; Jean Akers, Board Member, Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy

I. Call to Order/Public Comments

Jody Holton called the Board meeting to order. This is the first meeting of 2019 and includes the reorganization of the board.

II. Reorganization of Board – Election of Officers

Jody Holton opened the nominations for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. The nominations and elections are as follows:

- Charlie Tornetta nominated Steven Kline for Chair, was seconded by John Ernst and approved by all.
- Robert Blue nominated Dulcie Flaharty for Vice-Chair was seconded by John Ernst and approved by all.
- Steven Kline nominated Jody Holton for Secretary, was seconded by Dulcie Flaharty and approved by all.

III. Board Comment

Steven Kline reminded the Board to contact him if they have any recommendations for replacements for Pastor West's seat on the Board.

IV. Minutes of December 12, 2018

The minutes from the December 12, 2018 regular Board meeting were approved by the Board.

Motion: To approve the December 12, 2018 Board minutes, by Mr. Cohen, seconded by Mr. Ernst, and approved by all present.

V. Formation of Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Committee

Steven Kline appointed Dulcie Flaharty, David Cohen, Scott Exley and Charlie Tornetta as members of the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Committee for 2019.

VI. Community Planning Assistance Contracts

Presenter: Eric Jarrell

Eric Jarrell requested that the Board approve the planning assistance contracts for Springfield Township, Rockledge Borough, and Pottstown Borough.

The Springfield Township contract is a three year contract renewal. The main focus items for this contract are a SALDO update with a focus on landscaping, buffering and implementing the green parking guidelines. The contract term is from January 1, 2019 thru December 31, 2021 for a total cost of \$74,844 with a municipal share of \$37,422.

The Rockledge Borough contract is a three-year renewal of their planning assistance contract. The primary work item for this contract is park planning and grant writing. The contract term is from January 1, 2019 thru December 31, 2021 for a total cost of \$62,370 with a municipal share of \$31,185.

The Pottstown Borough contract is also a three-year contract renewal. The contract work items include an update of the Zoning Ordinance. The previous contract included rewriting the Downtown Zoning District. The contract term is from January 1, 2019 thru December 31, 2021 for a total cost of \$87,318 with a municipal share of \$43,659.

***Motion:** To approve the Springfield Township, Rockledge Borough and Pottstown Borough Planning Assistance Contracts, by Ms. Flaharty, seconded by Mr. Tornetta, and approved by all present.*

Eric Jarrell also requested that the Board approve the Pottstown Borough – Keim Street (1 year) short term planning assistance contract.

The Pottstown Borough – Keim Street contract is a short-term contract from January 1, 2019 thru December 31, 2019. The Planning Commission will complete a Keim Street Gateway Overlay Plan. The plan will develop strategies for access to the Schuylkill River Trail, enhance the economic performance of the Industrial Center and improve the neighboring residential neighborhoods. The Borough received a Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) Grant from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) that will provide funding for a portion of the plan. The total cost of the contract is \$41,713 with a municipal share of \$31,284.75.

***Motion:** To approve the Pottstown Borough – Keim Street Planning Assistance Contracts, by Mr. Cohen, seconded by Mr. Blue, and approved by all present.*

VII. Perkiomen Creek Water Trail – Feasibility Study

Presenter: Henry Stroud, Guest: Ryan Beltz – Executive Director, Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy; Jean Akers – Board Member, Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy

Henry Stroud introduced Ryan Beltz and Jean Akers from the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy (PWC). PWC is a non-profit organization formed in 1964. They are stewards of the Perkiomen Creek watershed and work to preserve the watershed's natural resources and features. PWC is well known for their annual Sojourn, community outreach, as well as education and conservancy efforts. Mr. Beltz and Ms. Akers would like to present to the board the feasibility study that was recently completed. It examines the potential to develop a water trail on the Perkiomen Creek. The Planning Commission provided GIS data for the study.

Ryan Beltz presented a summary of the Perkiomen Creek Water Trail Feasibility Study. PWC was awarded a DCNR grant to develop the study. The purpose of the water trail is "To enhance the environmental and recreational community-wide benefits of the Perkiomen Creek." The water trail would start just below Green Lane Park at the Perkiomenville Dam and travel 18 miles thru eight different municipalities ending at the confluence with the Schuylkill River in Oaks, PA. As part of the study, PWC met with each of the municipalities along the creek to gather their feedback. They also conducted a survey of PWC members and found that 96% of the respondents they surveyed were interested in a water trail, but felt there was a lack of information on how to access the Perkiomen Creek. The survey showed that a map, improved access, and trip suggestions would be the most beneficial to those who wish to use the water trail. In response, the planning team evaluated 14 publicly owned sites that could be used as water access points. Currently, Meadow Park in Schwenksville and Hoy Park in Lower Providence have boat ramp access for the water trail. Mr. Beltz spoke about the process for DCNR to designate a water trail. An important step in the process is to have a managing organization for the water trail. The PWC would like to assume that role. PWC has established itself as a major provider of public outreach thru conservation, recreation, community support, public information, trail maintenance, and educational programs.

Jean Akers, a board member of the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy also spoke about the Trail Study. She described the sites that were evaluated for potential water access. As part of the study, they engaged others who already use the creek as a trail to think about what may be needed to encourage use. They suggested that many of the public areas would benefit from improvements and amenities like parking, public restrooms, and water fountains. Additionally, they determined

that it would be helpful to post information online and at trailheads about the water trail as currently there is little available. This could include information about nearby recreational amenities, recreation providers where you can rent or borrow a kayak, food vendors, and the best place to start and end a trip on the water trail. PWC plans to develop a guide that will be available in print and online. Ms. Akers ended the presentation by stating that one of PWC's goals is to achieve state and county designation of the Perkiomen Creek as an official water trail.

VIII. Draft 2019 Montco 2040 Implementation Report

Presenter: Anne Leavitt-Gruberger

Anne Leavitt-Gruberger presented the draft 2019 Montco 2040 Implementation Report. The report listed the 2018 achievements and 2019 projects for implementation of the Montco 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The plan has three themes: Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and Vibrant Economy. In the theme of Connected Communities, the county creates connections beyond those of local municipalities. The achievements of 2018 included maintaining 36 municipal planning contracts, four regional planning contracts and authoring two school district enrollment studies. The county hired a GIS manager and finalized a new GIS Strategic Plan. The Montco 2040 Implementation grant program provided grants for 14 local projects. In transportation, we continued with Phase 3 of the Lafayette Street project and the Bike Montco Plan was adopted. The County Transportation grant program allocated \$1 million to local transportation projects, funded with part of the county's \$5 vehicle registration fee. For trails, a section of the Schuylkill River Trail in Pottstown was completed as well as the first phase of site development work at the Trail Junction Center. The Schuylkill River Trail had more than three miles resurfaced and there were safety upgrades to five trail road crossings in Conshohocken. For 2019 in Connected Communities we will finalize and adopt the Multi-Regional Greenway and Stewardship Study as well as adopt the KEEP plan in Pottstown. We will continue with construction of the final phase of the Lafayette Street project. In trails, the Wissahickon/Cross County Trail will complete final design through the Erdenheim Farm. The GIS team will initiate a program that can be used for public and local use of the county's GIS data and expertise.

In the theme of Sustainable Places, the county supports practices that help to sustain and enhance our neighborhoods and communities. During 2018, achievements included eleven bridge projects that reached the design phase and funded by the county's vehicle registration fee. The Wissahickon Creek Watershed Act 167 plan is being implemented. The county preserved five farms in 2018, and nine others are in-progress. There were seven household hazardous waste events and two tire collection events held throughout the county. FEMA approved the hazard mitigation plan. We held a Planning Smarter event on Local Water Resource Success Stories. The Parks Department restored the exterior of the Sunrise Mill and barn and constructed a new pavilion at the Peter Wentz Farmstead. DVRPC published *Eat Local Montco*; resulting in AgBrewCulture events to bring farmers and beer brewers together. The planning commission completed the *Suburban Homestead Guidebook* publication. In 2018, the planning commission began collaboration with the Commerce Department and Department of Housing and Community Development to create an Affordable Housing Advisory Board and will work on creating a Strategic Affordable Housing Plan. In 2019, we will continue to rehabilitate more county-owned bridges. There are three bridges that are slated to be completed and three bridges that will be started. We will continue implementing the requirements of the county's MS4 permit. We will continue to sponsor hazardous waste and tire collection events. The county will continue to support farmers through farmland preservation as well as holding networking and educational events. In 2019, we will begin the design of a new visitors' center at Pennypacker Mills.

In the final theme of Vibrant Economy, the county envisions an economy where residents earn and spend more, the government can make needed infrastructure improvements, and businesses can grow. The achievements for 2018 included widening the PA Turnpike through Lansdale and the Presidential Boulevard Road Diet in Lower Merion. We collaborated with the Commerce Department to hold an event called the Future of Manufacturing, which brought together more than 50 people and four panelists to discuss strengthening the industrial and manufacturing sectors in the county. The VFTCB launched Embark Montco to help visitors find pet friendly hotels in Montgomery County. Major events in the county continue to draw visitors and tourism spending to the county. Cirque du Soleil was a recent example of a major economic event. There was also targeted marketing of the county's business assets and a new online business park database was launched. For 2019, under Vibrant Economy we will continue to advocate for improved turnpike interchanges as per the recommendations of the Turnpike Corridor Reinvestment Study. We will continue to promote new transit-oriented development and other station area improvements within the county. We will work with the VFTCB to promote the county's regional assets. We will launch a microsite with economic development tools and data about Montgomery County. The county will participate fully in the lead up to the 2020 Census. Finally, we will continue to promote economic and workforce

development assistance. Lastly, Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger displayed updated 2040 Future Land Use Vision maps with housing construction and non-residential construction highlighting how most of the county's new growth is taking place in designated growth areas. She also displayed 2040 Transportation Vision maps showing the progress that has been made in completing transportation projects throughout the county.

IX. Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program Status and 2019 Round Announcement

Presenter: Scott France

Scott France provided a status of the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program and announced the opening of the application period for 2019. The 2040 grant program is competitive and intended to help implement projects that achieve the goals and objectives of the Montco 2040 Comprehensive Plan. Only municipalities can apply for a grant, but they can partner with other private or non-profit organizations. The County Commissioners approved \$1,500,000 in the 2019 capital budget to fund these improvement projects. The grant funding maximum is \$200,000 with an average of \$100,000. There is a minimum local match of 20% of the total grant amount. The application deadline for 2019 is March 1st and will require a detailed budget be included. There are focus categories that have been selected to inspire municipalities to consider similar projects. However, any projects that achieve a goal in the comprehensive plan are considered. This year Bike Montco is emphasized as part of the Walk/Bike Montco category. For 2019, project readiness is a criterion that is also being highlighted. Mr. France provided a detailed summary of the grants previously awarded. There were a total of 68 applications received for \$8 million and 41 grants were awarded for a total of \$3.9 million. A total of 39 municipalities have received funding with an average grant award of \$94,367.

X. Indian Valley Regional Planning Commission

Presenter: Eric Jarrell

Eric Jarrell provided a brief overview of the Indian Valley Regional Planning Commission contract. A history of the early work for the region was discussed. Indian Valley began meeting informally in the late 1980's, signed its first planning assistance contract in the late nineties, and this is the 8th consecutive contract renewal. The early work included a Regional Transportation Study in 1995; they initiated the Regional Comprehensive Plan in 1999 and adopted the Regional Comprehensive Plan in 2005. Since then there have been two updates to the Comp Plan in 2007 and 2015. The Indian Valley Regional Planning Commission is made up of the following municipalities: Salford Township, Lower Salford Township, Upper Salford Township, Franconia Township, Souderton Borough and Telford Borough. The major work item during the previous planning assistance contract of 2016 to 2018 was the Multi-Regional Greenway and Stewardship Study. DCNR awarded the region a \$120,000 grant primarily to work on the stewardship component of the study. In addition, each region provided \$10,000 a year in in-kind services for the study. Natural Lands conducted stewardship assessments for county and municipal parks. There were a total of 38 municipal properties assessed within the four regions. During the site visits Natural Lands assessed the vegetation community, identified the different kinds of habitat, identified any hazards or nuisances on the property, inspected trails for erosion issues, and evaluated the recreation resources on the site. The recommendations resulted in a Stewardship Priorities and Implementation Schedule for each of the parks. Many of the parks had similar issues such as deer management and invasive species control. The Stewardship Guide will provide an in depth explanation of issues and will provide recommendations that benefit the sites that were assessed as well as other properties with similar issues. Mr. Jarrell also spoke about an analysis of the Main Street Greenways. This entailed an interdisciplinary team that included a transportation planner, landscape architect, environmental planner and community planner that examined ways to make the village areas more walkable, greener and more sustainable. The identified projects will create opportunities for 2040 grants once the design and preliminary work has been completed. The identified projects include sidewalks, crosswalks, ADA ramps, street trees and streetscape treatments as well as stormwater controls. Mr. Jarrell also discussed the Rural Resource Greenways that involved tailored stewardship strategies for the various types of resources being protected.

XI. 2019 MCPC Work Program Final

Presenter: Jody Holton and Senior Staff

Jody Holton opened the discussion of the 2019 Work Program. The senior staff presented the Work Program during the December meeting and today we have set aside time to listen to board comments and recommendations.

- Dulcie Flaharty spoke about the western part of the county and highlighted Greenway Study. Ms. Holton spoke about how Eric Jarrell, Drew Shaw and Henry Stroud will have an opportunity to work with these communities on implementation of the plan for acquisition ideas and MS4 improvement requirements.
- The Board discussed School District planning and the need for us to start thinking about how our community planners can incorporate the information available with school enrollment projections into municipal planning efforts. Planners can include this information as part of the Comprehensive Plan process. Communities may benefit from information about facility expansion or potential for future changes in enrollment.
- The Board discussed implementing the Open Space and Park Expansion Program and how we can jump-start acquisition of important open spaces in the plan.
- Another comment was made about increasing economic development planning services. It would involve working closely with the Commerce Department and the Redevelopment Authority. The Rockledge contract includes economic development planning. Mr. Jarrell mentioned that Chloe Mohr is working with Dave Zellers for the Hatboro Comprehensive Plan.
- Ms. Holton mentioned the Affordable Housing Plan, and how Scott France and Anne Leavitt-Gruberger are working with Emma Hertz from Housing and Community Development and Dave Zellers from Commerce on this effort.
- The Board discussed the importance of the Campus Master Plan and new Justice Center for the county and Norristown. The Planning Commission serves on several committees for the campus master plan project. We will continue to update the board when information is available.
- The Board expressed an interest in remaining a part of the State Hospital site and continuing to attend the state meetings to remain involved in the conversation. Mr. Cover believes that the State Hospital will be a long process that is expected to take years to finalize.
- Mr. Kline brought about the discussion on how the Planning Commission can assist municipalities get started with GIS mapping and assisting on access for the data that is available.
- Mr. Kline would like to explore a design competition or studio in partnership with a university, college or other school. The Farm Park, State Hospital, Norristown Zoo and the Perkiomen Water Trail access points are potential design projects.

XII. Director's Report

1. Ms. Holton introduced Ellis Foley who was hired as an Environmental Planner. Most recently she worked with Villanova University on the Stormwater Management. She will be completing the Montgomery County Sewage Treatment Facility Inventory and tracking the county's MS4 annual report.
2. Ms. Holton introduced John Miklos who was hired as a Community Planner and will be working with Lower Providence Township and Worcester Township.
3. The Calendar of Events from January 9, 2019 to February 12, 2019 was distributed for board review. Ms. Holton highlighted the PA Farm Show on January 11th in Harrisburg that will be attended by Anne Leavitt-Gruberger and Danielle Weiden. On January 22nd the City Avenue Futurecast will have it annual gathering of stakeholders and real estate professionals.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.

The next Board meeting will be on February 13, 2019 at 9:00 AM in the Planning Commission's Office.