



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES: Regular Monthly Board Meeting
Wednesday, January 13, 2021
Approved: February 10, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDING: Steven Kline, Chair; Dulcie Flaharty, V-Chair; Charles Tornetta; Robert Blue; John Ernst; Obed Arango

STAFF ATTENDING: Scott France, Matthew Edmond, Pattie Guttenplan, Drew Shaw, Eric Jarrell, Bill Hartman, Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Robin McLean, Rita McKelvey, Jamie Magaziner, Veronica Harris, Karina Caddick

GUESTS: Tamara Holt, Executive Brand Ambassador, AVE by Korman Communities

I. Call to Order/Public Comments

Scott France called the Board meeting to order. This is the first meeting of 2021 and includes the reorganization of the board.

II. Reorganization of the Board – Election of Officers

Scott France opened the nomination for Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. The nominations and elections are as follows.

- John Ernst nominated Steve Kline for Chair, was seconded by Dulcie Flaharty and approved by all.
- Steven Kline nominated Dulcie Flaharty for Vice-Chair, was seconded by Charlie Tornetta and approved by all.
- Steve Kline nominated Scott France for Secretary, was seconded by John Ernst and approved by all.

III. Board Comment

Dulcie Flaharty thanked the staff for sharing such interesting articles. She shared that she learns a lot about the county and they assist with decision making.

John Ernst expressed his thanks to Steven Kline and Dulcie Flaharty for their leadership and continued guidance throughout the year. He also wondered if there is an update about the vacant seats on the board.

Obed Arango thanked Steve Kline and Dulcie Flaharty for their leadership over the last year is looking forward to the coming year. He also thanked the MCPC staff and the County for their service for this and the coming year.

Steven Kline thanked the board members for the nomination of Chairmanship for the coming year. He feels honored to be able to serve in this role once again this year. He provided an update about the vacancies on the board and hopes that the commissioners will be able to appoint replacements for the open positions very soon.

IV. Community Planning Assistance Contracts

Presenter: Eric Jarrell

Eric Jarrell requested that the Board approve the community planning assistance contracts for Lower Pottsgrove Township, Narberth Borough, West Pottsgrove Township and Upper Moreland Township. The contracts became effective on January 1, 2021 for a duration of three years.

The Lower Pottsgrove Township contract is a three-year contract renewal. The contract will include ongoing flexible general assistance. The potential work items may include a streetscape plan along High Street. The contract term is from January 1, 2021 thru December 31, 2023 for a total cost of \$44,541.00 with a municipal share of \$22,270.50.

Narberth Borough renewed their planning assistance contract. The main contract work involves an update to their SALDO; provide support to the Parking Study task force; implementation of their Heritage Action Plan. Narberth is also working on a Complete Streets Policy. The contract term is from January 1, 2021 thru December 31, 2023 for a total cost of \$63,630.00 with a municipal share of \$31,815.00.

The West Pottsgrove Township contract is a three year renewal. The contract includes ongoing general assistance. Other work items may involve a complete streets and streetscaping plan along West High Street. The contract term is from January 1, 2021 thru December 31, 2023 for a total cost of \$44,541.00 with a municipal share of \$22,270.50.

The Upper Moreland Township contract is a three year contract renewal of their planning assistance contract. The contract will include implementation of the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan. Other work includes updates to the zoning map, SALDO and zoning ordinances. The contract term is from January 1, 2021 thru December 31, 2023 for a total cost of \$89,082.00 with a municipal share of \$44,541.00.

***Motion:** To approve the Lower Pottsgrove Township, Narberth Borough, West Pottsgrove Township and Upper Moreland Township Planning Assistance Contracts, by Mr. Kline, seconded by Mr. Ernst, and approved by all present.*

V. Draft Montco 2040 Implementation Report

Presenter: Anne Leavitt-Gruberger

Anne Leavitt-Gruberger presented the Draft 2021 Montco 2040 Implementation Report. The Montco 2040: A Shared Vision is the comprehensive plan for Montgomery County and was adopted six years ago. This report lists the achievements for 2020 and projects that are planned in Montgomery County for 2021. The report has three themes: Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and Vibrant Economy. Although 2020 was a challenging year for the country the Planning Commission, other county departments and local agencies were successful in implementing a lot of projects around the county. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger provided an overview of the report which included the Montco 2040 Implementation grant program that awarded grants for 15 new projects in the county. In 2020, the county commissioners preserved seven farms and reached the milestone of preserving 10,000 acres during the life of the program. Montgomery County implemented a GIS plan for data sharing and transparency of information that is available to the public. The Your Way Home program continues to address challenges of homelessness and we continue to work on a Homes For All project. In recycling, continued efforts allowed the county to safely hold six Household hazardous waste events throughout the county. In transportation, there are 32 county-owned bridges that were in various stages of design and reconstruction. The County Transportation Grant Program allocated \$1 million to six local transportation projects. Two major construction projects were completed, the 422 bridge over the Schuylkill River, and the Lafayette Street extension project. For trails, construction started on the Chester Valley Trail Extension and advances were made at the Cross County Trail East, the Pennypack Trail and the Wissahickon Trail at Erdenheim Farm. For our environment, we addressed water quality in the county through the Wissahickon Creek Water Quality Improvement Plan process and implementation efforts were made for the county's MS4 permit program. The county also continues with its commitment to renewable energy for county-owned buildings and vehicles. In the area of public health, the planning commission worked on the RESTART Montco action plan that provided information that address physical and land use issues faced during the epidemic. The county organized COVID-19 testing sites, contact tracing initiatives, and provided funding support for childcare providers. Guidance was shared with local businesses on best practices to allow businesses to operate safely. The County also invested in our businesses with CARES Act funding. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger also spoke about in detail about what we can look forward to in 2021.

VI. Minutes of December 9, 2021

The minutes from the December 9, 2021 regular Board meeting were approved by the Board.

***Motion:** To approve the December 9, 2021 Board minutes, by Mr. Kline, seconded by Mr. Torretta, and approved by all present.*

VII. Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program

Presenter: Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Daniel Farina

Anne Leavitt-Gruberger and Daniel Farina presented a summary of the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program. This is a competitive grant program that is intended to achieve the goals and objectives of the Montco 2040 Comprehensive Plan. We are entering the sixth round of this program that began in 2016. The County Commissioners approved \$2,500,000 in the capital budget to fund these projects. A new focus for 2021 is on social equity and inclusion. Only municipalities can apply for an implementation grant, but they can partner with private or non-profit organizations. The grant funding maximum is \$200,000 with an average award of \$100,000. There is a minimum local match of 20% of the total grant amount. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger provided a historical summary of the program to date. Since 2016, the grant program has received 120 applications totaling \$15.2 million in requests. The County Commissioners awarded 72 grants that totaled \$7.7 million for an average award of \$109,000. The applications that received funding were spread across 43 municipalities. Mr. Farina provided a detailed status summary of each year of the grant awards program. He spoke about the projects that were completed, the projects that are in progress and any that withdrew from the program. Mr. Farina also displayed photos and provided details about projects that have been completed. The Implementation Grant Program is currently accepting applications, the deadline is March 1, 2021.

VIII. 2021 MCPC Work Program Final

Presenter: Scott France and Senior Staff

Scott France spoke about the final version of the 2021 MCPC Work Program. He provided an overview of some of the changes to the work program, resulting from board input. Mr. France spoke about and displayed a minor update to the work chart. The format of the report was streamlined making it stronger for the reader. The MCPC Work Program is currently available on our website. Mr. France introduced a vision that has been discussed both with the board and internally with senior staff. It involves looking forward to long term sustained issues in Montgomery County. These "sustained focus" topics are emerging challenges facing our county and its communities over the next decade. The MCPC's vision is to build various tasks centered on these topics into the Planning Commission Work Program and the Planning Smarter Series annually, so that the MCPC can focus its efforts over multiple years and in a systematic way to tackle these long-term problems. The choice of topics would include board input and involvement and would be limited to three or four such issues. When selecting the topics our intent is to choose a more broad focus that follow the goals and objectives the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. France provided a list of ideas and spoke about ways we can use to select the topics. Examples are Housing Supply and Affordability; Climate Change and Impacts; Population Migration; Immigration; Transportation Expansion and Retail Apocalypse. The resources that we move forward can be a wide range of work tasks – some traditional (such as model ordinances, plans, etc.) and some which might be new to the MCPC work program, such as white papers, microsites, or task forces. We also envision that we can integrate these topics into our current and existing work program efforts without creating a whole new subset of tasks. Matt Edmond provided an example of what a sustained focus topic can look like. He spoke about our Maturing County as the main topic – the idea that Montgomery County is or will be settling into a period where rapid growth is over and the planning challenges will shift to maintaining stability. This can include work program tasks focused on infill development, our aging housing stock, the increase in density, our continued economic vitality, diversifying transportation options, and changes in the county's demographics. We currently have items in our work program that have touched on these topics like the Homes for All, a TOD model ordinance, sidewalk and bicycling planning, and our contributions to the KOP Rail funding and construction vision. Mr. Edmond spoke about how we may use a focus like "A Maturing County" to begin shifting our efforts in future Planning Commission work programs. Examples of future tasks include tracking immigration and migration trends

over time; issuing research reports on national trends in mall and metro area development; writing complete streets policies for our contract communities; or identifying roadways that can benefit from TOD's and more frequent bus transit service. Finally, Mr. France offered three prospective methods for selecting the sustained focus topics. The first is for staff to recommend the topics to the board; the second is coordinated series of discussions between the board and staff; and the third is a wider collaborative approach that includes input from a wider array of colleagues such as the Board of Commissioners and Senior County Staff to go along with ideas from planning commission staff. Mr. France requested board feedback and each board member spoke about their continued interest in this effort. Ultimately, the Board voiced support for the second method above – coordinated discussions between MCPC staff and board members – for choosing the sustained focus topics.

IX. Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission Contract Presentation

Presenter: Jamie Magaziner

Jamie Magaziner presented a summary of the Central Perkiomen Valley Regional Planning Commission contract. The Central Perkiomen Valley Region is made up of Colledgeville Borough, Lower Frederick Township, Perkiomen Township, Schwenksville Borough, Trappe Borough, and Upper Frederick Township. The total region has a land area of 21.1 square miles and a population of approx. 29,000 residents. Ms. Magaziner spoke about the demographics and displayed the existing and future land use map. She stated that the region is approx. 43% residential, 8% non-residential and the remaining, about half, is either agricultural, undeveloped land or open space. The Open Space existing map was displayed as well as the Trail Network existing and proposed map. The Perkiomen Trail is a popular focus for the region and has the potential for making the connections that will encourage growth. During the previous contract a regional trail web app was developed, a story map created, and promotional material for the trail was designed. The planning commission will continue to assist with finalizing and maintaining the regional trail map. The app was developed to be able to be used with devices on the trail. It will allow users to find amenities such as businesses, restaurants, libraries, parking and trailheads. Ms. Magaziner spoke about the three Montco 2040 Awards that were awarded to the region. The Colledgeville Boat Ramp Project includes the ramp, picnic tables, parking area, landscaping and will be ADA accessible. This will make connections between the Perkiomen Creek water trail and the Perkiomen Trail. The second is a multi-municipal grant for signage and wayfinding for the Perkiomen Creek Water Trail. These will include 130 signs in 40 areas that will help users navigate the creek and the public areas. The third grant is for a Public Pavilion at the new Borough Hall in Schwenksville Borough. The contract work includes reviewing developments of regional significance; reviewing zoning amendments that have impacts on density and other factors; writing letters of support and sharing county reports and priority issues with the regional commission. Other contract items includes preparing agendas, meeting minutes and finalizing the Multi-regional Greenway and Stewardship study.

X. Household Hazardous Waste / Recycling – Annual Update and Summary

Presenter: Veronica Harris

Veronica Harris presented an overview of the Household Hazardous Waste and Recycling program. Montgomery County provides for the disposal of household hazardous waste, tires and campaign signs. These are special materials that are not intended for the regular trash or recycling bins and are often dangerous to the environment. Household Hazardous Waste are toxic or flammable materials that can cause a health risk if disposed of improperly. These may include gasoline, oil, antifreeze, pool chemicals, pesticides, mercury, fire extinguishers and propane tanks to name a few. Montgomery County scheduled seven household hazardous events for 2020. Unfortunately, due to restrictions from the State we were unable to hold these events on the scheduled dates. We did finally receive approval in the fall during the states green phase and held six hazardous waste events, with COVID restrictions. The restrictions included masks for workers and for attendees; we asked the attendees to keep items in their trunk and not the interior of their cars; and we also required workers to spread out on the site. Since we had to limit the attendance to 250 people maximum on site at any one time, there was a preregistration requirement for residents to attend the event. This tool did help us to gauge how many were attending and also allowed us to spread out the attendees throughout the day. There was a generally steady flow of cars without causing any traffic backup at the sites. We will likely continue the registration requirement in 2021 and into the future. There was a total of over

five thousand cars attended the events, which is down from previous years. For 2020, the cost for the events was approx. \$400,000 and we are reimbursed \$100,000 by DEP. The reimbursement is intended to reimburse us for 50% of the cost with \$100,000 cap. The county did work with a legislator to request an increase in the cap but unfortunately it did not pass in the last session. It is important to note that Municipalities and residents do not contribute to the cost for these events, mainly because they are quite costly and important to encourage participation. Ms. Harris spoke about a vision to have permanent recycling center in Montgomery County. The site would be open year round and would collect household hazardous waste, electronic waste, and miscellaneous recyclables. This could reduce illegal dumping in Montgomery County and encourage our residents to recycle. Ms. Harris also provided an update on the tire events which were cancelled due to COVID restrictions. She stated that this is a function that cannot be done socially distanced, since the workers need to stack the tires in trailers close to one another. The tire events will not be offered again in 2021 and because there are outlets for tires to be recycled this may not be a service we provide going forward. During, 2020 we did hold the campaign sign collection. The campaign signs were collected at 13 drop off sites around the county. This is a one week drop off event, after the November election. There is no cost to the county for this event. They are collected by the county correctional facility and sorted there for recycling. Ms. Harris spoke about a private program called Retrievr that is available to county residents. Retrievr will come to your home to pick up electronics and apparel. However, there is a charge for some items, like TV's and monitors. Information about this service is available on our website. Ms. Harris displayed a graph showing population, trash and recycling data thru 2019. The data showed that Montgomery County is growing in population and also increasing the amount of trash we produce. The recycling amount went down slightly in 2019. We hope to see the recycling figure grow going forward. Finally, she discussed impacts as a result of the pandemic. The increase of work from home has caused residential waste to go up, as commercial waste is trending downward. Because the costs for disposal is directly related to the costs per ton we may see these costs go up. This may impact the municipal budgets for communities that collect trash and recycling. It may also affect the rates for residents who pay directly for their trash and recycling. Ms. Harris also spoke about the PA budget for Recycling where \$50M was transferred to the general fund for COVID deficits. These are funds that are used for recycling reinvestment projects.

XI. Director's Report

1. Scott France announced that the Planning Commission is looking to fill three open positions. They are for a Principal Transportation Planner, a County Planner and for a Community Planner.
2. Mr. France shared that Maggie Dobbs has accepted a new position as Assistant Township Manager and Director of Planning and Zoning in Westtown Township, Chester County. Ms. Dobbs will be missed for her dedication to her communities.
3. The Farmland Preservation Program is celebrating an important milestone of preserving 10,000 acres of Farmland. The Board of Commissioners will be presenting a commemorative video at their January 21st meeting.
4. Mr. France spoke about the completion of the third phase of Lafayette Street Extension project.
5. Scott France provided an update of the Pennypack Trail leading into Bucks County. He shared that the final .7 miles has been constructed in Lower Moreland Township and will connect to a portion being constructed in Bucks County. This segment will be open later in 2021.
6. Mr. France shared that we are working to finalize the dates and locations for the Planning Smarter Events Program. We anticipate to begin promoting for these events in February.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.

The next Board meeting will be on February 10, 2021 at 9:00 AM.