



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**MINUTES:** Regular Monthly Board Meeting  
Wednesday, May 12, 2021  
Approved: June 9, 2021

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**BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDING:** Steven Kline, Chair; Dulcie Flaharty, V-Chair; Charles Tornetta; Robert Blue; Jill Blumhardt; John Ernst; Obed Arango; Nicole Kline-Elsier; Jonathan Rinde

**STAFF ATTENDING:** Scott France, Eric Jarrell, Bill Hartman, Daniel Farina, Chloe Mohr, Pattie Guttenplan, John Marlatt, Karina Caddick

**GUESTS:** Tamara Holt, Executive Brand Ambassador, AVE by Korman Communities; Kim Haymans-Geisler, resident; Mary Ellen Moran, resident; Jacqui Baxter-Rollins, Executive Director, The Partnership TMA

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### I. Call to Order/Board Comments

Steven Kline called the Board meeting to order.

### II. Minutes of March 10 and April 14, 2021

The minutes from the March 10 and April 14, 2021 regular board meetings were approved by the board.

***Motion:** To approve the March 10 and April 14, 2021 Board minutes, by Mr. Kline, seconded by Ms. Flaharty, and approved by all present.*

### III. Public Comment

Mary Ellen Moran is a resident of West Norriton Township. Ms. Moran is concerned about the maintenance of the Schuylkill River Trail. She recalls that approximately five years ago a group planted trees in the area close to St. Gabriel and Pawlings Road. These trees are being negatively affected by the growth of wild rose bushes, poison ivy and other vines. She was inquiring if this group or another group could provide maintenance to these trees. Bill Hartman will coordinate with the Montgomery County Parks Department and Valley Forge Park to find out who can provide this maintenance and will request that they provide Ms. Moran with a status.

### IV. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Model Ordinance

Presenter: Marley Bice, Matthew Popek, Tamar Nativ, Claire Warner

Marley Bice, Matthew Popek, Tamar Nativ and Claire Warner provided an update of a model ordinance that is being developed for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) in Montgomery County. The TOD ordinance resource document is intended to be used as a basis for communities to build upon when creating their specific TOD ordinance. The Planning Commission is responding to strong development interest around existing train stations. Local municipalities such as Bridgeport, Upper Dublin and Upper Moreland have recently anticipated this type of development and created their own TOD ordinances. Municipalities recognize the benefit of TOD ordinances as an economic revitalization tool for their communities. Ms. Bice stated that this project will develop a model for our municipalities that incorporates the local trends for planning and zoning around their station areas. She added that this type of forward thinking will promote transit ridership with good development practices around our transit stations. Mr. Popek spoke about the importance of TOD planning for the County's transportation system. Montgomery County is the suburban county with the most SEPTA regional rail stations and a bus network that is being redesigned. There are also transportation projects listed in Montco 2040 in discussion that include the King of Prussia Rail extension and passenger rail service reactivation on rail lines towards

Phoenixville/Pottstown and Souderton/Perkasie. The benefits of TOD are evident in developed areas that have a train station, trails and residential areas built within a close proximity of these modes. This type of model ordinance will ensure that municipalities are taking advantage of the capacity of the entire transportation network without solely adding to roadway traffic. Ms. Nativ displayed a map of the Montgomery County train stations and rail transit network with a station area typology shown for each station. The TOD model ordinance is structured around five station area typology types to enable communities to select the land use that best represents their current or potential station area. For example, if you review the Town Center station area with a walkable main street and mixed use development with residential, retail and office. The future development of this area can include 3- story mid-rise structures with setbacks and a continuous streetscape that can fit into the existing main street character. Tamar Nativ provided a detailed summary, displayed diagrams and provided case study locations of the five station area options that were selected. They included street grid, streetscape, parking, gathering spaces and parks as well as building heights and setbacks. Then Ms. Bice spoke in length about the five key design elements and best practices for a successful TOD. The design elements are land use mix and density, walkability & pedestrian design, building design, placemaking, and parking. Claire Warner provided additional overview details about the model ordinance that is currently in development. Ms. Warner spoke about use regulations; dimensional standards, and bonus provisions that will be incorporated within the TOD model ordinance. She also spoke about design standards elements and best practices that can be incorporated within each of the five station area typologies. These included building, streetscape and open space design standards like setbacks, building orientation, sidewalks, street trees and gathering open spaces. The next step is to incorporate the feedback that has been received. There will be an internal and external review by planning professionals, attorneys and developers. SEPTA will also have an opportunity to provide their feedback. The final document will be featured at a Planning Smarter event this October.

#### V. Montco 2040 Plan Update

Presenter: Anne Leavitt-Gruberger

Anne Leavitt-Gruberger provided a summary of the Montco 2040: A Shared Vision Comprehensive Plan Update. This plan was adopted by the County Commissioners in 2015 with a complete update scheduled for 10 years in 2025. MCPC is currently working on a mid-point update intended to review progress indicators and to update the report maps. The comprehensive plan has three themes: Connected Communities, Sustainable Places, and Vibrant Economy. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger spoke in detail about the themes and the proposed updates. In the theme of Connected Communities she spoke about PennDOT Connects; Walk Montco and the Safe Routes to School projects; the new Bike Montco Plan; the Trail Access, Diversity, and Awareness study; the Montco 2040 grants awarded to date and the Sunrise Trail & Swamp Creek Greenway Study. In the theme of Sustainable Places Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger spoke about the \$5 vehicle registration fee and the bridge and intersection improvements that it funded; the Complete Streets policy; updates to the sewer and water service area maps; the hazardous waste collection program; the potential for a hydroelectric facility on the Norristown Dam; and emphasis on flooding education and heat island impacts. The proposed updates discussed in the category of Vibrant Economy includes major transportation projects such as the Lafayette Street extension, the Ridge Pike Corridor reconstruction project; the KOP Rail Project; the Covid-19 grant programs offered through the Commerce Department and Restart Montco. The interim update to the Montco 2040 plan will also include changes to the policy maps that are currently outdated. The maps that will be considered for update include the Development Potential Plan map; the Future Land Use Plan map; the existing and future Sewer and Water Service Areas maps; the Vision Roadway Projects map; the Programmed Roadway Projects map and the proposed Countywide Trail System map. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger invited everyone to attend the May 24<sup>th</sup> public forum where she will present this information and will invite attendees to make comments and ask questions. Information for attending this virtual event will be available on our website.

***Motion:** To approve the Montco 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update, by Mr. Kline, seconded by Ms. Flaharty, and approved by all present.*

#### VI. Hazard Mitigation Plan / Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis

Presenter: Drew Shaw, Ellis Foley, Jon Leshner

Drew Shaw, Ellis Foley and Jon Leshner spoke about the Hazard Mitigation Plan and Climate Change Vulnerability Analysis. The Federal Disaster Mitigation Act, passed in 2000, requires counties to adopt Hazard Mitigation Plans and to update them every five years. FEMA, PEMA, the municipalities, counties and the state are integrated into this process. An adopted Hazard Mitigation Plan is required in order for municipalities to receive federal disaster funding during a state of

emergency. This is an action-oriented plan with a goal to anticipate the potential for hazards and to make communities less vulnerable and more resilient to those hazards. The target is to complete the process for a 2023 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update. Mr. Shaw spoke about the plan content and displayed a list of all the hazards for Montgomery County. These hazards will be reviewed and updated using several teams, committees, public workshops and surveys. In preparation for this plan the MCPC Environmental section has been working to develop a 2021 Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment. Jon Leshner, Ellis Foley and Jason Emmel from the GIS group are analyzing sociographic, health factors, historical temperature, flooding and critical infrastructure data. DVRPC has been a key partner for this project. This assessment will identify the people, places and the infrastructure that would be most affected by increased heat and flooding due to climate change. Mr. Leshner spoke about the increase in average heat especially over multiple days. He stated that the evening temperatures will also rise and not allow people and surfaces to cool overnight. Increased average rainfall will also be an effect of climate change. The studies show that days with 3 inches or more of rainfall is expected to increase 52% by mid-century and 93% by the end of the century. There will be more intense rainfall events followed by prolonged events of drought. When it does snow, the amounts will be higher. Mr. Leshner spoke about the climate effects on land use which look at floodplains, impervious surfaces, tree canopies, homes and building stock. He also spoke about the people who will be affected more by climate change which included the elderly, children, those who are chronically ill, have pre-existing medical conditions, families living in flood plains or without air conditioning. The climate change vulnerability assessment is expected to be a resource tool for MCPC, municipal managers and the community to use to increase awareness and we hope will guide implementation. Ms. Foley spoke in detail about the geographic areas in Montgomery County where the impacts of climate change are expected to be greater or where we would be less able to adapt. These are the areas where interventions could be targeted. She spoke about the preliminary index results for heat risk, flood risk and socio-economic factors. These risk factors were used to determine the overall climate change potential impact value. Ms. Foley displayed a county map of the highest climate change risk neighborhoods that may need special attention in the future. These maps currently are in draft. The next step is to make this assessment more user friendly and educational using a web based tool.

## **VII. Director's Report**

1. Scott France wanted to acknowledge and thank the Planning Commission staff for their diligence which is evident during the board presentations. He also thanked the board member for their service and the helpful feedback they provide.
2. Scott France and Eric Jarrell introduced Tim Konetchy who joins MCPC as a Community Planner. Tim recently relocated to Montgomery County after working as a planner for Oswego County and the City of Binghamton in New York.
3. Mr. France thanked Juliann Smith and Shreeya Sharma who are ending their internship with the Planning Commission. Juliann will return to Temple University to work on her Geology and GIS degree. Shreeya will be seeking employment in Planning and we thank them both for their hard work and contributions.
4. The County Commissioners appointed a new member to the Farm Board. Ned Foley will join the Farm Board. He is a local farmer and developer of compost treatments.
5. Mr. France shared that The Farm Board will tour prospective farms for preservation on June 4<sup>th</sup>.
6. The Montgomery Awards committee has scheduled a tour of the potential awards sites for June 17<sup>th</sup>.
7. Scott France announced that the County Commissioners have adopted and endorsed The Homes for All Strategic Plan. This was a collaborative team effort that included the Planning Commission, the Commerce Department and Housing and Community Development.
8. On May 20<sup>th</sup> the Montco 2040 Grant application awards will be announced at the Board of Commissioners meeting.
9. Scott France shared that MCPC held their first Planning Smarter event of the year on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The Happy Trails! Planning and Designing Trails for All Users was well attend virtually. It focused on trail awareness and diversity. The event was led by Donna Fabry and included a panel discussion and video which is available on our website.

10. There are two upcoming PMPEI courses The Limits to Zoning will be on May 27<sup>th</sup> and Managing the Subdivision Review Process will be on June 1<sup>st</sup> and information for registration is available on the Planning Smarter webpage.
11. The Planning Commission will hold their next Planning Smarter event on June 30<sup>th</sup>. The webinar information for Hot Topics: Emerging Challenges in Our Communities is available on our website.
12. Montgomery County is honored to receive two awards from the American Society of Highway Engineers (ASHE), Delaware Valley chapter. The 2020 Project of the Year award in the small project category was received for the Lafayette Street Extension phase three Project. The 2020 Project of the Year award in the large category was received for the Route 422 Schuylkill River Bridge.
13. Mr. France announced that multimodal fund grants of \$3M from the Commonwealth Finance Authority and \$5M from PennDOT were awarded to communities throughout Montgomery County.
14. DVRPC awarded \$120,000 regional trail program grant to fund a feasibility study for the Cross County Trail in Plymouth and Whitemarsh. Mr. France thanked Brian Olszak for preparing the successful application.
15. Scott France shared that MCPC is preparing to host Representative Madeline Dean on an Infrastructure Tour on Friday, May 21st. During the tour we will visit Norristown, West Conshohocken and King of Prussia and discuss potential projects that could use funding.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11:55.*

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***The next Board meeting will be on June 9, 2021 at 9:00 AM***