

MINUTES
Cambria County Planning Commission

February 16, 2017

The regular monthly meeting of the Cambria County Planning Commission was held on Thursday, February 16, 2017, at 12 noon, at Kosta's Restaurant, Ebensburg, Pennsylvania.

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Mr. Rovanseck.

PRESENT

Ronald M. Rovanseck
David L. Belz
Lonnie Batdorf
Russell Kiel
Eric Wolf
Diane Waksmunski

ABSENT

Toni Renee Anderson
James White
Rev. Sylvia King

STAFF

Ethan C. Imhoff
Christopher D. Allison
Shanna M. Sosko
Colleen A. Bukowski

GUESTS

Commissioner B. J. Smith

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were presented at this meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On a motion by Mr. Kiel, seconded by Mr. Belz, the minutes of the January 19, 2017 CCPC meeting were approved. The motion passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The February Financial Statement was read by Mr. Imhoff and reviewed by those present. There being no comments on the report, Mr. Wolf made a motion that the February Treasurer's Report and the bills listed for payment be approved. The motion was seconded by Mr. Belz and passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Imhoff stated that there was no correspondence to be read at this time.

STATUS REPORTS

Mr. Imhoff noted that monthly status reports were provided to each member prior to this meeting. He explained that although there would be no oral presentation of the reports at this meeting, specific questions could be directed to the appropriate staff members. There being no questions on the reports, Mr. Rovanseck suggested that the meeting continue with discussion of Old Business.

OLD BUSINESS

Stating that there was no Old Business to discuss at this time, Mr. Imhoff noted that development of the Regional Comprehensive Plan is continuing. He explained that core values and a mission statement are being developed by each county involved in the study. Mr. Imhoff stated that discussion of hypothetical scenarios which will take place during the New Business portion of this meeting will aid in this planning process.

NEW BUSINESS

Two hypothetical scenarios were presented for discussion.

Scenario #1: Closing of two anchor stores at the Johnstown Galleria has been announced and mall owners are considering a \$75 million plan which would involve partial demolition of the mall and replacement with mixed-used development. Mixed use development would include a business-hotel with 150 rooms; indoor water park; open-air "Main Street" with room for up to 30 retailers and restaurants (national and local) connected to the remaining mall complex; 100 market-rate apartments, catering partly to students and young professionals; 35 income-restricted units, utilizing low-income housing tax credits; and 52 market-rate senior apartments. Developers would request a 15-year property tax exemption on the value of the new construction from the county and Richland Township, as well as a \$2.5 million grant from the county to aid with demolition and site preparation. The grant from the county would be matched with a state grant. Anticipated outcome of project: 40 full-time jobs at an average annual wage of \$32,500, and up to 52 part-time jobs paying an average of \$12/hour; after exemptions expire in year 15, yield of \$1.2 million per year in combined property taxes.

Discussion among CCPC members focused on the following topics:

- Project would provide significant economic benefits, creating a destination for a regional populace (Harrisburg-Pittsburgh)
- Good infrastructure and highway access makes Richland Township an excellent location for new development
- Tax incentives are necessary to entice small businesses to the area
- Mixed-use development which would expand the existing economic footprint should be encouraged vs. "retail for retail" development
- Providing business and tax incentives may prove to be financially detrimental to the County if businesses do not continue after the exemption time period

Scenario #2: A developer is proposing a 32-home subdivision in central Cambria County. Because of its close proximity to Routes 219 and 22, the development would be marketed to homebuyers who work in Altoona, Johnstown, and other regional employment centers. With a \$1 million investment from Cambria County, homes could be priced in the \$225,000 - \$250,000 range. In addition, the developer is also considering the purchase and renovation of a three-story building in Ebensburg. The top two floors would be converted into 12 market-rate apartments and an elevator would be installed with the assistance of a \$200,000 County grant or interest-free loan. Anticipated outcome of the two projects combined: \$80,000 per year in property taxes.

Discussion among CCPC members focused on the following topics:

- \$1 million County investment in proposed housing subdivision would not provide a substantial return; LERTA incentives may be a better avenue for the developer

- Housing markets will naturally improve with as economic conditions improve
- The Ebensburg apartment concept would be a good re-use of an existing building, which might otherwise contribute to downtown blight
- County low or no-interest loan could be considered but a County grant would not be a wise investment

Mr. Imhoff noted that although the scenarios presented at today's meeting are hypothetical, the discussion helps to formulate a vision for Cambria County's future growth and development.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned on a motion by Mr. Wolf, seconded by Mr. Kiel. Motion passed unanimously.