

MINUTES
Cambria County Planning Commission
August 19, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Cambria County Planning Commission was held on Thursday, August 19, 2021, at 12 noon, at Kosta's Restaurant, Ebensburg, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Wolf called the meeting to order.

PRESENT

Eric Wolf
Lonnie Batdorf
Russ Kiel
Ron Rovansek

ABSENT

Rev. Sylvia King
James White
Danea Koss
Debra Orner
Diane Waksmunski

STAFF

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

GUESTS

Commissioner Thomas Chernisky
Ron Robertson, County Community
Development Director

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the June 17, 2021 meeting were approved on a motion by Mr. Batdorf. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kiel and passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Imhoff read the August Financial Statement. After reviewing the report, Mr. Batdorf made a motion that the July-August Treasurer's Report, including expenses listed for payment, be approved. The motion was seconded by Mr. Kiel and passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE

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

STATUS REPORTS

Executive Director

Mr. Imhoff apprised the members of a recent critical and time-sensitive development concerning the Red Mill Bridge in Blacklick Township. Mr. Imhoff explained that in addition to the current severely compromised integrity of the metal bridge, large sections of the structure's stone foundation have become dislodged. He stated that in their role as coordinators of County bridge activities, he and Mr. Allison have

participated in discussions with Keller Engineers, the County's engineering firm of record; PA DOT engineering staff; and the County Commissioners to determine how best to ensure public safety at the bridge site. Mr. Imhoff reported that pursuant to these discussions and field inspections, there is a consensus that emergency demolition of the structure is warranted. Mr. Imhoff also reported that due to the historical significance of the bridge, both he and Mr. Allison participated in a telephone conversation with Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) staff, to gain insight on how to move forward with bridge demolition/replacement. Mr. Imhoff and Mr. Allison apprised the members of SHPO staff comments, indicating that SHPO staff is adamant that every effort should be taken to ensure historical preservation of the bridge, i.e. disassemble the bridge in such a manner that it can be saved and stored for possible future preservation activities. CCPC staff stated that demolition of the structure will be problematic due to the waterline currently traversing the structure and possible compliance with SHPO recommendations to preserve the structure. In response to questions by several of the members, Mr. Imhoff provided the following comments: a bidding process is not necessary in an emergency demolition situation; if executed, the demolition contraction will most likely include temporary relocation of the water line with a caveat that the County will not maintain the line; and a new bridge at the site is scheduled for construction in Summer, 2022. Noting that ultimate decisions regarding the Red Mill Bridge rest with the County Commissioners, CCPC staff and board members agreed that ensuring public safety, attempting historical preservation measures, and satisfying residents who use the bridge will be difficult and legal guidance will most definitely be needed during the decision-making process.

Updating the members on the City of Johnstown RAISE grant application, Mr. Imhoff stated that the application was submitted in July. Noting that the application requested funds to enhance the Johnstown Train Station, CamTran Transit Center and Main Street corridor, Mr. Imhoff stated that several meetings have been held with area legislators to apprise them of the application and request their support in securing the requested \$25 Million.

The Executive Director reported that the County Commissioners have requested the CCPC and the County Redevelopment Authority to conduct informational sessions regarding American Rescue Plan Act funding available to every municipality in the County. He explained that the sessions will focus on the process of applying for the federal funding as well as provide guidance on spending the money that has been allotted to their particular municipality. Mr. Imhoff noted that spending guidance from the Department of the Treasury is expected in October.

Mr. Imhoff reported that in an effort to spur activity on a pilot market-rate housing project in downtown Johnstown, the following four potential structures have been identified and toured: the former First Commonwealth Bank building, the Fish Boat building, the Hey Day building, and the Park building. He stated that the WOD Group, consultant for the project, will provide guidance on which property is the most viable for the pilot project. Noting that funding for the project has been secured through a Community Foundation for the Alleghenies grant application, Mr. Imhoff deferred details of the CFA grant to Ms. Kinka's status report.

Transportation Planning

Mr. Allison reported that prior to submission of the RAISE application to the U.S. Department of Transportation, he coordinated various meetings and conversations with project stakeholders, the consultant, and local officials to ensure a strong application packet. He also stated that he participated in an online meeting with Federal Transit Administration officials to brief them on the grant application.

Mr. Allison stated that staff continued development of the 2023 transportation program update by reviewing municipal project requests and meeting with PennDOT District 9-0 staff to discuss local bridge project priorities. He noted that since no County-owned bridges will be included in this update, inclusion of one or two municipal bridges will be added to the project listing.

Mr. Allison briefed the members on a public meeting/open house which was held to apprise local residents of the William Penn Avenue Corridor Plan and to gather additional public input. Noting that the meeting was well-attended, Mr. Allison stated that comments received at the gathering will be reviewed and the narrative section of the plan will soon be initiated.

Mr. Rovansek encouraged Commission staff to continue coordination of local and regional transportation agencies so that a united effort can be put forth to lobby for the region's "fair share" of funding, if and when federal infrastructure funding becomes available. Both Mr. Imhoff and Mr. Allison indicated that the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Vision 2025, local highway and mass transit agencies, as well as Sustainable Strategies, an area lobbying group, have been discussing and prioritizing potential projects in anticipation of passage of infrastructure legislation. Mr. Imhoff also stated that several area projects have been awarded earmark funding through the recent House transportation bill, which authorizes funding for roads, public transit, and other transportation infrastructure.

Community Development

Ms. Sosko reported on several outreach projects she has been involved with during the past two months. She stated that in an effort to advertise and promote attendance at the William Penn Avenue Corridor public forum, she designed a flyer which was mailed to local residents and created posters and maps which provided a visual overview of the plan. Ms. Sosko stated that she attended a meeting with Tunnellhill Borough Council to discuss the scope of a proposed sidewalk project and lend CCPC support for the initiative. She noted that staff toured the US 219 project area in Carrolltown to view new sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian infrastructure completed as a result of major improvements to the corridor.

Ms. Sosko informed the members that CCPC staff has been requested to present an accessibility workshop at the upcoming Miss Wheelchair Pennsylvania contest to be held in Richland Township. She explained that the session will provide contact information and advocacy strategies to contestants so they will be better informed as to how to implement/improve mobility and accessibility within their community. Ms. Sosko noted that in addition to CCPC staff, the president of the Miss Wheelchair Pennsylvania organization, Richland Township representatives, and PA DOT representatives will be involved in planning the accessibility session.

Ms. Sosko mentioned that in-person LTAP classes have been scheduled. A course focusing on seal coating and a project oversight class will be held in October at the Penn Highlands Ebensburg campus.

Senior Planning

Adding to the Executive Director's comments on implementation of the market-rate housing strategy, Ms. Kinka announced that the grant application submitted to the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies to assist with development costs associated with a pilot market-rate housing project has been awarded in the amount of \$80,000. She explained that \$40,000 has been earmarked to assist the project developer and \$40,000 will be allocated to the WOD Group for consulting services.

Ms. Kinka apprised those present of discussions and outcomes of various meetings in which she participated over the past several months. She stated that the Miss Wheelchair Pennsylvania accessibility session will coincide with the Commission's plans to highlight areas for mobility improvements surrounding commercial and residential areas of Richland Township. Ms. Kinka noted that installation of pilot bike racks, designed and fabricated by Greater Johnstown High School Welding Club students with oversight by JWF Industries, was the topic of discussion at the Vision 2025 Recreation Economy Committee. Noting that the bike racks have been fabricated using scrap materials from JWF, Ms. Kinka expressed her excitement that this initiative is finally coming to fruition after several months of COVID related delays. Ms. Kinka expounded upon a presentation sponsored by the Johnstown Convention and Visitor's Bureau. She explained that during the presentation a "secret shopper" destination consultant provided various suggestions to aid in promoting Johnstown as a visitor destination, i.e., improve branding of the Johnstown area to promote tourism; upgrade signage to provide better wayfinding; and encourage better customer-friendly hours of operation for downtown businesses. She also noted that it was refreshing to hear the consultant's comments regarding the historical assets and re-purposed functional venues in the Cambria City neighborhood.

Ms. Kinka reported that she has been involved in preparation of a grant application to fund an update to the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan. She stated that the \$37,500 grant, awarded by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, requires a 25% match (\$12,500) which will be provided by Cambria County. The plan will be prepared by a consultant familiar with hazard mitigation planning and preparedness.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Imhoff commented that updates to the CCPC Bylaws are currently under review by the County Commissioners. He stated that he will contact the Commissioners to garner their comments so that official action on the amendments can be taken at the September CCPC meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

There being no "New Business" to discuss at this meeting, Chair Eric Wolf adjourned the meeting.