

MINUTES
Cambria County Planning Commission
November 18, 2021

The regular monthly meeting of the Cambria County Planning Commission was held on Thursday, November 18, 2021, at 12 noon, at Kosta's Restaurant, Ebensburg, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Wolf called the meeting to order.

PRESENT

Eric Wolf
Diane Waksmunski
Ron Rovanseck
Debra Orner
Russ Kiel

ABSENT

James White
Lonnie Batdorf
Rev. Sylvia King
Danea Koss

STAFF

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

GUESTS

Commissioner Thomas Chernisky

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered at this meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 21, 2021 meeting were approved on a motion by Mr. Kiel, seconded by Mr. Rovanseck. Motion passed unanimously.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Imhoff read the November Financial Statement, noting revenue and expenditures for the past month. There being no questions or comments on the report, Ms. Waksmunski made a motion that the November Treasurer's Report, including expenses listed for payment, be approved. The motion was seconded by Mr. Rovanseck and passed unanimously.

Mr. Imhoff stated that discussion/approval of the draft 2022 budget will be tabled until the December meeting. He noted that he has met with the Executive Committee to discuss various budget line items and a meeting with the County Commissioners has also been scheduled to review the proposed budget and the request for an increase in the annual allocation and liquid fuels funding to the CCPC.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Wolf stated that there was no correspondence to discuss at this meeting.

STATUS REPORTS

Executive Director

Mr. Imhoff shared news that the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant application submitted by the City of Johnstown through the cooperative efforts of the CCPC, CamTran, Vision Together 2025, Johnstown Area Heritage Association and other public and private partnerships has been awarded. He commented that area legislators were instrumental in supporting the application sponsored by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Mr. Imhoff stated that the \$24 million grant will provide funding to renovate the Johnstown Train Station, construct a new CamTran Intermodal Transportation Center; upgrade the Johnstown Inclined Plan; improve the Main Street corridor in downtown Johnstown; and connect several urban hiking/biking trails. Noting the very competitive grant process, Mr. Imhoff expressed his satisfaction that the grant award was a culmination of the dedicated efforts of a coalition of public, private, non-profit, and governmental entities working together to develop a strong application that will greatly enhance the transportation network for City and County residents. Commissioner Chernisky commended the CCPC staff for their partnership in this endeavor and noted that the cooperative spirit of all those involved has been validated by receipt of the grant.

Mr. Imhoff apprised the members of a topic of discussion that has been initiated among Vision Together 2025 staff and board members which could be a possible solution to the continuing population loss in Johnstown and Cambria County. He explained that because other parts of the country have successfully utilized immigration as a part of a strategy to reverse population decline and employment gaps, the Vision board and staff have begun exploring the feasibility of hosting immigrants, particularly recently-evacuated Afghan refugees currently living on American military bases, in Johnstown and Cambria County. Mr. Imhoff stated that the issue is a complicated one and primary logistics would involve housing, education, translation and social services for relocated families. Mr. Imhoff indicated that he will keep the CCPC members abreast of this undertaking as more information and direction unfolds.

Transportation Planning

Mr. Allison reported that a recent meeting of the William Penn Avenue Corridor Plan steering committee was very productive and resulted in a compilation of needs and discussion of implementable projects to meet the various transportation-related issues along this corridor. He indicated that a draft of the corridor plan will soon be initiated.

The Transportation Planner stated that, in addition to coordinating the transfer of unused funding from the FY 2020-2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) to the current fiscal year, he has begun work on the draft FY 2022-2024 UPWP. He noted that although transportation funding for the upcoming four-year period will remain at current levels, supplemental funding may be available for development of the new CamTran transit facility.

Providing an update on the Red Mill Bridge situation, Mr. Allison stated that after much discussion and coordination with Army Corps of Engineers and PA Department of Environmental Protection representatives, it was determined that an emergency demolition permit was not necessary. He stated that the removal contract has been executed and a Notice to Proceed has been issued, with removal of the structure anticipated within the next 60 days. Mr. Allison also noted that the historical preservation process has been initiated and effort is being taken to comply with PA State Historic Preservation Office procedures.

Community Development

Ms. Sosko briefly apprised the members of community development activities undertaken during the past month. She stated that as a follow-up to the Ms. Wheelchair Pennsylvania accessibility workshop, she organized and attended a meeting to discuss how to improve next year's presentation and the feasibility of conducting another "walk and wheel" site visit to two intersections in Richland Township. Ms. Sosko explained that event participants have requested that the site visits be made without traffic control and police protection measures in place so as to provide a more realistic experience of situations encountered by persons with disabilities when traversing sidewalks and crossing traffic.

Regarding the possible development of a Portage area regional comprehensive plan, Ms. Sosko stated that she encouraged both borough and township officials to form a core group of individuals who can spearhead this initiative and keep their respective municipal officials apprised of this endeavor. She noted that CCPC staff will continue to provide input and support as requested.

Senior Planning

Ms. Kinka reported that she continues involvement with key stakeholders of the pilot housing project in downtown Johnstown. Noting that the project involves several layers of coordination with regard to financial logistics and construction, Ms. Kinka stated that she is coordinating a meeting with City and County project stakeholders to discuss available public funding to support the project.

Ms. Kinka stated that the unveiling of the pilot mural in downtown Johnstown was well attended and student artists were excited to see their hard work and artistic abilities recognized. She noted that she is hopeful that this first mural project will spur creation of other murals in every neighborhood of the City.

Updating the members on the County Hazard Mitigation Plan, Ms. Kinka stated that over one-half of the County's municipalities have completed and submitted hazard/risk assessment forms as requested. She noted that the community preparedness surveys will facilitate plan preparation by the consultant.

Ms. Kinka reported that she and Ms. Sosko recently attended the PA Chapter of the American Planning Association annual conference. She indicated that the environmental justice and equity, complete streets, and regionalization planning workshops were particularly informative.

In response to an inquiry by Mr. Rovansek, Ms. Kinka stated that the State Theatre is operational, with movies and other cultural events hosted at the venue. She noted that facility managers have also scheduled live musical events at the theatre.

With no "Old Business" or "New Business" on today's agenda, Mr. Rovansek made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was seconded by Ms. Waksmunski and passed unanimously.