



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES: Regular Monthly Board Meeting
Wednesday, February 9, 2022
Approved: March 9, 2022

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

STAFF ATTENDING: Scott France, Pattie Guttenplan, Daniel Farina, Steve Zbyszinski, Veronica Harris, Marley Bice, Tim Konetchy, Claire Warner, John Marlatt, Karina Caddick

GUESTS: Tamara Holt, Executive Brand Ambassador, AVE by Korman Communities; Olivia Pierce, MCPC Intern; Emily Roth, student of Widener University

I. Call to Order/Board Comments

Dulcie Flaharty called the board meeting to order.

II. Minutes of January 12, 2022

The board approved the minutes from the January 12, 2022 regular Board meeting.

***Motion:** To approve the January 12, 2022 Board minutes, by Ms. Kline-Elsier, seconded by Mr. Rinde, and approved by all present.*

III. Public Comment

None

IV. Horsham Township Community Planning Assistance Contract

Presenter: Scott France

Scott France requested that the board approve the planning assistance contract for Horsham Township. The main contract work will include an update and implementation of their Comprehensive Plan. The contract term is from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024 for a total cost of \$102,816 with a municipal share of \$51,708.

***Motion:** To approve the Horsham Township Planning Assistance Contract, by Ms. Blumhardt, seconded by Mr. Blue, and approved by all present.*

V. Annual Summary of Subdivision, Land Development, and Zoning Activity

Presenter: Daniel Farina

Daniel Farina presented a summary of the 2021 Annual Summary of Subdivision, Land Development, and Zoning Activity. This report lists the new proposals submitted during the previous year. The Annual Summary reflects proposal plans only, not actual construction activity. It is a useful tool to indicate trends of where development is currently occurring or where we can expect future development. The report also measures how much development is occurring on already developed parcels. The total number of proposal submissions for 2021 was 473, which was an increase of 17.4% from 2020. This increase is likely due to the pandemic. Mr. Farina displayed a county map that displayed the geographic distribution of the proposals for each municipality. The map revealed an even distribution of proposal activity throughout the county with the most submissions in Lower Merion and Lower Salford. The proposals totaled 968 acres, which is an increase from the previous year. Mr. Farina said that 63% of the total proposed acreage was residential, 14% industrial, and 12% commercial. The residential proposals

for 2021 included 5,100 units, which is the highest amount proposed in the last 15 years. Multifamily units continues to represent the highest percentage of housing type followed by Single-Family detached and attached development. Mr. Farina spoke in detail about the ten top residential proposals, with a majority in urbanized centers. The municipalities included Lower Merion, Conshohocken, New Hanover, and Upper Dublin. Dan Farina also spoke about nonresidential development proposals, which are measured by square footage. Montgomery County had a total of 3,713,802 square feet of nonresidential development proposed during 2021. This represents an increase of 39% from the previous year and indicates a relatively stable market. The nonresidential proposals include commercial, industrial, institutional, and office types. Industrial proposals totaled 1,606,548 sq. ft., which is the second-highest amount over the last ten years. Office and Commercial also experienced an increase in proposals from the prior year. Mr. Farina presented a detailed overview of the top 10 nonresidential proposals in Montgomery County. In summary, the 2021 Annual Summary reveals a very active year for new housing units and nonresidential square feet proposals considering the economic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic.

VI. Farmland Preservation Annual Summary

Presenter: Steve Zbyszinski

Steve Zbyszinski provided an overview of the Farmland Preservation Annual Summary. The preservation program in Montgomery County began in 1990 and allows for the purchase of agricultural easements. The objective of the preservation program is to maintain an environment that supports a viable farm economy. The purchase of agricultural easements guarantees that the farm could never be developed for another use. Since the program was established in Montgomery County, 10,226 acres have been preserved on 178 farms. This is approximately one third of the counties total farmland. Mr. Zbyszinski provided a detailed summary of the five farms that accepted offers in 2020. A Montgomery County map was displayed that highlighted all the farms that have been permanently preserved since the beginning of the program and the farms that are enrolled in their local ASA. During 2021, the Farmland Preservation Program received seven applications for consideration and the Farm Board presented offers to six farms. Five of the farms accepted the offers with a total of 106 acres. A map was displayed that showed where they are located in the county. For the 2022 application round, the program has received 18 applications in 9 different townships totaling a potential of 553 acres. This is the largest amount of applications that have been received in the last ten years. Mr. Zbyszinski shared that during 2021 the Planning Commission attended several events and provided educational outreach to promote the program. They included the 4H Fair, the Springfield Rotary Club, and Dock Woods. He also spoke about the Stalk Talk newsletter that is produced twice a year and includes a wide variety of topics. The next edition will be available in the spring.

VII. Household Hazardous Waste / Recycling Annual Update and Summary

Presenter: Veronica Harris

Veronica Harris presented an overview of the Household Hazardous Waste and Recycling Annual Update. Montgomery County provides for the disposal of special materials that the municipalities cannot handle such as household hazardous waste and campaign signs. These special materials are not intended for the regular trash or recycling bins and are often dangerous to the environment. Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) are toxic or flammable materials that can cause a health risk if not disposed of properly. These may include gasoline, oil, pool chemicals, herbicides, fire extinguishers and fluorescent tube light bulbs to name a few. Ms. Harris provided a spreadsheet of the statistics for the last three years of events. Montgomery County scheduled seven household hazardous events a year over the last three years. Unfortunately, due to restrictions we were unable to hold one of the events in 2020. During 2021, approximately 7,000 cars attended the events with about 570,000 pounds of hazardous material. The total cost for the HHW events was approximately \$510,000 and the county receives an annual DEP grant for \$100,000. The DEP grant is intended to reimburse the county for 50% of the cost. Unfortunately, it covers less than 20% and we would need legislative action in order to increase the grant amount. Ms. Harris noted that Municipalities and residents do not contribute to the cost for these events. They are quite costly and the process is complicated for each municipality to navigate. Ms. Harris spoke about her personal wish 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. A recycling center could reduce illegal dumping in Montgomery County and encourage our residents to recycle. Ms. Harris also provided an update on the Campaign Yard Sign recycling. This is a one-week drop off event, after the November election. In 2021, the campaign signs were collected at 15 drop off sites around the county. There is no cost to the county for this event. The signs are collected by the county correctional facility and sorted there for recycling. During 2021, the recycling program partnered with a non-profit organization called Tiny Works Progress Administration and we delivered a mini-van full of campaign signs. The non-profit teaches local youth how to construct things, generally out of

wood. The group wanted to find ways to upcycle the signs and came up with some creative ideas. A few of the items they created using a laser cut machine were signs, 2022 New Year's glasses, Christmas tree decorations, roofs and shingles for tiny libraries. Ms. Harris spoke about a private program called Retrievr that is available to county residents. Retrievr, which works through an app system, 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 at a steady pace in population and the amount of trash we produce is increasing slightly. The recycling amount was trending upward but we did see a drop in 2020. We hope to see the recycling figure continue to grow going forward.

VIII. Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission

Presenter: Marley Bice and Tim Konetchy

Marley Bice and Tim Konetchy presented an overview of the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission (PMRPC) contract. The region includes eight municipalities, six in Montgomery County and two in Chester County. The PMRPC was established in 2005. The region has experienced significant population growth with a regional population of approximately 83,000 residents in 2020. This is a 20% increase in population from 2000. There has been a lot of development and population growth in this region. DVRPC has forecasted the PMRPC region to continue growing and has estimated an additional 18% population growth through 2050. Ms. Bice displayed the Future Land Use Map and spoke about the benefits of regional planning with regard to population growth and development. She spoke about the primary and secondary growth areas and highlighted the designated conservation areas. The region has experienced development within the preferred growth areas. Ms. Bice spoke about the region's partnership with DVRPC and their work on transportation related projects. In 2021, DVRPC completed a two-year study of the High Street Corridor. DVRPC is currently working on a PART Bus Stop Enhancement Study. This is a two-year study that includes work to identify and prioritize bus stop and access improvements; create design guide for shelters and landscaping and to improve PART branding with uniform signage and design. Tim Konetchy spoke about the Pottstown Area Regional Recreation Committee (PARRC), which focuses on maintaining, enhancing and developing recreational facilities and open spaces in the Pottstown Metro region. PARRC recently completed a Strategic Plan through 2025, funded by a mini grant. Mr. Konetchy also spoke about the mini-grant program, which funds park improvements and planning. The \$25,000 grants are funded by DCNR and PAHWF. Since the start of the program, 37 projects have been awarded grants leveraging a total of \$1.2M in project costs. They have received six grant applications for the fourth round and have \$150,000 in funding to award. Finally, Ms. Bice spoke about future project work which includes expanded coordination with Chester County; a demographics analysis update and beginning a regional comprehensive plan update.

IX. Upper Dublin Planning Assistance Contract Presentation

Presenter: Claire Warner and Pattie Guttenplan

Claire Warner provided an overview of the Upper Dublin Township Planning Assistance Contract. Upper Dublin is in the eastern part of the county with a population of approximately 26,000 residents. She displayed a map of the existing land use and highlighted the significant Institutional, Commercial and Open Space areas of the township. Ms. Warner spoke about the previous contract work, which included development reviews, a landscape and streetscape plan and an analysis of the GFW District mixed use requirements. Developments of significance in the Ft. Washington Office Park included 1125 Virginia Drive with 310 residential units and 1250 Virginia Drive with 171 residential units. Both developments will have frontage connection with the proposed Cross County Trail. Ms. Warner spoke about the upcoming work items that includes continuing the work on the Ft. Washington Office Park Streetscaping and Landscaping Plan; zoning amendments; land developments and flexible assistance.

Pattie Guttenplan presented a project update of the Ft. Washington Landscaping and Streetscaping Plan. This is a two-mile stretch of the future Cross County Trail through the Fort Washington Office Park. The project work involved creating a Conceptual Plan followed by a detailed Landscape Plan for the area. Ms. Guttenplan provided a history of what prompted the plan and displayed a Trail Enhancements plan of the five zones that roughly coincide with the phases of trail construction. She also presented the detailed Landscape Plan for the Community Center Zone, which was included in the construction plans prepared for this section of the Cross county Trail in coordination with Boles Smyth Associates, Inc. Ms. Guttenplan spoke about the next steps and displayed a map of the completed and future phases Cross County Trail.

X. Director's Report

1. Scott France introduced Naomi Crimm who joined the Planning Commission as a Community Planner II. Naomi has a master's degree in regional planning from Cornell University.
2. The Planning Commission currently has three open positions, a Transportation Planner, Community Planner and an Assistant Section Manager of Design.
3. Mr. France introduced two interns that will be working at the Planning Commission. Sam Zrillo is a graduate student at Temple University studying City and Regional Planning. Sam will be working with the Open Space section primarily on trails. Olivia Pierce is a senior at Temple University majoring in Community Development. Olivia will be working with the Environmental Section primarily on the Hazard Mitigation Plan.
4. Scott France recognized two staff members on their recent promotions. Ellis Foley to Senior Planner and Troy Woodyard to Principal Graphic Designer II.
5. The Planning Smarter schedule for 2022 was displayed for board review. MCPC will host four planning education courses throughout the year. In May, the first public event is the "Strategies to Enhance Walking and Bicycling in Your Community". Then in June, we will offer a Hot Topics hybrid event on current planning Issues. The third public event will be in September or October and will highlight Montgomery County's Return on Environment Study. Finally, we will end the program with our popular Montgomery Awards celebration on November 16.
6. Mr. France announced recent grant awards. The DCNR C2P2 grant awarded \$70M across PA with \$3.1M awarded to Montgomery County. They included \$400k for the Schuylkill River Trail, \$500k to Natural Lands for acquisition of the Laughing Waters property and \$160k grant to Upper Salford for the acquisition of the Clemens Property for Open Space. The ARLE program also awarded grants for 28 project around PA the state. The CFA Multimodal Awards funded 11 projects for \$7M.
7. The Calendar of Events from February 9, 2022 to March 8, 2022 was distributed for board review. Mr. France highlighted the Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law webinar on February 10 and the Federal Infrastructure Press Event with Congresswoman Madeleine Dean on February 11. He also highlighted the February 26 EAC Network conference for EAC members, municipal staff and others interested in improving their communities. Drew Shaw will be a co-presenter and will discuss grant opportunities and useful tips for grant applications.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30.

The next Board meeting will be on March 9, 2022 at 9:00 AM.