



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

**MINUTES:** Regular Monthly Board Meeting  
Wednesday, March 9, 2022  
Approved: April 13, 2022

---

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

**STAFF ATTENDING:** Scott France, Pattie Guttenplan, Eric Jarrell, Daniel Farina, Matt Edmond, Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Drew Shaw, Pattie Guttenplan, John Marlatt, Karina Caddick

**GUESTS:** Sarah Moran, Manager, Office of Mobility Analysis and Design, DVRPC; Aaron Frait, Associate Manager, Office of Mobility Analysis and Design, DVRPC; Mark Cassel, Septa

---

### I. Call to Order/Board Comments

Steven Kline called the board meeting to order.

### II. Minutes of February 9, 2022

The board approved the minutes from the February 9, 2022 regular Board meeting.

***Motion:** To approve the February 9, 2022 Board minutes, by Mr. Kline, seconded by Ms. Flaharty, and approved by all present.*

### III. Public Comment

None

### IV. Rockledge Borough Community Planning Assistance Contract - Action

Presenter: Eric Jarrell

Eric Jarrell requested that the board approve the planning assistance contract for Rockledge Borough. The contract will include attending Planning Commission meetings and flexible assistance as needed. The contract term is from January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2024 for a total cost of \$57,834 with a municipal share of \$28,917.

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

### V. North Penn School District Contract – Action

Presenter: Daniel Farina

Daniel Farina requested that the board approve the North Penn School District Contract. The North Penn School District has 17 schools, 13 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 1 high school. North Penn is the largest school district in the county with a current enrollment of approximately 12,600 students. This is the second enrollment study for North Penn. The contract term is from April 1, 2022 through July 15, 2022 for a total cost of \$11,648 with a school district share of \$8,736.

***Motion:** To approve the North Penn School District Contract, by Mr. Blue, seconded by Mr. Tornetta, and approved by all present.*

**VI. Progress Update on Bike Montco / Walk Montco**

Presenter: Matt Edmond, Anne Leavitt-Gruberger

Guests: Sarah Moran, Manager, Office of Mobility Analysis and Design DVRPC; Aaron Frint, Associate Manager, Office of Mobility Analysis and Design, DVRPC

Anne Leavitt-Gruberger and Matt Edmond introduced Sarah Moran and Aaron Frint from the Office of Mobility Analysis and Design at DVRPC. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger provided an overview of Walk Montco and Bike Montco. The Walk Montco Plan adopted in 2016 outlines the county's official pedestrian design standards. The Walk Montco Plan examined four focus areas surrounding an elementary school, a train station, a downtown area and a commercial corridor. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger provided an update on the implementation efforts since the adoption of Walk Montco. She stated that we often collaborate with the HHS Office of Community Information and Education on Safe Routes to School programs with local schools. MCPC conducts a walk audit, which involves observing schools during arrival and dismissal, and making recommendations on how to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety. They are currently working with Roslyn Elementary on a walk audit. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger also spoke about the Bike Montco Plan, adopted in 2018, as a template of where we would like to see bike corridors. The Bike Plan also includes four case studies: bicycling in towns, bicycling to trails, bicycling to transit and biking to school.

Sarah Moran and Aaron Frint spoke about the tools that DVRPC has created to help communities design the best ways to expand walking and bike access. Ms. Moran displayed and spoke about the Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress Tool (LTS) and Connectivity Analysis. LTS is an interactive tool that helps to identify and rank roads where improvements to bicycle facilities would make the greatest local and regional impact. Ms. Moran displayed the online tool, which outlines biker comfort level from lowest stress to high traffic stress. This tool could be used to identify where we could focus on making improvements. Ms. Moran also spoke about the Connectivity Analysis, which highlights where connectivity improvements would make the highest impact locally and regionally. Mr. Frint spoke about an interactive online tool available on the DVRPC website that provides a Sidewalk Gap Analysis. This tool is an inventory of all sidewalks and crosswalks. This gives us a map of where pedestrian trips are and are not feasible. The interactive tool highlights Sidewalk Segment Gaps, Walk Time to Transit, Rail Station Walksheds and Islands of Connectivity. The Islands of Connectivity shows where sidewalk segments could be added to expand an area that a person can walk in a low stress and safe environment.

Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger spoke about a Technical Assistance Pilot that DVRPC recently conducted with Montgomery County municipalities to help communities who wish to improve their pedestrian network. This could improve their standing for competitive grant programs that are available. Mr. Edmond then discussed ongoing efforts of the county and MCPC staff for Bike Montco. He displayed the story map for the Bike Montco Plan and spoke about the planned bicycle network, which we use often for our initiatives. Mr. Edmond also spoke about the Complete Streets Policy for county owned roads as recommended on the Bike Montco Plan. Complete Streets provides the policy for when county owned roads are repaved or bridges replaced. The policy promotes safe access to all users on county owned roads. Mr. Edmond also spoke about the progress in Bike Lanes in Montgomery County. Montgomery County began with 16.5 miles of bike lanes and has grown to 43.25 miles in the last four years. Finally, Mr. Edmond announced an upcoming Planning Smarter event has been scheduled for June at the Hill School in Pottstown. The event will promote local walking and biking.

**VII. Wissahickon Water Quality Improvement Plan revision**

Presenter: Drew Shaw

Drew Shaw presented to the board an update of the Wissahickon Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP). Since 2015, the Planning Commission has been working with representatives from 13 municipalities and 4 wastewater treatment plants to develop a WQIP. The EPA and DEP attributes the Wissahickon's nonattaining status to phosphorus, and has prepared a Draft TMDL or Total Maximum Daily Load for the stream. The TMDL requirements are challenging and cost prohibitive for the individual municipalities. The EPA allows for alternative TMDL plans to be prepared, and a partnership was formed to develop an acceptable alternative to the TMDL, while working with the EPA and DEP that will improve the water quality over time. Mr. Shaw spoke about the partnership, pollutants, stormwater management, the wastewater treatment facilities and the aquatic life. He also spoke in detail about the draft plan analysis and the project recommendations. The WQIP implementation period will entail four 5-year phases that will be completed in 20 years. The implementation will include projects, policies and programs; wastewater treatment plant optimization; four 5yr. phases of assessing and modifying and a long-term modeling program. The next steps are to provide a response to the EPA and DEP and then incorporate their recommendations. The final plan will be presented to the planning commissions and boards of the participating municipalities as well as environmental

stakeholders. The individual municipalities will adopt the plan followed by a formal submittal of the Wissahickon Water Quality Improvement Plan to the regulators for their approval.

### **VIII. Median Housing Price Report**

Presenter: Daniel Farina

Daniel Farina provided an overview of the 2021 Median Housing Price Report for Montgomery County. During 2021, the county had 12,870 market-rate sales of homes with a median sales price of \$370,000. The median sales price increased by \$35,000 from the previous year, which shows a significant demand for housing. The housing report compares the median sales price of new homes and existing homes. The median price for a new home in 2021 was \$529,116, which is over 16% growth from the prior year. This is the first time that new homes are breaking the \$500k medium price. Similarly, existing homes also experienced an increase in median sales price from 2020, by nearly 10%. The report also breaks down these figures by housing types. All three, single-family detached, attached and multifamily home median prices saw an increase during 2021. Single family detached increased by 11.5%; single family attached by 10% and multifamily also rose by 12.4% from the prior year. Mr. Farina displayed a map of Montgomery County with a breakdown by Municipality of the median housing price. The most expensive median priced homes were in Lower Gwynedd, Lower Merion and Worcester. The most affordable housing were in Schwenksville, Norristown and Pottstown. A look at National and Northeast Region data for 2021 shows a median sales price for existing single-family homes was \$353,600 nationwide and \$394,100 in the Northeast Region. This is an increase of 17.9% and 15.3% respectively. In summary, the medium housing price in 2021 increased by 10.4% overall. The number of market-rate sales increased by 8.9%, which is the highest in over a decade. The current market greatly benefits the seller and prevents families from transitioning to home ownership. The board members suggested a press release to highlight the publication of the annual Median Housing Price Report.

### **IX. Montgomery Awards – Call for Nominations**

Presenter: Pattie Guttenplan

Pattie Guttenplan presented an update of the Montgomery Awards Program. She requested that the Planning Commission Board and staff begin to think about projects that would be eligible for a nomination. The program has three awards: The Montgomery award, The Planning Advocate award and the Environmental Stewardship award. The Montgomery Award has six eligibility categories: Land Development, Revitalization, Open Space, Transportation, Environmental and Community.. Ms. Guttenplan provided descriptions and examples for each Montgomery Award category. The Community category is a new one this year to encourage projects that are successful efforts by nonprofit organizations or private and public entities and partnerships and contribute to the well-being and diversity of a community. Projects could include community gardens, affordable housing, and public spaces. The Planning Advocate award is awarded to an individual or organization that has made significant contributions in Planning for Montgomery County. The Environmental Stewardship award is selected by the Conservation district and recognizes projects that improve water and soil quality. The Montgomery Awards committee members are Dulcie Flaharty, Charles Tornetta and Jill Blumhardt. Project ideas can be forwarded to Ms. Guttenplan for follow up and consideration.

### **X. Director's Report**

1. Scott France introduced Anne Nygard who joins the Planning Commission as a Community Planner II. Anne received her undergraduate degree from Tulane University and a master's in City and Regional Planning from Temple University.
2. The Montco 2040 Grant Program closed the application period on March 1. The Planning Commission has received 29 applications with a total of \$4 Million in requests. The grant committee has up to \$2.5 million to award.
3. Montgomery, Berks and Chester Counties have each approved the formation of the Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority. There will be a public hearing in April to create the nine-member board. This is to restore passenger rail from Philadelphia to Reading.

4. Mr. France announced that AARPA is requesting ideas for projects from residents and organizations. The American Rescue Plan Act has \$161M in funding available. The application period is from February 28 to April 30, 2022. The Plan information and application is available on the county website.
5. The Planning Commission has submitted four presentation proposals for the annual APA PA conference. The conference will be in October in Lancaster, PA.
6. The Calendar of Planning Events from March 9, 2022 to April 12, 2022 was distributed to the board prior to the meeting for their review.
7. Anne Leavitt-Gruberger spoke about the county commissioner's interest in providing the counties emergency food provider network with a grant. The grant recipient would receive the funding to purchase and oversee a large-scale capacity warehouse.

*The meeting was adjourned at 11:30.*

---

***The next Board meeting will be on April 13, 2022 at 9:00 AM.***