



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES: Regular Monthly Board Meeting
Wednesday, June 8, 2022
Approved: July 13, 2022

BOARD MEMBERS ATTENDING: Steven Kline, Chair; Dulcie Flaharty, V-Chair; Charles Tornetta; Robert Blue; John Ernst; Jonathan Rinde; Nicole Kline-Elsier

STAFF ATTENDING: Scott France, Matthew Edmond, Eric Jarrell, Anne Leavitt-Gruberger, Matthew Popek, Daniel Farina, Danielle Baer, John Marlatt, Karina Caddick

GUESTS: Jade Utz, Commerce Department; Pete Addalli, IBEW Local 98

I. **Call to Order/Board Comments**

Steven Kline called the board meeting to order.

Dulcie Flaharty referenced a DCNR grant for a Green Lane Park master plan. Ms. Flaharty wondered which consultant was selected to work on the master plan. Eric Jarrell said that he would inquire and advise.

Dulcie Flaharty spoke about an article regarding an open space referendum in Limerick. The Planning Commission does not have a contract with Limerick but Ms. Flaharty suggested that MCPC reached out to discuss our Open Space program.

Steve Kline thanked the Planning Commission staff for organizing a successful Montgomery Awards Tour. The tour group visited projects that have been nominated for a Montgomery Award.

II. **Minutes of May 11, 2022**

The board approved the minutes from the May 11, 2022 regular Board meeting.

***Motion:** To approve the May 11, 2022 Board minutes, by Ms. Flaharty, seconded by Mr. Rinde, and approved by all present.*

III. **Public Comment**

None

IV. **Bridgeport Borough Community Planning Assistance Contract, Action**

Presenter: Eric Jarrell

Eric Jarrell requested that the Board approve the planning assistance contract for Bridgeport Borough. This is a three-year contract renewal for Bridgeport Borough. During the previous contract, Bridgeport adopted an update to their Comprehensive Plan. The current contract will include implementation of the Comprehensive Plan, including zoning and subdivision ordinance updates. Other work will include master parks planning, a downtown parking study and streetscaping work. The contract term is from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2025 for a total cost of \$55,692 with a municipal share of \$27,846.

***Motion:** To approve the Bridgeport Borough Planning Assistance Contract, by Ms. Kline-Elsier seconded by Mr. Ernst and approved by all present.*

V. **Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Awards**

Presenter: Anne-Leavitt-Gruberger

Anne Leavitt-Gruberger presented a summary of the Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Awards. The Implementation Grant Awards program is a competitive process intended to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Montco 2040 Comprehensive Plan. There was \$2.5M available for the 2022 round of awards. Only a municipality can apply for an implementation grant, but they can collaborate with non-profit or private organizations. The grant maximum is \$200,000 with an average award of approximately \$100,000. Between 2016 and 2021, this program received 151 applications and awarded 95 grants for a total of \$10.3M. Ms. Leavitt-Gruberger provided a detailed summary and photos of each project that was awarded grant funding in this year's cycle. For 2022, 29 applications were received that totaled \$4 million in requests. The county commissioners awarded the \$2.5M to 18 grant recipients. The board members discussed requiring a post construction certification for future grant recipients.

VI. TIP Update

Presenter: Matthew Edmond, Matthew Poppek

Matthew Edmond presented a summary of the Transportation Improvement Program for the Fiscal Year 2023 – 2034. The TIP is the region's capital budget for federal and state transportation funds. It is part of the regions planning process and is updated every two years. The TIP is a 12-year capital plan with a 2-year capital budget. The document is a budgeting tool and not a construction timetable, so projects can receive the funding they need as they progress towards construction. Mr. Edmond spoke about major projects built or which have started construction since 2015. They include the Lafayette St. Extension, the Chester Valley Trail, the US 422 Valley Forge, US 202 Dekalb Pike and Markley Street and the 309 Connector Phase 2. He also stated that since 2010 \$1.36 Billion has been invested in Montgomery County. Mr. Edmond spoke about the new Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which will provide big increases in bridges, bike/ped and transit. The region will be receiving over \$20 billion for use on highways and transit during fiscal year 2023. Locally, for Montgomery County, the TIP over the 12 years has included 61 projects totaling \$931.6 million. During the first four years, the TIP has allocated \$375m for Montgomery County. Mr. Edmond spoke about the major projects still included in the TIP which include I-76 ICM, 309 Connector phase 3, work on US 422 around Pottstown, and the Ridge Pike project. The new projects in Montgomery County that are being added to the TIP are 309 Connector phase 4, PA 29 & PA 113 and converting Dekalb Street to a 2-way road. Mr. Edmond also spoke in detail about transit investment to SEPTA and PART. Finally, Mr. Edmond spoke about the future types of projects to look forward to getting into subsequent TIPs. The future will focus on safety, maintenance, and walk and bike improvements.

VII. Housing and Nonresidential Construction Report

Presenter: Daniel Farina

Daniel Farina presented a summary of the 2021 Nonresidential Construction report. The data for this report is derived from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment. The data is measured in square feet and broken down further into the categories of Commercial, Industrial, Institutional, Institutional Aging, Municipal, Office and Recreation. During 2021, there was a total of 2,259,069 square feet of nonresidential construction. This was the largest amount of nonresidential construction since 2016. The Office category accounted for 38% of all construction with 807,827 square feet of development taking place in Conshohocken and Upper Providence alone. Commercial and Institutional also ended strong in 2021 with approximately 500,000 square feet constructed with the majority in Upper Merion, Montgomery, Lower Providence and Lower Merion. Mr. Farina displayed a county map that showed the distribution of construction and highlighted that 76% of all nonresidential construction was infill development. He said that the overall goals from the County's Comprehensive Plan was met with construction within designated growth areas. Looking ahead to 2022 will likely be similar with projects such as the Upper Merion High School, Black Rock Middle School and several logistics centers slated to be completed this year.

Mr. Farina also presented an overview of the 2021 Residential Construction report. The information for this report is also derived from the Montgomery County Board of Assessment. During 2021, there were 2,209 housing units built in Montgomery County. This is a 35% decrease from 2020, which is a return to the ten-year average. Mr. Farina said that this is still well above the low-point following the Great Recession. The report breaks down the data by residential type in the categories of Single-Family Detached, Single-Family Attached, Multifamily and Mobile Home. Multifamily and Single-Family attached accounted for almost 70% of all units built. The multi-family category continues to represent the highest units built with 1,026 units built in 2021. Age restricted represented 26% of all unit built during 2021. Mr. Farina displayed a county map that showed the distribution of residential construction across the county. Mr. Farina stated that development primarily occurred within the designated growth areas of the county, which is consistent with the goals of the comprehensive plan. Mr. Farina anticipates

that residential construction for the current year will be similar to 2021. This is due to a decrease in the existing homes inventory.

VIII. New Hanover Township Planning Assistance Contract Presentation

Presenter: Danielle Baer

Danielle Baer presented an overview of the New Hanover Township planning assistance contract. New Hanover Township is located on the western part of the county and part of the Pottstown Metro Area Regional Planning Commission. Ms. Baer displayed a map of the existing land use, which shows that the township is largely residential and agricultural. Residential makes up 44% of the township and agricultural makes up approximately 33%. A large majority of residential development in New Hanover is single family detached, which is something the township is interested in diversifying. During the previous contract, New Hanover adopted a new comprehensive plan and Village Mixed Use District and did work on updating their subdivision and land development ordinances. The current contract work includes continuing implementation of the comprehensive plan including zoning and SALDO updates. Ms. Baer also provided a detailed update of the Wassmer Tract Passive Recreation Plan. The Wassmer property is 90-acres and was previously preserved by the township for open space. There is a lot of residential development proposed in close proximity to the tract that would benefit from the trails and amenities planned for this site.

IX. Director's Report

1. Scott France introduced Andrew Turner who joins the Planning Commission as a Transportation Planner. Andrew received his master's in Community Planning from the University of Cincinnati. The Planning Commission currently has two open positions, an Environmental Planner and Assistant Section Manager of Design.
2. Mr. France has also requested to add a new Community Planner position to the current staff count. The new planner will assist with the current workload as well as with the addition of a new Planning Assistance Contract.
3. Congratulations are in order for Claire Warner who received an award by GVFTMA for Top TDM Professionals under 40 award.
4. Scott France shared that Matthew Edmond has accepted a position with Septa as Director of Real Estate. Matthew Popek will be the Interim Manager for the Transportation section.
5. The Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority will have their first board on meeting July 6 in Reading. Commissioner Lawrence, Dave Zellers and Scott France will represent Montgomery County on the board.
6. The Planning Smarter event Hot Topics: Big Changes on a Small Scale was held virtually on May 24. The topics discussed were Infill Development, Electric Vehicles Trends & Land Use, and Innovative Ordinance Testing techniques. The next Planning Smarter event will take place on June 16 at the Hill School in Pottstown. The event is called Strategies to Enhance Walking and Bicycling in Your Community.
7. The Calendar of Events from June 8, 2022 to July 12, 2022 was distributed for board review. On June 9, Matt Edmond will be speaking about trends and visions in transportation at MCATC, a township commissioner's event. Then on June 10, Bill Hartman and Matt Edmond will be attending and speaking at the Partnership TMA Greenways in Our Future Event. MCPC staff will gather at Elmwood Park in Norristown for a staff picnic at 12 noon on June 22. Then later on June 22 MCPC will host the Montco 2050 Comprehensive Plan Focus Group on housing. Finally, on June 23 Cheltenham will hold a Comprehensive Plan Public Workshop.
8. Scott France will be presenting on June 10 at the PA Legislative delegation advocating for local transportation funding.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30.

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