



## **Mt. Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3)**

Board of Director's Meeting

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

Virtual Meeting

**Members:** J. Blauser for K. Barnhardt (County), K. Mallatratt (Alsace Twp.), L. Kelleher (Reading), D. Pottiger (Lower Alsace Twp.), M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (Reading), J. Oswald (Lower Alsace Twp); L. Olsen (County)

**Members absent:** B. Petrov (Mt. Penn), C. Hurwitz (Mt. Penn), D. Barth (Alsace Twp)

**Others attending:** Committee representatives

### **CALL TO ORDER & INTRODUCTIONS**

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 4:11 pm and stated that a quorum is present. He noted that Mr. Barnhardt is delayed due to a conflicting obligation. He announced that due to the COVID-19 Declaration of Emergency, the MP3 is meeting virtually with public comment invited in writing via email.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Olsen inquired if Ms. Kelleher or Ms. Blauser received any written public comment. Both replied in the negative.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Olsen asked the members to consider the minutes from the January meeting and the agenda for this meeting. He noted that the March meeting was cancelled due to the pandemic.

**The January minutes and agenda were approved by acclimation with no changes.**

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Ms. Mallatratt, MP3COG Treasurer, called attention to the reports from March and May attached to the agenda showing the following:

- March – no expenses
- March – due payments from 4 of the 5 members
- March calendar sales profit \$809.60
- March bank account balance \$19,530.83

- May payment of PA COG Association Dues \$250 (approved by email Board vote)
- May bank account balance \$19,280.83
- May BCCF balance \$9063.61 (with interest dividend)

**A motion was made by Ms. Kelleher, seconded by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, to approve the Treasurer's Report for March and May and file them for audit. The motion was approved unanimously.**

### **MP3 COG ACTION ITEMS**

#### **1. BAMBA Upgrade to Silver Rating**

Ms. Kelleher reported that the application review process is incomplete. She opined that the delay may be related to the pandemic.

#### **2. Payment of Bills**

Ms. Mallatratt stated that there are no additional bills requiring Board approval.

#### **3. Update on the Withdrawal of Mt Penn**

Ms. Blauser reported that Mr. Barnhardt and Mr. Olsen were to attend the Mt. Penn Borough Council meeting to address this issue; however, doing that was not possible due to the pandemic. Other arrangements will be made.

#### **4. Update on Pagoda Partying**

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz described the decade long problems created by the activities at the Pagoda during the spring, summer and fall months that cause quality of life problems for Reading and Lower Alsace residents. She noted that the current pandemic has not lessened the problems. She stated that automobile racing occurs as well and over the past weekend there seemed to be some type of bicycling event that should have had a special event permit from the City.

Ms. Mallatratt noted that the illegal dumping affects all three partner municipalities. She added that Lower Alsace and Alsace Townships do not have the resources to clear the debris in a timely fashion. Mr. Pottiger stated that Mr. Harrity from Reading Public Works has been a great resource to all municipalities by addressing dumping and graffiti issues, even when the problem is not within Reading's boundaries.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz described the various groups that regularly park and visit at the Pagoda (good and bad) and she noted that there is a variety of litter and dumping from these crowds at the Pagoda as well. She also described the various problems associated with unpermitted activities on the Mt. Penn Trails.

Ms. Showers, from County Planning, joined at the meeting.

The group had a lengthy discussion about the various problems that exist across Skyline Drive and the need for multi-municipal solutions.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

*Note: reports from the committees are included with the March 27<sup>th</sup> agenda.*

### **1. Finance & Capital**

No report; currently working with Public Safety & Environmental on signage and a trail assessment study. County Planning will submit a DCNR grant application to assist with the funding for the trail assessment.

In response to a question about the assignment of an annual \$20K contribution from the City and the County for capital improvements at the Preserve area, Ms. Kelleher reported that the funding was included in both budgets. Projects can be submitted to the City/County for consideration.

### **2. Marketing & Promotions**

Ms. Burkovich stated 170 calendars are available at the County and 140 are available at other locations. She reported that the Mt. Penn Clean-up and geocaching event planned for the end of March was postponed due to the pandemic. Planning for Music on the Mountain is also on hold.

Mr. Olsen stated that Mr. Kline recently observed that there are large flat areas around the Pagoda that could be cleared and used for amphitheater-style concerts.

Ms. Burkovich stated that the Committee has started working on a 2021 calendar and a brochure (digital and hard copy).

Ms. Burkovich stated that the Committee has started working on a website migration to move it away from the County's website and onto an independent web server. She stated that the domain name – [www.mtpennpreserve.org](http://www.mtpennpreserve.org) – is currently owned by Mr. Stefanik, formerly employed by R-BAR. Mr. Stefanik is willing to transfer ownership of the domain name at no cost to the MP3.

Ms. Blausner left the meeting at this time.

In response to a question, Ms. Burkovich stated that she has worked successfully with SiteGround and GoDaddy sites. She expressed the belief that SiteGround and GoDaddy are the most economical choices and both are WordPress sites. She reviewed the information in the Marketing Report attached to the agenda. In summary:

#### **Domain Name ([www.mtpennpreserve.org](http://www.mtpennpreserve.org))**

- Currently owned by Wes Stefanick via GoDaddy
- Expiration of domain ownership: May 4, 2021
- Free transfer within GoDaddy, then \$20-\$30 or more each year for renewal

- SiteGround Domain \$17.95 to transfer from GoDaddy to SiteGround, plus 1 year FREE renewal and 1 year of free domain privacy. Cost of a domain will be \$17.95 each year from that point forward.

**After discussion, Ms. Mallatratt moved, seconded by Ms. Kelleher, to authorize the transfer of the domain name, [www.mtpennpreserve.org](http://www.mtpennpreserve.org), from Mr. Stefanik and to authorize the Marketing Committee to move. The motion was approved unanimously.**

The decision regarding migrating new website from County Planning to a new provider (GoDaddy or SiteGround) will be discussed and voted on at the July meeting.

### **3. Public Safety Committee**

Ms. Kelleher stated that the Public Safety Committee has provided a progress report showing their work primarily on the problems at the Pagoda, copied in below.

#### **Increase Improved Perception of Safety**

- Emergency Call Stations – more information is needed on the number of drug arrests made on Skyline Dr. to determine if drug forfeiture money from the DA can be used for this – **insufficient arrests made to allow use of drug forfeiture money at the Pagoda/Tower areas**
- More Security Cameras at Pagoda/Fire Tower – **internet connection required**
- Coordinated park regs City/County; City Park Code amended to mirror County hours of operation (no need for update to regulations) - **Completed**
- Coordinated signage park hours & park regs - **Completed**

#### **Increased & Coordinated Patrol & Enforcement**

- Work with the County to get more Park Rangers to patrol – **not feasible due to manpower and funding**
- Investigate cost of Act 173 Certification for Park Rangers – **not feasible due to cost**
- Ask Lower Alsace & Reading to authorize Reading Police & Central Berks to perform coordinated enforcement over municipal boundaries – **Mutual Aide Agreement executed 2019**
- Ask the County, Reading, Lower Alsace & Alsace to adopt the same regulations that apply to the Preserve area re Park regs, hunting regs, firearms, no ATVs, etc. – **Completed re Reading/Berks County; note Alsace and Lower Alsace do not own park land in either township**
- Create map defining municipal boundaries – **Completed**
- Central Berks & Reading Police provided with access to live stream cameras at the Pagoda allowing remote ability to check on activity – **Completed**

#### **Improved Traffic Controls**

- Closing off Skyline Drive List Rd. to Pagoda – We need to work on hours and physical barrier installation – who will need access fire, radio phone and cable services – **not feasible**
- Consider removing island at Pagoda to control flow of traffic and create ability to close off Pagoda Parking during “closed” hours – **not feasible**
- Shift southbound lane of traffic to the eastern side of the rock island at the Pagoda; allowing the closure of the parking area during non-operational hours – **Traffic study**

**required to move the traffic lane and berm 1-2 feet to the east; PW Dir. R. Johnson agreed to perform study in 2020**

#### **Coordinated Marketing & Permitting**

Review Reading, Berks, Alsace & Lower Alsace event permitting and create one application that will be reviewed by all five municipalities during the approval process – **Completed**

- Add permit fee that will come back to the Preserve & support security, patrols, etc.
- Move races requiring closure of Skyline to road behind the Fire Tower – seek funding for repaving of the road – **Worked with Muhlenberg Police Department to relocate race**

#### **Trail Maintenance & Management**

- Continue to assess the trail system and make recommendations to eliminate illegally created trails and create an improved trail management process – **requires DCNR Grant for a study similar to that prepared for Antietam trail system; submission by County Planning**
- Recommend coordinated signage across the Preserve area, marking various types of trails – **Grant application following completion of study listed above**
- Create permit for trail use & modification

Ms. Kelleher noted that the Committee includes representatives from all three partner municipalities, Police (City and Central Berks) and City Public Works and she noted their success working together to get multiple issues resolved.

Ms. Kelleher reminded the group that due to the transition in administrations, the Public Works recommendation for a traffic study to determine the feasibility of relocating the southbound traffic from the Pagoda parking lot to the eastern side of the rock island was delayed until the new administration was installed. She noted that shifting the southbound lane of traffic will enable the closure of the parking lot when the park is closed - **§ 396-304. Time of use. A. Parks are open 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. prevailing time from October 1 through April 30 and 7:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. prevailing time from May 1 through September 30, except with a permit.**

#### **4. Environmental Committee**

Mr. Brophy stated that there was a Rad Sport event at the Pagoda area over the past weekend. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that due to the number of participants, a permit should have been obtained. Mr. Pottiger agreed, noting that when permits are issued the event information is shared with the partner municipalities.

Mr. Brophy agreed with the need for a study of the Mt. Penn Trail system, similar to that provided for the Antietam trails. He stated that this study will identify trails that should be eliminated, improved, are sustainable, etc. He suggested creating a simplified trail map for those who do not wish to use the Fork app while hiking or biking. He described his vision for a new trail that would link the downtown with the Pagoda, as the White Trail links with Antietam.

Ms. Burkovich stated that all trails in the Antietam area have been GPS'd and mapped. She stated that any maps of the trails on Mt. Penn should be provided to County DES, as DES may need to assist someone who is injured or lost on the trails.

**OTHER MATTERS**

Mr. Olsen suggested scheduling a retreat for the fall to discuss 2021 planning and fundraising.

**Ms. Kelleher moved, seconded by Ms. Mallatratt to adjourn the meeting at approximately 5:40 pm.**

The next regular meeting of the MP3 COG will be on July 22, 2020 via Zoom at 4 pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary*