



Mt. Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3)

Board of Director's Meeting

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

Members: K. Mallatratt (Alsace Twp.), L. Kelleher (Reading), L. Olsen (County), D. Pottiger (Lower Alsace Twp.), J. Moore (Alsace Twp.),

Members absent: B. Petrov (Mt. Penn), T. Goodman (Mt. Penn), J. Oswald (Lower Alsace Twp.), K. Barnhardt (County), M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (Reading)

Others attending: L. Lloyd, J. Motze, H. Adams, C. Wegener, D. Grove – in person and J. Frank and L. Kissinger virtually

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:02 pm. He noted that Mr. Barnhardt was detained at work; however, a quorum is present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for public comment. No one present stepped forward to speak and the public comment period was closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES & AGENDA

Mr. Olsen asked the members to consider the minutes from the January meeting and the agenda for this meeting. No modifications were made to the minutes. The minutes were approved by acclamation.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Mallatratt, MP3 COG Treasurer, stated that the MP3 bank account has a balance of \$47,536.83 after the deposit of \$11,125 (Dues and ticket sales) and expenses of \$3856.90 for expenses associated with the concert at the Liederkrantz. She stated that the balance in the BCCF account is \$9,104 after the receipt of \$17.99 in interest.

The Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously on motion of Mr. Moore and a second by Mr. Pottiger.

Ms. Kelleher moved, seconded by Mr. Moore, to ratify the payment of \$150 to Signs and More for the new MP3 banner. The motion was approved unanimously.

MP3 COG REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Modification of MP3 Agreement re Membership Amendment via Resolution to allow elected officials to select a non-elected representative and replacing “executive committee” to “board”. Reading and Berks have adopted modification

Mr. Olsen explained that this modification will allow Mr. Barnhardt to remain on the MP3 while he serves as the County COO.

Ms. Kelleher noted that in general, this modification provides the elected officials from the five partner municipalities with the option to have a non-elected official or citizen replace their elected official representative on the MP3 board. She explained that the modification can be made by resolution, due to a change in the State COG legislation which was identified by City Council’s solicitor. Mr. Moore and Mr. Pottiger stated that Lower Alsace and Alsace Townships will be moving the modification forward for consideration at an upcoming meeting.

B. Alteration of Mt. Penn Trails & Other Complaints

Mr. Olsen stated that several complaints have come through about improper work occurring on some trails on the Mt. Penn tract, along with trash dumping and vandalism.

Ms. Kelleher explained that the complaints relate to the work being done to rectify the illegal and unsafe changes made to the Skyline Trail (formerly the A Line Trail). The work is being performed by a contractor retained and paid for by BAMBA, as permitted by the Arborist and the Acting Public Works Director. She noted that two mountain bikers were severely injured after a rogue group made the improper and unpermitted changes to the Skyline Trail.

Ms. Kelleher noted the positive and cooperative relationship between the City and BAMBA and how the City depends on BAMBA to be a partner and provide information about the issues that occur or are observed on Mt. Penn.

Ms. Kelleher added that there are also repeated complaints about the constant trash dumping on the mountain and stolen and damaged signage. She stated that the City received a bid from a contractor to remove the trash from the entire expanse of Mt. Penn at approximately \$94K which is not an option. She thanked Mr. Frank and the Environmental Committee for organizing all the clean-ups.

Ms. Kelleher stated that several years ago BAMBA applied to IMBA for a Silver rating designation. Currently the trails have an IMBA Bronze designation. Note these trails are the only trails within Pennsylvania with an IMBA rating. The upgrade to Silver was denied by IMBA due to the lack of appropriate trail signage. BAMBA has been working with the County DES on the signage and approximately 1/3 of the signs installed were either damaged or removed by some group or individual.

Mr. Frank stated that he visited Mt. Penn this afternoon and although there was just a clean-up event two weeks ago, there is already a significant amount of trash on site. He noted that although regular volunteer clean-ups are organized the results are always short lived.

Mr. Lloyd expressed the belief that dumping, vandalism and other bad behavior will continue on Mt. Penn unless the Drive is closed to all traffic apart from walkers, bikers and scheduled bus tours, along with public safety access.

Mr. Kissinger stated that Public Works is exploring options to thwart the ability of the public to throw debris over the stone walls such as the installation of clear Plexiglass mounted on concrete blocks, which has been used in similar areas in other municipalities. When questioned about the height of the Plexiglass, Mr. Kissinger stated that the size has not yet been determined.

Mr. Olsen questioned the next steps and Mr. Kissinger replied that he will ask Natural Lands to include recommendations in their study.

Mr. Lloyd noted that all approaches and suggestions made to cure this problem will continually cost money. He again suggested considering the closure of Skyline Dr. to vehicles apart from scheduled bus tours and public safety vehicles.

C. Update on December 7th Board Retreat

Mr. Olsen stated that he, Mr. Barnhardt, Ms. Mallatratt, Ms. Kelleher, and Ms. Adams attended the retreat and the group had a productive, high altitude discussion of various issues such as the permanent closure of both the Pagoda and Tower as the methods of construction used when they were built make them non-code compliant for today's safety standards such as having two ways of egress, lack of ADA access, etc.

Mr. Olsen stated that the group decided that focus should be on events to promote the Preserve such as concerts, hiking, tours and other nature and biking related events organized with Berks Nature, the Conservancy, BAMBA and others. He noted the number of venues that exist across the Preserve for events. He stated that the group came away with the tagline "Activities, Awareness and Advocacy".

Ms. Adams noted the success of the two concerts that were held – one to kick off the Blues Fest and the second to kick off the Jazz Fest. She suggested identifying ways to inform those who attend about the MP3 and its mission at events.

C. Update on RFPs for

- **Coordinated Approach to Dumping – no responses submitted**
- **Security Cameras draft started**

Covered under Item A above.

D. Update Meeting with Preserve Partners - framework

Mr. Olsen and Ms. Kelleher noted that there should be a meeting with Pagoda Skyline and the Pagoda Foundation to develop an agreement between the entities or a merger of the entities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS – submission in written form only

- Finance & Capital – None
- Promotions & Marketing – Attached to the agenda
- Public Safety & Public Services – Attached to the agenda
- Environmental & Land Use Committees – Attached to the agenda

WRITTEN REPORTS FROM PRESERVE STAKEHOLDERS

None received.

Other Business

Mr. Kissinger stated that the request to build a pavilion on the Tower property was denied by the City.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:55 pm on motion of Ms. Mallatratt and Mr. Moore, respectively.

The next regular meeting of the MP3 COG will be held at City Hall in Council Chambers on May 24, 2023 at 6 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary

Action Items:

1. Update from Stewardship Plan Work Group at May meeting
2. Consider closure of Skyline Drive during times when the park is closed
- 3.