

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
SOUTH CAMPUS
400 E. WYOMISSING AVE., SUITE D, BOX 2
MOHNTON, PA 19540

December 10, 2025

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair, Glenn R. Knoblauch called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, in person in the 1st floor conference room at South Campus.

2. ROLL CALL

The following members were present:

Glenn R. Knoblauch, Chair
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB, Secretary
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CECd
Jodi Gauker
Sarah Phillips
David Mattes
Kevin Lerch
Gavin Milligan

Also Attending:

Ashley Showers, Executive Director
David Peris, Berks County Assistant Solicitor
Shailyn Hernandez, Office Support V
Matthew McGough, Transportation Planner III
Michelle Franklin, Planner III
Taylor Lawrence, Planner III
Rick Royer, Design Planner I
Devon Hain, Planner II
Laura Mursch Hosie, Intergovernmental Planner III
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Alan Piper, Transportation Planner III
Amanda Timochenko, Transportation Planner II
Shanice Ellison, Planner I
Thiago Correa de Almeida, Planner II
Mark Mohn, Gov't Affairs Director, Reading-Berks Association of REALTORS®
Jeremy Zaborowski, Director of Industrial Development Authority
Debra Millman, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance
Chris Williams, Barry Isett & Associates
Dustin Rohrbach, Barry Isett & Associates
Michael Angelina, East Penn Manufacturing
Kerry Good, Lyons Borough Engineer, Entech Engineering
Kim Fies, Director of Berks County Department of Agriculture
Amanda Burkard-Sell, Assistant Director of Berks County Department of Agriculture

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. REPORTS OF STAFF

A. Executive Director's Report

a. **Subdivision & Land Development Plan Approval Powers for Lenhartsville & Lyons Boroughs Memorandum**

Executive Director Ashley Showers began her report by announcing Vice Chair, Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez's term expiration and her final goodbyes to everyone. Lisa shared with Ashley Showers the heartfelt decision not to continue her time with the board due to personal reasons and she wishes everyone good wishes. Mrs. Showers continued her report by updating on the status of the Assistant Director job posting and on the candidates that have currently applied. The goal is to have the position filled by February 1st. She went on to update on the comprehensive plan outreach events for the last month and the results of the survey responses we have for the comprehensive plan. Mrs. Showers also reminded everyone that the January meeting will be held on the 21st, not the usual second Wednesday of the month due to her being on leave. During that meeting there will be a presentation done by Amber Columbo on Workforce Development Multi-Year Plan and Thomas P. Miller & Associates Study. Executive Director Ashley Showers ended her report by stating that Chair, Glenn Knoblauch, will be appointing the nominating committee for the reorganization and board positions for January's meeting. The formal election of officers will occur on January 21st board meeting.

B. Elect Nominating Committee

Chair Glenn Knoblauch appointed Tom McKeon, David Mattes, and Kevin Lerch as the nominating committee to recommend new officers for the board positions.

C. Staff Reports – Michelle Franklin

a. **East Penn Mfg. Co. – Admin 3 Building Project – Lyons Borough**

Michelle Franklin began her report by introducing gentlemen's from Entech, East Penn, and Lyons Borough engineer. East Penn will be building a new administrative office building located in Lyons Borough. Since it falls within the borough the Berks County Planning Commission has the responsibility to review and approve the plan. Michelle Franklin went on to explain that this presentation is more for background information since the plan has not been submitted yet, so no formal action needs to be taken at this time.

Mr. Michael Angelina from East Penn then continued the presentation on the Admin 3 Building Project. He started his presentation by giving some background information on what the need of the new administrative building. There is much growth occurring at East Penn and they have outgrown the 2 administrative buildings they have. The proposal plan is to have this new administrative building which will house the new hire onboarding, training, interviews, medical assessments, and more administrative staff.

A question was asked about how many people will be occupying that building. Michael Angelina stated that it would not be new employees, more of relocating existing employees. It will be about 97 employees in the new building.

Mr. Chris Williams from Barry Isett & Associates continued the presentation by presenting the plans for the new building and diving deeper into the details of the plan. Mr. Williams stated that they are currently

waiting on PennDOT's comments regarding the roads, parking, and traffic impacts. The zoning is residential/commercial, and the parking requires 412 parking spaces. They are proposing 510 parking spaces due to their need for visitor parking and employee parking. Mr. Williams continued to go over the details and background information of the proposed plan.

A discussion ensued about the time frame of the submittal of the plan and location of the site. Mr. Williams stated that they are looking to submit after the new year in January and the site is located entirely in Lyons Borough.

Mr. Dustin Ruhrbach gave more insight into the architectural side of the plan. He stated that scheduled wise they are still on the design phase. The building's primary function will be administrative duties, and it will accommodate a conference room as well.

A discussion ensued about the building being a 2-story building and the impact of traffic coming in and out of the site; since this will be the one stop shop for new hires and it raises the concern of safety if they must cross the highway. Mr. Williams stated that new hires will park in parking spots marked on the north side of the building. It wouldn't require them to cross from one side of the highway to the other. Comments were made on the positive outlook locals have on this plan since new hires will sometimes show up at their homes, thinking it is there that they are going to have training. Another comment was made about adding a walkability aspect to the plan for pedestrians to be able to walk from building to the next, especially since a main road must be crossed. Comments were made on stormwater management and if testing were done by Lyons Borough engineer, Kerry Good.

A question was asked by Kerry Good on how the fees work and payment is made to the engineer. Glenn Knoblauch and Michelle Franklin stated that they will get back to him on details of that. Comments were made on the Berks County Planning Commission having representation when the plan is presented to Lyons Borough so that the Berks Planning Commission board members can receive feedback from Lyons Borough officials.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. November 12, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- B. Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary
- C. Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity

MOTION: David Mattes made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Kevin Lerch and passed unanimously.

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS' REPORTS

A. Kim Fies & Amanda Burkard-Sell – Growing Berks

Executive Director of Agricultural, Kim Fies and Deputy Director, Amanda Burkard-Sell began their presentation by giving background on who they are and what does the Berks County Department of Agriculture (Ag) does. The department of Ag was established in 2015 to serve Berks County residents with a team of eight staff members. The Department of Ag promotes agriculture in Berks County by preserving farmland, invigorating agricultural economic development, and connecting our community to agricultural resources. Kim Fies went over some agricultural facts, data in Berks County, and their overall goals and focus areas with Growing Berks. One of the main goals for the Department of Ag is to educate the public and expand the knowledge of agricultural.

Amanda Burkard-Sell then went on to speak about the farmland preservation ACE Program. This program has been the department's largest area of focus since currently Berks County has over 80,000 acres of preserved land and a leader in the nation. The ACE program is a voluntary process to legally record easements that restrict a property to agricultural use. It is perpetual and it cannot be removed. Easements are purchased using state, county, federal funds, and landowner donations. There is a process to get into this program, and it is subject to approval. To obtain approval the landowner files an application, meets all the minimum criteria, and then applications are scored, ranked, and selected. The process takes 1-2 years and is then inspected at least biennially. The Department of Ag then works with the Berks County Planning Commission to rank the applications and map the approved easements as preserved farmland.

Kim Fies and Amanda Burkard-Sell went on to speak on the different criteria that go into the ACE ranking; the ranking consists of 40% - Soils, 30% - cluster potential, 20% - farmland potential, and 10% - development potential. They continued to expand on the ACE program by going over restrictions, benefits to farm owners, benefits to the community, and preservation statistics. Executive Director Kim Fies ended her report by announcing some events and annual programs the department does to address some of the weaknesses that came out of doing Growing Berks. One of the main weaknesses that was uncovered was the hundreds of different definitions for Ag that exist in local ordinances. Going forward the Department of Ag will be coordinating with the Planning Commission to create a definition for Ag that can help municipalities with their ordinances and regulate framework and enforcement. It will be a coordination to help make connections with municipalities through the County Comprehensive Plan.

Discussion ensued on the different types of products that are allowed to be grown on farms according to federal, state, and local laws. Comments were also made on the repercussions that exist when an eased farmland in the program falls into noncompliance, size restrictions, and how often is a property is ranked or re-ranked. Discussion ensued on the increase in poultry farming over the past years and the impact on stormwater management.

6. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Kevin Lerch made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:28p.m. The motion was seconded by Glenn Knoblauch.



Glenn R. Knoblauch, Chair



Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB, Secretary