



Mt. Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3)

Board of Director's Meeting

Wednesday, September 27, 2023

Members: –K. Barnhardt (County) – virtually and J. Moore (Alsace Twp), L. Kelleher (Reading), L. Olsen (County), M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (Reading), J. Oswald (Lower Alsace Twp.), K. Mallatratt (Alsace Twp.), D. Pottiger (Lower Alsace Twp.) – in person

Members absent: B. Petrov (Mt. Penn), T. Goodman (Mt. Penn),

Others attending: L Kissinger – virtually and R. Rock – in person

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Olsen called the meeting to order at 6:04 pm. He noted that a quorum is present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Olsen opened the floor for public comment.

Mike Stubner expressed the belief that the Deer Management program at the County owned Antietam property and the City owned area of Mt. Penn is not beneficial. He questioned the amount of taxpayer funding spent on this activity. He stated that hunting is illegal on these properties and that the Deer Management hunting should be stopped.

Arthur Hahn agreed and questioned why this Deer Management program was started as he rarely sees any deer when walking his dog from his home located on the preserve. He questioned the safety of the archery program, noting that a misfire could easily occur and injure someone. He questioned the need to have 50 hunters over a 5-month period, six times per week. He questioned the cost and if the County has insurance covering this program.

Ms. Kelleher explained that the County has been using the USDA Deer Management program for several years, as it was one of the recommendations in their Natural Resources Stewardship Plan. The City started partnering with the County last year. There is a charge to participate. She stated that the program works to reduce the deer population, reduce car accidents and protect the flora and fauna in these park areas.

Mr. Hahn questioned the number of accidents caused by deer. Mr. Oswald stated that deer hits are usually not reported.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed that the overpopulation of deer damages the ecosystem on the mountain.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES & AGENDA

Mr. Olsen asked the members to consider the minutes from the July 26th meeting, the Special Meeting held on August 22nd and the agenda for this meeting. Mr. Pottiger requested a change to the Special Meeting minutes via email. The minutes and agenda were approved by acclamation with the modification requested by Mr. Pottiger.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ms. Mallatratt presented the Treasurer's Report - the MP3 bank account has a balance of \$49,687.07 which matches the July balance as there was no activity in the account.

Ms. Kelleher moved, seconded by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Mallatratt stated that at the end of the year she will transition off the Alsace Township Supervisor's Board, but that she intends to remain on the MP3 board representing Alsace Township. She added that she will also transition off as Treasurer and Mr. Moore offered to take on that role.

Mr. Olsen noted the receipt of a letter from the Reading Music Foundation seeking a \$400 donation from the MP3 to assist with the costs associated with the concert to benefit the Antietam School District.

Ms. Mallatratt expressed the belief that the MP3 can make that contribution and that the contribution is an appropriate expense for the MP3.

Mr. Moore moved, seconded by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, to make a \$400 contribution to assist the Antietam School District with the costs associated with the benefit concert organized to provide flood repairs. The motion was approved unanimously.

MP3 COG REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS

A. Modification of MP3 Agreement – Lower Alsace submitted the executed agreement modification.

B. Natural Lands Stewardship Plan and Trails Feasibility Study

Mr. Kissinger stated that the site visits continue and are going well, noting that weather conditions required some schedule modifications. **The required public hearing is Tuesday, December 5th at 6 pm in Council Chambers, City Hall with a virtual option.**

C. Closure of Skyline – Duryea Dr to List Road

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the study to make the exterior repairs to the Pagoda area has been completed and when construction begins Skyline Drive will need to be closed from List Road to the Pagoda.

Ms. Kelleher noted that in addition to the repair of the Pagoda, the City also proposed a guardrail project to hinder dumping and gating Skyline at List Road and Tank Road.

Guardrails are proposed to separate the bike/pedestrian lanes from the lanes of traffic. The guardrails will also enclose the overlooks. This will prevent vehicles from approaching the walls and dumping debris into the forest and will also protect the walls from vehicular damage. Alternative parking areas will be provided.

Mr. Oswald expressed the belief that this will only relocate the illegal dumping. He noted that adding guardrails could impede the Hillclimb races. He expressed the belief that the City is taking the wrong approach. The right approach is to have the police apply strict law enforcement. He also suggested having the Parking Authority ticket illegally parked vehicles. He expressed the belief that that type of education will stop the bad behavior.

Regarding the Hillclimb races, Ms. Kelleher stated that Mr. Anspach, the City Capital Project manager, had some conversations with Mr. Rock and Mr. Rock will be included on the team that works with the engineers to design the project so issues that could interfere with the race can be addressed.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that adding the guardrails will enclose the lanes of traffic which should calm speeding. She added that the guardrails will also protect the stone walls from vehicular accidents. She expressed hope that making these improvements will create a more park-like atmosphere and allow a reset for the area.

Mr. Oswald opined that the dumping in the List Road Overlook area is worse than the dumping in City areas. Ms. Kelleher called the board's attention to the photos included with the environmental report from Mr. Frank depicting the trash and large, bulky items removed from the Pagoda area.

Mr. Kissinger stated that the dumping in the Reading area is just as bad as it is in the Lower Alsace area. He stated that he and Public Works crews regularly cleanup dumped debris, sometimes working with Lower Alsace staff. He expressed the belief that the guardrails will make it very difficult to dump large and heavy items. He added that the guardrails will also block vehicular access into the lookout areas.

Mr. Oswald stated that he agrees with closing off the lookouts and disagrees with the guardrails separating the driving lane from the bike lane, as he believes that law enforcement can resolve those issues.

D. Installation of EV Stations

Ms. Kelleher stated that the City requested a support letter to accompany a grant application for EV stations. She stated that the board wanted additional information on where the stations would be located on the preserve. She offered to follow-up with the Ms. Ayers-Fisher

E. Update Meeting with Preserve Partners - framework

No update.

F. Events

- **COG Events**

Mr. Olsen stated that the following events are planned for the upcoming year:

- Blues Fest @ the Liederkrantz in coordination w/ Berks Arts in the fall of 2023
- Jazz event @ Liederkrantz in coordination w/ Berks Arts in March 2024
- Bluegrass event @ Fire Tower – summer 2024
- Salsa event @ the City Park Band Shell - summer 2024
- Blues event @ Liederkrantz – fall 2024

Mr. Olsen stated that the MP3 received a grant of \$2,500 from the Reading Music Foundation to assist with event costs. He stated that the Blues Fest concert will be on November 15th at the Liederkrantz. With sold out seating of 120, the concert should yield \$3,000-\$3,400 in profit.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the repair work at the Pagoda will require the closure of Skyline at List Road, so the concert at the Fire Tower may need to be relocated.

Mr. Rock stated that he and Mr. Anspach discussed that issue with him regarding the two Hillclimb races and Mr. Anspach explained that the dates for annual events on Mt. Penn will be publicized with the bid so the contractor is aware that accommodations may be required so the events can be held.

COMMITTEE REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS – submission in written form only

- Finance & Capital
- Promotions & Marketing - attached to the agenda
- Public Safety & Public Services
- Environmental & Land Use Committees – attached to the agenda

WRITTEN REPORTS FROM PRESERVE STAKEHOLDERS

None received.

Other Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 29th at 6 pm at the Alsace Township Building.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 pm on motion of Ms. Mallatratt and Mr. Pottiger, respectively.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary

Action Items:

1. Linda – follow-up with Sustainability Mgr re EV Stations
2. City – Traffic Study on the closure of Skyline Dr.
3. Repairs to Pagoda