

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
BERKS COUNTY SERVICES CENTER
633 COURT STREET, 14TH FLOOR.
READING, PA 19601-4309

January 8, 2025

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair, Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, January 8, 2025, in person at the Berks County Planning Commission's Library Conference Room.

The following members were present:

Glenn R. Knoblauch, Chair, *via telephone*
Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez, Vice Chair
Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB, Secretary
Jodi L. Gauker, *via telephone*
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CECd
David Mattes
Kevin Lerch
Sarah Phillips

Also Attending:

David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director
David Peris, Berks County Assistant Solicitor
Ashley Showers, Assistant Director
Matthew McGough, Transportation Planner III
Alan Piper, Transportation Planner III
Michelle Franklin, Planner III
Thiago Correa de Almeida, Planner II
Devon Hain, Transportation Planner II
Taylor Lawrence, Planner III
Michael Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler
Laura Mursch, Intergovernmental Planner III
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Rick Royer, Design Planner I
Amanda Timochenko, Planner II
Jaime Perez, Deputy Director of Berks County Redevelopment Authority
Jeremy Zaborowski, Director of Industrial Development Authority
Amanda Burkard-Sell, Deputy Director, Berks County Department of Agriculture
Jeff Fiant, President, Berks County Association of Township Officials
Rodney S. Ridley., Ph.D., VP of Research, Alvernia University

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

3. BOARD REORGANIZATION

The board members went over the new board organization announcing Glenn R. Knoblauch as Chair, Lisa-Weaver-Gonzalez as Vice-Chair, and Lee C. Olsen as Secretary.

MOTION: Dave Mattes made a motion to approve the board reorganization. The motion was seconded by Kevin Lerch and passed unanimously.

3. REPORTS OF STAFF

A. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Hunter began his report by introducing some attendees and congratulating Glenn R. Knoblauch for his position as Chair. Mr. Hunter went on to share upcoming meetings that everyone is welcomed to attend such as the Smart Growth Alliance Meeting on January 22nd at 2pm, Commissioners Budget Operations Meeting on January 28th at 9:30am when Pam Menet will present the Department of Agriculture's Growing Berks Presentation, and finally the SRPRA Meetings that are held virtually every 4th Monday afternoon at 3pm. SRPRA is waiting to incorporate step II of the Corridor Identification Program. Mr. Hunter announced that as part of the engagement section of the County Comprehensive Plan Update, Fleetwood High School students will be joining a Planning Commission meeting in the future. Mr. Hunter reported on the year ahead with Joint Comprehensive Plans and the direction of this year's plans. Lastly, Mr. Hunter ended his report by congratulating Dave Mattes for winning RBAR Award as Realtor of the Year.

B. Staff Reports and Recommendations

a. **Michelle Franklin – Broadcast District – Spring Township**

The proposed plan was submitted as a preliminary plan for review. The site is located along the northeast side of the Paper Mill Road (S.R.3021) and Broadcasting Road intersection. The proposal is for a 10-lot mixed use subdivision and land development with 782 residential units and 12 commercial buildings with public water and sewer service and associated site improvements. The site is in a Designated Growth area and therefore is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update.

Discussion ensued on the specifications of the proposal and the impact on traffic in the area since it is already a heavy traffic intersection. There were also comments made on the sizes of the lots and properties. The number of townhomes compared to the single-family homes being largely different and the walkability the site in relation to the surrounding stores and recreation.

A comment was made by Jeremy Zaborowski, who is part of Spring Township Planning Commission, on the context and comments the municipality has on the plan. He commented on the walkability being taken into consideration and it was concluded that walkability along Broadcasting Rd is limited. He also mentioned the research conducted by the Spring Township's Planning Commission members and on changes they have suggested and want made on the plan.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. December 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- B. Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary
- C. Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity

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

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. Rodney S. Ridley, Sr., Ph.D. – Jumpstart Program

Rodney S. Ridley, Sr. began his presentation by giving an overview of what is the Jumpstart Program and how it came about in Reading, Pennsylvania specifically under the purview of O’Pake Institute at Alvernia University. O’Pake Institute was built in March of 2020, and it currently consists of over 1,500 graduates and more enrolled students. The Jumpstart Program is about being a driving force for community development utilizing students to help create change and be a learning program to the students as well. Mr. Ridley, Sr. went on to share the future growth and impact the program can have on the community and economic development in the City of Reading.

Discussion ensued on the program and how it can be used to help the blighted property situation in the City of Reading. Comments were made on the City of Reading’s Blighted Property Review Board that was conducted years back and how this program can assist in making strides towards fixing the rise in blighted properties.

B. Jeff Fiant – Updated BCPC Solar Advice

Jeff Fiant started his presentation by giving a background of his career and decisions that he has made to lead him to where he is now, a building code official. Mr. Fiant went on to discuss his comments about BCPC Utility Solar Advice and how it has a huge opportunity to help the municipalities in managing solar projects. Mr. Fiant shared some of the projects he has been involved in like the utility scale solar project in Richmond Township. He stated the problems that have arisen from the solar panels installed like land and stormwater issues. Another solar project he is currently working on is a project that proposes to put a utility scale solar panels on top of warehouse roofs. This is something that is welcomed due to its limited effects on to the land, minimizing any stormwater issues. This municipality is working on creating a new ordinance and some zoning changes to get this project going. Mr. Fiant went on to state that he really wants to see changes to come about when it comes to utility scale solar projects and it should be a mission to educate the public, municipalities, and the County so we are all on the same page on utility scale solar projects.

Discussion ensued on the new proposal about having utility solar panels on warehouse project and how well can an existing warehouse hold the weight of solar panels. Comments were made

on points that need to be looked at first before approving the new ordinance for utility scale solar projects.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: David Mattes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:46p.m. The motion was seconded by Thomas C. McKeon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lisa" being more prominent.

Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez, Vice Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lee C. Olsen". The signature is more formal and blocky than the one to its left, with "AIA" written in smaller letters to the right of the main signature.

Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB, Secretary