

BERKS COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
SOUTH CAMPUS – LARGE 1ST FL CONFERENCE ROOM
400 E. WYOMISSING BLVD, SUITE D
MOHNTON, PA 19540

July 09, 2025

MINUTES

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair, Glenn R. Knoblauch called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:20 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, July 09, 2025, as a virtual meeting using the platform Microsoft Teams Townhall.

2. ROLL CALL

The following members were present:

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

Also Attending:

David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director
Cody Kauffman, Berks County Assistant Solicitor
Ashley Showers, Assistant Director
Matthew McGough, Transportation Planner III
Alan Piper, Transportation Planner III
Michelle Franklin, Planner III
Taylor Lawrence, Planner III
Michael Golembiewski, Transportation Modeler
Beth Burkovich, GIS Analyst
Rick Royer, Design Planner I
Laura Mursch Hosie, Intergovernmental Planner III
Thiago Correa de Almeida, Planner II
Jeremy Zaborowski, Director of Industrial Development Authority
Pamela Menet, Director of Economic Development
Jaime Perez, Deputy Director of Redevelopment Authority
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator
Dan Fogarty, Director of Workforce Development
Kim Fies, Deputy Director of Agriculture
Amanda Burkard-Sell, Agriculture Program Manager
Stacey Keppen, Reading Housing Authority
Mark Mohn, Government Affairs Director, RBAR
Jessica Jones, Deputy Director of Office of Aging
Alex Roche, Director of Advocacy, GRCA

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ashley Showers read the public comment policy. Following the reading of the policy, there was no public comment.

4. REPORTS OF STAFF

A. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Hunter began his report by introducing the new member of the Planning Commission, Gavin Milligan. Mr. Milligan went on to say a few words about himself and his eagerness to join the Planning Commission.

Mr. Hunter began his report by updating everyone on the status of Planning Chats and the vision of Planning Chats is now in the postproduction stage and the videos are being edited by Planning's Design Planner, Rick Royer. The goal is to launch the short videos in Planning's website in August. He followed with announcing the status on the process of the Joint Comprehensive Plans and that a fourth plan is in the works. Mr. Hunter also updated everyone on the process of the County Comprehensive and some of the next steps to follow. He ended his report by going over the changes made to the County Comprehensive Plan schedule discussions.

B. Staff Reports – Shanice Ellison

a. **4889 Penn Ave. – Lower Heidelberg**

The proposed plan was submitted for review as a Preliminary/Final Plan. The site is located north of East Penn Avenue and west of Gaul Road. The proposal is for a mixed-use development that includes apartments and retail uses, day care, and quick-service restaurants. The residential component consists of eight 3-story buildings ranging from 20 units to 36 units in each; totaling 226 apartment units, with a mix of one-bedroom and two-bedroom layouts. The subdivision will include 400 parking spaces and 11 garage structures (5 spaces per structure). The subdivision includes amenities such as a dog park area, a clubhouse, a pool, a fire pit, a sport court, and a playground. In addition to the residential section, the proposal includes several commercial units. This includes a day care facility, a various-unit retail strip, and an empty lot. The total disturbed acreage for the site is approximately 20 acres. The plan is consistent with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update since the site is within a Designated Growth area.

Discussions ensued about the thoughts behind the recommendation of using parking garages instead of surface parking and how the tenants will navigate that. The discussion continued with the different types of parking that are offered and the different issues with certain types of parking being used. There were questions on HOP requirements and on pedestrians' access/walkability. There was also a comment made by board member David Mattes on the reasoning of why there are more apartments being developed over single family homes. The concern is raised on the crisis of finding homes and the decrease in homeowners. There was a final question on whether the zoning hearing board stated why they granted relief from the parking requirements and their thoughts behind it.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. May 14, 2025 Meeting Minutes
- B. Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary: April/May May/June
- C. Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity: April/May May/June

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

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

A. Beth Burkovich – Final Subdivision Dashboard Presentation

GIS analyst, Beth Burkovich started her presentation by giving a brief description of the Subdivision Dashboard and the overall information presented on the dashboard. Ms. Burkovich continued by going over the key elements of the dashboard like the date range selection option, the different types of data that are displayed, and the different features of the menu button. She also reviewed the map portion of the dashboard and all the features the dashboard offers for the map. Some of these features are changing/selecting different types of map layers, selection of a particular area, and the ability to click on individual parcels to investigate the details related to that parcel. The data of each parcel is populated as the Planning office receives the information; typical data will be a month behind due to the internal office process.

There were comments made on how innovative the dashboard is and how great the improvements are.

B. Pam Menet – Housing Needs Assessment

Mrs. Pam Menet began her presentation by going over the goal of IMAGINE Berks Housing Update. The goal is to address the county's needs for new housing and redeveloped housing that is accessible and attainable while continuing the commitment to agriculture, open space, and a diverse economic landscape rooted in Smart Growth. Mrs. Menet went over the need for housing and the major issue falls on the affordability of housing rather than just the type of housing being offered. She went on to go over the data on the housing development pipeline and the different types of units that are reviewed by the Berks County Planning Commission versus the types of units that get approved by the municipality and endorsed by the Berks County Planning Commission. Pam Menet also discussed the housing strategies that can help with assess and addressing the mismatch between housing stock and housing demand, including age, price point, type, and location. She also discussed the various types of housing available, and costs associated, as well as new housing redevelopment.

A discussion ensued on the issues of building costs rising, which in return raised the housing pricing in the market. Comments were made on the trends and on the types of housing in demand and housing prices. An additional comment was made to take some time at the next in person meeting to discuss housing.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: David Mattes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:24p.m. The motion was seconded by Lee C. Olsen.

Glenn R. Knoblauch, Chair

Lee C. Olsen, AIA, NCARB, Secretary