



Venango County Regional Planning Commission

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Board Meeting Minutes for the February 2022 Meeting

Monthly board meeting called to order by Nancy Marano, at 6:30 PM.

Those present at the public meeting of the Venango County Regional Planning Commission on February 15, 2022, at 6:30 pm, held in hybrid format both in person at 737 Elk Street in Franklin, PA and virtually via Go-To-Meeting:

Members Present:

- Nancy Marano (Chair)
- Frank Pankratz (Vice-Chair)
- Greg Miller (Secretary/Treasurer)
- Anita Fuchs
- Tracy Jamieson
- Keith Klingler
- Fred Krizinsky
- Judy Lentz
- Glenn Speer
- Nick Melnick
- Bill Moon
- John Neidich
- Ben Porter
- Julie Powell
- Sue Smith

VCRPC BOARD APPROVED

March 15, 2022

Staff Present:

- Hilary Buchanan (Executive Director)
- Ashley Smith (Deputy Director)
- Erik Johnson (Senior Planner)
- Joshua Sterling (Comm. Dev. Planner)
- Alexandria Shreffler (Geo. Analyst)
- Land Use Planner (Vacant)

Guests Present (List):

- Kara O'Neil, The Derrick
- Mike Dulaney, Commissioner

Quorum Present: Yes No

The attendance of 14 board members (of the 15 current appointees) was accounted for by Joshua Sterling.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Greg Miller made a motion to approve the minutes of the November 2021, board meeting. Bill Moon seconded. All approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS

- None.

SPECIAL PURPOSE MATTERS

- The Annual Report was brought to the board for review and approval (5a). Greg Miller requested a revision of the transportation section to include a description of Dotter Road bridge before and after the improvement, with photos if it is possible. With no other suggestions made, Bill Moon made a motion to approve, Tracy Jamison provided a second.
- The director gave an update of the plans to develop the county Comprehensive Plan (5b). The MAP grant application was submitted with a target beginning date of Fall 2022 and completion in 2024. Nancy Marano inquired whether information gathered by the previous committee had been useful for procuring favorable bids.

The information was reported to have been included in the Request for Proposal (RFP) and was reflected in the resulting quotes, which were higher than originally expected. EADES Group was the lowest proposal, at \$74,000. The board was advised to begin thinking about who might serve on the steering committee(s) for the development of the plan. The idea of “inner” steering committees within municipalities was mentioned and discussed as a proactive approach that members could consider now in preparation for the recruitment time-frame. The high cost of the plan was questioned in light of work having been done for the plan prior to the passing of information to the planning commission staff, but resulting discussion revealed that many of those goals had been accomplished, times had changed, and that although the cost appears hefty, this document is used to justify and obtain grant funds both at the county level and at the municipal level. Emlenton representatives acknowledged that they use the 2004 Comprehensive Plan as a guide for local plans and development. It was suggested that delaying the plan to Fall 2022– when the grant awards are to-be-announced– might not be necessary if we have the funding to complete the plan without the grant. Since it needs to be updated, Commissioner Mike Dulaney mentioned that it could be possible to “start early” and would work with Hilary Buchanan to explore the possibility. Keith Klingler reminded the board that there had been discussion in the past about a resolution to prevent loss of private lands, by which he recalled that the board had recommended that a specified balance of public-to-private land would be maintained in each municipality; for example, the state would need to sell other vacant lands in order to off-set any “buys” to maintain the balance. After some discussion, Keith Klingler made a motion to affirm that decision, Bill Moon seconded. Tracy Jamison opposed, citing lack of descriptive evidence to sway her opinion and requested further information be presented. The board discussed further and tabled until a drafted resolution is presented before the board.

- The board discussed the current by-laws (5c). Hilary Buchanan lead a section-by-section series of suggestions. When the discussions were finished, she reported that she would submit a red-line revision of the document to the county solicitor for comment.
- The director reported the updated municipal membership fee (5d). The fee is increasing from 50 cents per capita to 55 cents per capita. It was communicated that this increase would “balance out” in many municipalities where there was in decrease in population. Tracy Jamison asked for confirmation that the new 2020 census information was used in these calculations, which was affirmed.
- The board selected new officers for each of the three officer positions (5e). The chair, Nancy Marano, had served a full term and the position would need a new officer. Greg Miller nominated Frank Pankratz as chair, which was seconded by Sue Smith and appointed unanimously. With Frank Pankratz taking the chair position, the vice-chair position was vacant. Nick Melnick nominated Greg Miller as vice-chair, which was seconded by Nancy Marano and appointed unanimously. Finally, with Greg Miller taking the vice-chair position, the Secretary/Treasurer office was left open. Sue Smith was nominated to the position by Frank Pankratz, Greg Miller made the motion, and Frank Pankratz seconded and appointed unanimously. The 2022 Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer for the Venango County Regional Planning Commission board will be Frank Pankratz, Greg Miller, and Sue Smith. Nancy Marano passed the leadership to Frank Pankratz for the remainder of the meeting.
- The board was invited to discuss the state of sewage enforcement in the county (5f). The board recognized that there seems to be an issue getting Sewage Enforcement Officers (SEOs) to residents. Commissioner Mike Dulaney summarized these concerns with context from other local meetings and resident complaints. There was discussion about how to address these issues, including suggestions to add more SEOs. The board resolved that Cornplanter Township should be contacted in order to encourage more SEOs be added to address the shortage of service.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

- Executive Committee – No report
- COG Meeting – Report was give by _____ Greg Miller _____. The COG meeting in January 2022 was held at the Cranberry Township building. This month’s meeting is scheduled to be held Thursday, February 17th at 7:30 PM in the Sandycreek Municipal building. The Spring Dinner will be on March 26th at the Sandycreek Volunteer Fire Department, where registration will begin at 5:30 PM.

SUBDIVISIONS AND LAND DEVELOPMENTS

- Ashley Smith gave the report in the absence of a Land Use Planner. She presented a Subdivision waiver request, which was a follow-up from the December 2020 meeting where the applicant requested a waiver from SALDO section 506.A.1.a and was tabled until DEP approval had been obtained for the proposed septic system. The board was presented with the DEP approval letter and began discussing the case. It was mentioned that the 1:4 length-to-width ratio (Venango County SALDO 506.A.4) would also now apply to both parcels that they would no longer be greater than 10 acres post-subdivision. John Neidich made a motion to request conforming lots to the 1:4 ratio with Right-Of-Way easement agreements. Frank Pankratz seconded.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF REPORTS

- Deputy Director

- Ashley Smith was promoted to deputy director beginning January 2022. She reported that the county returned escrow balances and closed out 16 past projects. She provided an update on the Cypress Creek Solar development in Cherrytree Township where the township had passed a zoning amendment for solar farms. She was notified that their stormwater plans were under review by the township. The Log Cabin project is currently under construction. She approved seven (7) stormwater management applications for small projects. She provided comments on seventeen (17) subdivisions and approved and recorded eleven (11). She has been training for billing and invoicing administrative tasks.

- Senior Planner & Recycling Coordinator

- Erik Johnson – reported that there has been a consistent flow of customers at the new center and noted that many of those people have been coming from the municipalities which were experiencing illegal dumping in the past and had been removed from the program. His winter activities have included snow plowing to keep the bins and parking lot accessible. He will be submitting the Recycling Annual Report to DEP in April, and has submitted for 902 and 903 reimbursement and should be processed soon. He reported that the Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) vendor will be posted tomorrow (2/16) for a one (1) month span. He was aware that Butler County had recently gone through the same process and received three (3) responses in two (2) months. In the meantime, he has been directing residents to attempt disposal with Tri-County Industries (Grove City). He recognized that although there are methods for disposing paint in the trash safely, chemicals are more challenging to dispose. He has also been working with Tri-County Industries to develop a tire collection event. Finally, he mentioned that he was procuring a cost estimate for an expansion plan of the facility, which includes improvements such as an additional 6000 square feet and a securable partition designed for shredding sensitive documents. The facility is currently 3000 square feet.

- Geospatial Analyst

- Alex Shreffler – reported that she had been working on several mapping projects both for departments within the county and with municipal governments. She has also been gathering data sources for a county-wide infrastructure map, which hopes to be a resource for economic development across the entire region. For GIS Day in November, she gave a GIS presentation to a group of school-age students to show the importance of spatial data science and community involvement. Finally, she has been working toward developing a Data Management Plan which is currently in the inventory stages.

- Community Development Planner

- Joshua Sterling – reported that bids had been opened for the Community Block Development Grant (CDBG)-funded project in Clinton Township. This project will be bringing their township building into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act. The contract was executed on 12/16/2021 in the amount of \$73,878. Bids for the Emlenton Hughes Park project were higher than expected, which has prompted a modification request to move 2016 CDBG funds into the project. Since the Rent, Mortgage, Utility Assistance Program was launched in October using CDBG-Coronavirus (CDBG-CV) funds as part of the CARES Act of 2020, thirteen (13) households have qualified. Two (2) home rehabilitation projects have

been completed since the last board meeting, and there are currently five (5) under contract, another partially executed, and an additional four (4) have been recently inspected and pending scope reports. The HOME program will be expanding, with additional applications anticipated for both Oil City and Franklin in the upcoming RFP funding round. The Pennsylvania Housing and Rehabilitation Enhancement (PHARE) program has seen impacts of contractor scarcity, which needed to be resolved for two (2) home rehab projects that failed to attract contractor bids. The county has also applied for an additional year of PHARE grant funding of \$680,000 to continue to support the program. This amount is more than six (6) times the previous awards, which is needed in order to address the large volume of applications.

- **Executive Director**

- Hilary Buchanan – announced approval of the development of an Infrastructure Bank, which will help municipalities fund critical infrastructure projects. Now that they have a contract with HRG Engineering, they can begin the feasibility study. There has been a stall on the Allegheny Boulevard trail project while PennDOT is meeting with Giant Eagle to resolve concerns regarding right-of-way. There will also be discussion about traffic light options at the next Sugarcreek Borough meeting. The State Street bridge will be added to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) by PennDOT with a 5 percent local match, which would be \$158,750 of the total 3.175 million dollar project. Fisherman’s Cove Bridge will be addressed using Act 13 funds, which is a \$31,750 match with Victory Township because the cost of repair had doubled unexpectedly. Pritchard Road Bridge in Oakland Township was completed this week in the amount of \$55,000. There were three (3) applicants interviewed for the Land Use Planner position and an offer of employment was extended to one of them. The department will be reposting the position for Land Use Planner while one of the interviewees considers the offer. DEP completed their environmental study of the Venango County Park Site near Washington Crossing, which will be discussed at an upcoming meeting on February 23rd. The Two Mile Run DCNR grant is under discussion with the engineer and park manager to determine whether running water will be required. The newly formed Housing Coalition will be meeting on April 7th and a survey evaluating local housing needs will be circulated to parties-of-interest. Other work toward a solar information workshop is in development, grant research for the American Rescue Plan (ARP), Local Share Account (LSA), and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) has ongoing, and annual reports for Liquid Fuels, Act 44, and Act 89 have been submitted.

PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL

- None

ADJOURNMENT

- At 8:41 PM, Nancy Marano made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by John Neidich.

Respectfully submitted,
Alexandria Shreffler.