

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

November 13, 2024

## MINUTES

### 1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Christopher Spohn called the monthly meeting of the Berks County Planning Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting was held on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, in person at the Berks County Planning Commission's Library Conference Room.

#### **The following members were present:**

Christopher Spohn, Chairman  
Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez, Vice Chair  
Glenn R. Knoblauch  
Jodi L. Gauker  
Thomas C. McKeon, AICP, CEcD  
Sarah Phillips  
David Mattes

#### **Also Attending:**

David N. Hunter, Sr., AICP, Executive Director  
David Peris, Berks County Assistant Solicitor  
Matthew McGough, Transportation Planner III  
Alan Piper, Transportation Planner III  
Shailyn Hernandez, Office Support V  
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  
Pamela Menet, Director of Community and Economic Development  
Derek Harris, Economic Development Coordinator  
Jeremy Zaborowski, Director of Industrial Development Authority  
Chris Trachte, Reading Planning Commission, Member; Walk Bike Berks  
Kayla Hayick, Greater Reading Chamber Alliance

### 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

### 3. REPORTS OF STAFF

#### A. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Hunter began his report by bringing everyone's attention to the consent agenda item, 2025 Fees Schedule and the importance behind the amendment. He also updated the Board

on how the Ag Study is progressing and thanked everyone for their collaboration and assistance. Mr. Hunter also discussed the latest news on the move to South Campus and what can be expected in the upcoming months leading up to the move. Mr. Hunter also gave a shoutout to the Transportation staff for the awesome job they did on the RATS/MPO Certification Review.

Mr. Hunter concluded his report by going over the agenda items for today's meeting.

## B. STAFF REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### a. **Ashley Showers – 103 -105 E. Main Street Blight Review, Kutztown Borough**

Ashley Showers began her report by detailing the purpose for the review on the blighted property and the condition of the property. In response to the Redevelopment Authority's request for a recommendation, the County Planning Commission has reviewed the above-mentioned property for its appropriate reuse and to ensure that its disposition aligns with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update. The property is located at 103-105 E. Main St., Kutztown Borough within the C-C (Business Commercial Central) District, which is zoned for retail sales and services, business operations, and dwelling units combined with commercial use. It lies within an Existing Development Area on the County's Future Land Use Plan. The Berks County Planning Commission notes that disposition of the property for commercial or related uses aligns with the Berks County Comprehensive Plan 2030 Update. Therefore, the Berks County Planning Commission recommends that a commercial or related use for the property at 103-105 E. Main St. would be appropriate, in accordance with the Kutztown Borough Zoning Ordinance (225-17 C-C – Business Commercial Central).

Discussion ensued on the declaration of blight on the property and the process the Redevelopment Authority takes to repair the property.

MOTION: Glenn R. Knoblauch made a motion to approve the Blight Review in Kutztown Borough. The motion was seconded by Jodi L. Gauker and passed unanimously.

### b. **2025 Meeting Dates Approval**

Discussion ensued on 2025 Board meeting dates, location, and whether they will stay in person or virtual. It was decided and voted on that the starting in 2025 BCPC Board Meetings will be advertised as being in person with half the year (January – June) located at 633 Court St. and the other half of the year (July – December) located at South Campus in Mohnton Borough.

MOTION: David Mattes made a motion to approve the 2025 Board Meeting Dates. The motion was seconded by Jodi L. Gauker and passed unanimously.

## 4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. September 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes

B. Land Development & Subdivision Activity Report/Summary

C. Endorsed Land Development & Subdivision Activity

MOTION: Glenn R. Knoblauch made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Dave Mattes and passed unanimously.

5. STAFF, STAKEHOLDER AND BOARD MEMBERS REPORTS

**A. Pamela Menet – Imagine Berks Year 2 Update**

Pamela Menet started her presentation with doing a recap of the goals and key principles of Imagine Berks. Mrs. Menet went over the work conducted in year 2 of implementation. Specifically, Ms. Menet shared updated wage numbers for opportunity jobs, how the implementation team focused on redevelopment efforts, and outreach to the community.

Mrs. Menet also went over some unique projects with Agriculture in Berks County. As well as infrastructure funds that are available for municipalities to support infrastructure gaps in designated future growth areas as identified in the County Comprehensive plan. Additional information was shared about the Reading Airport and the changes they have made to continue to make the airport as a point of destination for business travel and private charter.

Mrs. Menet ended her report by sharing future implementation activities for year 3 of Imagine Berks.

**B. Derek Harris – Broadband Study Update**

Derek Harris began his presentation by going over the background information on the Broadband Study. Through that plan they identified the areas where there is lack of broadband access in the County. The County will continue to engage and support fiber infrastructure build-out across the region by incumbent and new providers. The County is prioritizing those areas that are unserved or underserved. The primary source of funds for the fiber installation shall be private and federal and/or state funds. County funds can be considered as last resort funding for projects that are identified as a priority and exhibit a funding gap.

Additionally, Mr. Harris discussed the statistics of different broadbands that are used in the County and their projections for expansion. He also stated that the County will work with the Berks County Digital Equity Coalition and its partners to identify barrier to access, affordability, and adoption.

**C. Alan Piper – RATS MPO Certification Review**

Alan Piper started his presentation by reminding the Board on the purpose and function of the Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS) as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Mr. Piper went on to explain that through Federal Legislation the MPO must go through a certification review every four years. Mr. Piper went over the process of the certification review and who makes up the review team. Mr. Piper shared that this year's review went rather well, and the next one will be in 2028.

**D. Mike Golembiewski – Berks County Travel Demand Forecasting Model Validation**

Mr. Golembiewski gave a presentation regarding the Travel Demand Model for the Board. Mr. Golembiewski stated that this is one of the tools that is utilized for the development of the TIP and the LRTP. His presentation included background on what the model is, how it works, and how we use it. Mr. Golembiewski stated that the main reason for using a model is to make sure that transportation projects do not have adverse effects on air quality.

Mr. Golembiewski informed the Board on why we validate the model and the next steps in doing a new validation. Mr. Golembiewski stated that FHWA guidance calls for a validation every ten years. The last model validation was in 2015. A new validation will begin shortly, and it is anticipated to last about 6 months.

Mr. Golembiewski stated that the initial cost estimate for the model validation was between \$75,000 and \$85,000. Mr. Golembiewski stated that this cost will not be incurred by the County but instead will be paid by PennDOT out of their existing air quality contract with their consultant. Mr. Golembiewski thanked PennDOT for their support.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Jodi L. Gauker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:16p.m. The motion was seconded by Glenn R. Knoblauch.



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Christopher Spohn, Chairman



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Lisa Weaver-Gonzalez, Vice Chair