

**PENNS VALLEY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 16, 2019**

PRESENT:

Penns Valley Regional Planning Commission

Centre Hall	Chris Cooper
Gregg Township	Keri Miller and Doug Bierly
Haines Township	Daryl Schafer
Miles Township	
Millheim Borough	Lauralee Snyder
Penn Township	Bob Fox
Potter Township	Ron Grove

Other:

Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organizations	Tom Zilla
BAI Group, LLC	Sel Edor
Penns Valley Conservation Association	Joshua Brock
Centre County Planning and Community Development Office	Ray Stolinis and Linda Marshall

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Fox called the September 16, 2019 meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

APPROVAL of MEETING NOTES

Mr. Fox called for additions or corrections to the May 20th meeting notes. Ms. Miller moved to approve the May 20, 2019 meeting notes. Mr. Grove seconded the motion. The meeting notes were approved as written.

TREASURER REPORT

Ms. Cooper reported that there is a balance of \$364.10 in the Treasury and that there were no expenditures since the May 20th meeting. Mr. Grove moved to approve the September 2019 Treasurer's Report. Mr. Schafer seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

SECRETARY REPORT

No report

REPORTS

Centre Hall Borough

Ms. Cooper stated that the natural gas line is being installed at the intersection of Church Street and SR 144. The line will run south along SR 144 and then East and West Ridge Avenue to some of the back streets.

She added that they are on track in terms of the project's timeline.

Gregg Township

Ms. Miller reported that the Lower Georges Valley Road bridge project is moving along and that they are on schedule for the bridge to be crossable in November of 2019. The paving and final completion of the project will take place in the spring of 2020.

She added that the Century Estates Subdivision is also moving along.

Ms. Miller referenced the meeting at Millheim Borough on Broadband, and she commented that she wants Gregg Township to be part of that discussion.

Mr. Bierly informed the Commission that Sarah Campbell Lane at Penns Cave is now open to SR 192.

Haines Township

Mr. Schafer reported that the Haines Township Planning Commission is working on their burning and property maintenance ordinances and a few other items.

He added that they are also developing a list of needs and wants for a new township facility.

Mr. Schafer stated that the Fiedler Road Bridge is the worst rated bridge in Centre County and that the Township has been exploring ideas as to how to address the bridge. They are considering installing a box culvert or even closing the bridge with cul-de-sacs at both ends.

He concluded by stating that the Township is having difficulties with two water authorities. One is having mechanical issues and the other operational.

Miles Township

There was no representative present.

Millheim Borough

Ms. Snyder reported that Millheim Borough Council will be discussing the franchise agreement this Friday with Atlantic Broadband.

The Borough is continuing to explore options for solar power for the property adjacent to the sewer plant.

Ms. Snyder added that Council will begin discussions on the 2020 Budget at the end of September.

Penn Township

Mr. Fox reported that the Township is finishing up its road maintenance for the year and that they are also working on the franchise agreement for Broadband service.

Potter Township

Mr. Grove reported that the Township has been reviewing a proposed 94-unit housing development and making certain that there is adequate fire protection.

He added that the Potters Mills sewer project should be up and running at the end of the year.

The Township is also considering a sign ordinance.

OLD BUSINESS

Penns Valley EMS

Mr. Fox noted that the Penns Valley EMS hired a consultant to help them with organizational restructuring.

Mr. Braucht stepped down as President of the Board and that Cindy Foust will serve on interim President. It was reported that Mr. Henry Beiler may take over as President.

In regard to funding, the EMS has asked the municipalities to commit to another year of contributions to the service. The municipal representatives stated that no commitment has been made at this time since they are just beginning the budget process.

Mr. Schafer informed the Commission that Haines Township was contacted by Evangelical Hospital about expanding their ambulance services into Haines Township.

NEW BUSINESS

Centre County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Update-Tom Zilla

Mr. Zilla reported that the US Route 322, Potters Mills Gap Project is going well. He noted that the initial project schedule was impacted due to the relocation of utilities and that the contractor has resorted to over-time shifts to complete the work.

The four lane section of this project will be completed in late 2020, and the work on the two lane parallel local access roadway will continue into 2021. The current traffic patterns will be maintained until the end of the project.

Mr. Zilla continued by addressing the State College Area Connector project. He noted that \$20 Million has been slated for the project's Preliminary Engineering phase. He added that the MPO completed administrative work related to the funding in late June.

Mr. Zilla stated that the Michael Baker firm was hired as a consultant project manager under the direction of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PADOT). PADOT is currently completing the process to select a project design consultant. Work is expected to begin in January 2020.

Mr. Zilla added that the information compiled in the Data Refresh phase was a good start for this project.

Mr. Zilla explained that the Purpose and Need will change during this process. He noted that there have been no fatalities in recent years on the section of US Route 322 between Harris Township and Potters Mills. Based on the recent crash data, different needs and purposes will most likely be identified.

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Noting that the former South Central Centre County Transportation Study project ended fifteen years ago, Mr. Zilla stated that there are now new environmental regulations in place. In addition, PADOT will be using the Planning and Environmental Linkages process for this project. The bottom line is to get rid of all of the alternatives that do not make sense during the early part of the process before more detailed planning is conducted.

Another change mentioned by Mr. Zilla is that the MPO is now county-wide, which was not the case during the SCCTS project process.

Mr. Zilla updated the Commission on other projects. He stated that the section of SR 45 from the Meadows Clinic to the Old Fort intersection will be repaved next spring. The project will include some minor drainage work and will start in April 2020. Mr. Zilla stated that he requested that there be no lane closures to be in place until 8:30 a.m. The afternoon peak drive time will have lane closures.

Mr. Zilla reported that the Paradise Road and Smulton state bridges have been completed; however the Brush Mountain Road bridge project has not begun.

Other bridge projects include: replacing the Penn Street-Mill Race bridge in Millheim Borough in 2021; rehabbing the School Street bridge project in the Village of Spring Mills in 2023; and rehabbing a bridge on Route 445 Madisonburg Pike in Miles Township in 2024.

Miles Township's Fox Gap Road Bridge project will not begin until 2021 since agreements are just getting signed.

In regard to future local bridge projects, Centre County sent a written request to municipalities asking if they would be interested in a partnership opportunity to address bridges that are over 20 feet in length and are classified as poor or nearing that designation. The funding may be available through PADOT's Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant. Interested municipalities need to contact Mr. Mike Bloom, Assistant Director of the Centre County Planning and Community Development Office, by October 4th.

Mr. Zilla also encouraged those present to contact Mr. Mike Bloom, if they want to discuss the County's Liquid Fuels Program. He noted that the application for Liquid Fuels funding is due on October 25, 2019

Mr. Zilla reported that the stone wall along SR 144 in Centre Hall Borough and Potter Township is being studied, using special transportation planning funds. McCormick Taylor will be conducting the study. Mr. Zilla stated that the question is what do we do with the walls from an historic and cultural resources perspective, and he commented that he is not sure what will happen with the wall during the pipeline project. He concluded by stating that the walls might be considered as significant contributors to the Penns and Brush Valley Rural Historic Landscape District.

Mr. Zilla stated that the MPO has just started working on the next TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) for 2021 to 2024, which is updated every two years. He noted that there has been a reduction in the base funding allocation for roads and bridges in Centre County, comparing the current program with \$54.5 Million over four years to the next program being reduced to \$42 Million. One of the main reasons for the reduction is that more federal and state funding is being targeted for improvements to the Interstate Highway System.

Mr. Zilla continued by stating that the focus in Penns Valley will be on bridges, and there will not be a lot of opportunity to get other projects funded.

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Mr. Zilla explained that the next step for the Long Range Transportation Plan process will be to organize the input received through the stakeholder meetings with municipalities, and have municipalities confirm that the information compiled is correct. Staff will also look at what projects might be fundable under TIP.

It was reported that the Long Range Transportation Plan process is adjusting to a new environment with a focus on asset management, fixing what we have. Mr. Zilla commented that Centre County will have to be more creative in order to get new projects funded. He added that the focus will be data driven.

Ms. Miller indicated that Gregg Township's Liquid Fuels allocation has also decreased.

Referring to Act 89 of 2013, which allowed for increasing state gas tax and how it is collected, Mr. Zilla reported that revenue projections are flat due to hybrids and other fuel efficient vehicles. He stated that this is a concern because state gas tax funds are used as a basis for matching federal dollars. The federal transportation authorization bill will run out before the 2020 election; however, a Continuing Resolution may be approved as an interim measure.

Mr. Fox recommended that the gas tax be based on mileage.

Mr. Zilla replied that mileage is being tracked on the I-95 Corridor using volunteer participants.

Solar Energy presentation-Sel Edor, BAI Group, LLC

Mr. Edor introduced himself.

Mr. Edor explained that he had worked for the company that was responsible for the solar system built on the parking lot at Burkholders Market. He noted that he now works for BAI Group, which is an environmental firm. He stated that the company has done a lot of energy projects for the Marcellus Shale activity as well as capturing gas in landfills. BAI Group also worked on the wind project along I-99, which is in line with the company's focus on renewable energy.

Mr. Edor informed the Commission that BAI Group now has an opportunity to work with Millheim Borough on a solar project at the waste water treatment plant. He added that Ms. Snyder, Mayor of Millheim Borough, had asked what happens if other municipalities are interested in solar energy then would that result in economies of scale.

Mr. Edor added that his former employer has done a lot more solar projects in Penns Valley than other areas.

Mr. Edor stated that one of the selling points of solar energy is being insulated from energy rate hikes.

Mr. Edor began his PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Edor noted that the major concerns about solar are: costs, cloud conditions, low cost of electricity, and the technology being unproven. He commented that the cost of electricity is at an all-time low; however, solar prices are declining.

Referring to a map created by the World Bank, Mr. Edor addressed the Solar Status across the US and showed that central Pennsylvania is located in a cloudy region with lower production numbers.

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The benefits of solar were also addressed, which include: saving money, securing a better world for future generations, increasing local energy dependence, and redirecting funds to other improvement projects.

As part of the presentation, Mr. Eder laid out his solar idea, which involves putting together a Purchasing Group of local governments in the region, developing a solar approach that costs no money upfront, and using the power of numbers to help drive down costs for all. BAI Group wants to develop a solar project that will not cost the municipalities a dime. He added that there are energy investors, putting money into solar projects and then selling the power at a known cost for a set term.

Mr. Eder stated that he is not asking for a budget allocation from the municipalities but only asking for interest. He added that local governments are very valuable to an energy investor since they have very stable revenues coming in. He commented that rural local governments need the volume.

Referencing the market in Pennsylvania, Mr. Eder informed the Commission that the cost of a kilowatt hour ranges from seven to ten cents, but with solar energy, the cost is six cents.

Laying out BAI Group's process, Mr. Eder indicated that they first look at energy needs by analyzing the energy bills to determine demand. The next step is to look at locations on the properties owned by the municipality, investigate the opportunities and determine if there are viable options.

Mr. Eder stated that the project has zero turnkey costs.

Mr. Eder projected that the 25 year savings would be \$671,834 in real cash that comes back to them. These funds will help the local government find grants to purchase back the system.

Mr. Eder remarked that his company is not looking to do a big Penns Valley solar system project. He said that the next steps would be for the members to talk to their elected officials and if interested, invite his company to present more in depth information specific to the municipality. He noted that if his company finds that solar will not work in their area that they will inform the municipal officials of their conclusion.

Mr. Eder showed a slide photo of the Penns Valley Veterinary Clinic in Millheim with a solar system on the roof of their building. The system cannot be seen from the street.

Ms. Schafer asked if the energy generated is put back into the grid. Referring to the Millheim Sewage Treatment Plant as a potential project location, Mr. Eder stated that the system would serve the loads of the treatment plant first and any excess power will go into the grid. West Penn Power will reimburse them. He added that Millheim Borough could purchase power from the grid during wet and snowy days and that net metering allows the entity to bank it.

Ms. Marshall asked if there is a federal tax credit for the investors. Mr. Eder replied in the affirmative and stated that it has instant value.

Ms. Cooper left the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Mr. Bierly left the meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Mr. Eder noted that there is a federal tax law that prohibits the investor from selling the system before the 5th year.

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Mr. Schafer asked as to what is the life span of a solar system. Mr. Eder replied 30 years.

Ms. Miller asked what if a municipalities has facilities/meters in multiple locations. Mr. Eder replied that they would pick the meter that has the highest load. He noted that there is an allowance in PUC (Public Utility Commission) law, whereby, any meter within two miles can be aggregated with all of the meters in that area.

Mr. Eder talked about how solar systems make economic sense for many states where the cost of electricity per kilowatt is much higher.

Mr. Eder commented that he feels that the Old Gregg School might be a good opportunity for the installation of solar system due to its usage.

Mr. Eder thanked the Commission for their time.

Discuss on the Public Safety Chapter, Regional Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Marshall distributed the emergency services section of the 2006 Regional Comprehensive Plan's Public Facilities Chapter to the Commission members. She asked that they review the document before the November 18th meeting.

Ms. Marshall asked the Commission if there are any issues that she might not be aware of that should be considered as part of the process of updating this Comprehensive Plan element.

The Commission relayed that the region's fire companies have been working together on grant applications for purchase of equipment, training opportunities and other ways, which result in reducing costs and establishing a level of efficiency.

Ms. Marshall explained that she will be collecting data from the emergency services in which she hopes to present to the Commission in November.

INFORMATION ITEMS

There were no other information items presented.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

There were no other items mentioned for the Commission's consideration.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Mr. Grove moved to adjourn the September 16, 2019 meeting of the Penns Valley Regional Planning Commission at 8:46 p.m. Ms. Miller seconded the motion. The motion carried.