



Blair Planning

Blair County Planning Commission
Altoona Metropolitan Planning Organization
Blair County Government Advisory Committee

BLAIR COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting of January 25, 2024 8:30 AM

Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania

AGENDA

CALL TO ORDER

1. Roll Call – The meeting will begin with a roll call of the members to publicly determine who is present as well as determine if a quorum is present.
2. Approval of Minutes – Consideration of the combined November-December 2023 minutes of the Blair County Planning Commission Meeting.
3. Public Comment Period – Public comment will be received at this time.
4. Commissioner Liaison Forum – Introduce Commissioner Amy Webster as our new Commissioner Liaison. This is an opportunity for the Commissioners' liaison to make any reports, comments, or findings to the Planning Commission.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

5. **APPOINTMENT:** Mark Moore, Project Manager – Ampliform (BL-Diamond LLC); Michael Tincher, Consultant – ERM; Justin Stewart, Professional Engineer – Geotech Engineering.
BL Diamond Solar - Located along Hileman Hollow Road in Greenfield Township, this proposal is for the development of a 16.3-megawatt alternating current utility-scale solar facility, owned and operated by Ampliform, on approximately 227-acres of leased land.
6. Comcast Telecom Building – Located along Lampost Lane in Allegheny Township, this proposal is for the construction of a 1400 SF telecommunications building with associated gravel parking and stormwater management behind the existing CNB Bank off of Plank Road.
7. Tussey Mountain Landscaping - Located along Charger Highway in Blair Township, this proposal is for the construction of a 24'x80' storage building for landscaping materials.
8. Coffee on 3rd – Located along 3rd Avenue in Duncansville Borough, this proposal is for the construction of three 12'x20' boutiques, a 12'x16' greenhouse pavilion, and a crushed stone path connecting them for the purpose of creating a boutique village.
9. Staff Level Subdivision and Land Development Reviews:
 - City of Altoona – Cory Noel Lot Merge, 110 Caroline Avenue
 - Greenfield Township – Tim and Brenda Moyer, located on Old Timberman Road
 - Greenfield Township – Bonita Schultz Subdivision, located on Crabapple Lane
 - North Woodbury Township – Township Salt Storage Addition on Cranberry Road
 - North Woodbury Township – Sollenberger / Kulp Lot Line Change, Creps Road

METROPOLITAN CLEARINGHOUSE

10. Staff Level Reviews: Planning staff has reviewed and responded to the following requests since the last meeting. Commission members were given an opportunity via email to review these requests prior to response letters being sent:

- **City of Altoona** – PennDOT application to PA DEP for Water Obstruction and Encroachment Permit – S 12th Street Bridge #19 over Brush Run, S 16th Street Bridge #22 over Brush Run, East 25th Avenue Bridge #10 over Spring Run.
- **Antis Township** – Keller Engineers for DelGrosso Foods, Inc. – Application for PennVEST funding from the PA Infrastructure Investment Authority – Kristel Lane Pre-Treatment Facility
- **Catharine Township** – Penn Del Engineering for Penn England, LLC – application to PA DEP for Water Quality Permit – Home Farm Manure Storage Facility
- **Logan Township** – Altoona Water Authority – Application to PA DEP, Stream Encroachment Permit – Burgoon Run Stream Entry & Valve Removal
- **Logan Township** – LWCF Grant Application from National Park Service via DCNR for Strawberry Hills Outdoor Soccer Complex/Community Park Project.
- **North Woodbury and Taylor Townships** – Scotch Hill Solutions for Pleasant View Farm – Application to PA DEP for Chapter 102 Permit for Land Development – Animal Housing Facility
- **Tyrone Borough** – Markosky Engineering Group for PennDOT Engineering District 9-0 – Application to PA DEP for GP-11 Water Obstructions and Encroachments Permit – SR0453 14B over Sink Run Culvert Replacement

11. Grant Update:

- Execute a \$30,000 grant agreement for Act 167 funds awarded to Blair County.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

12. Unified Planning Work Program and Master Grant Agreement FY2024-25 – Review and approve a Resolution designating David McFarland, Planning Director as the official to execute the Unified Planning Work Program and Master Grant Agreement FY2024-25 and subsequent work orders from the period of January 2024 through June 2025.
13. Planning Director's Report – The Planning Director will give a brief update on professional development and administrative issues for the organization, including (but not limited to):
- Job Description for Community Planner
14. Planning Commissioners' Forum - This is an opportunity for Planning Commission members to bring items of relevant interest to the attention of the body as a whole.
15. Questions from the Media – This is an opportunity for the media to ask any questions needed to clarify any points made or agenda items discussed during the meeting.
16. Upcoming Events:
- January 26 – Blair County Alliance Annual Meeting
 - February 8 – Hollidaysburg Comprehensive Plan Consideration at Borough Council
 - February 19 – President's Day, Planning Commission Office closed
 - February 22 – Juniata Forward Steering Committee Meeting
 - February 26 – All Together Altoona Steering Committee Meeting
 - February 29 - Blair County Planning Commission Meeting

ADJOURNMENT

The next board meeting is scheduled for 8:30 AM on February 29, 2024 at the Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania.



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BLAIR COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes for January 25, 2024

Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania

CALL TO ORDER

1. Roll Call --

Members present:

William R. Hall, Chairperson
James M. Dixon, Treasurer
Nicola Ardizzone
Lawrence Carter
Benjamin Postles (via speaker phone)

Amy Webster, Commissioner

Members absent:

Patrick Baechle, Secretary
Herbert Shelow, Sr.
Thomas M. Holsinger
Linda Smith

Guests:

Carol Dannenberg
Justin Stewart
Nathan Whited
Mattea Derr
Mark Moore
Michael Tincher

Staff:

David McFarland III, Planning Director
Sherry Socie, Strategic Planner
MacKenzie Caron, Community Planner
Wes Burket, Transportation Planner
Rhonda Kelly, Planning Aide

Staff Absent: none

Representing:

Townships Collectively
City of Altoona
City of Altoona
City of Altoona
Townships Collectively

Commissioner Liaison

Boroughs Collectively
Boroughs Collectively
Townships Collectively
Townships Collectively

Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog
Ampliform
Ampliform
Ampliform
Ampliform
ERM

Board Member Benjamin Postles joined the meeting via speaker phone.

2. Approval of Minutes – A motion was made to approve the Planning Commission minutes of the combined November-December 12, 2023 meeting; Motion passed.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the November-December 12, 2023 meeting, Item #2 on this agenda:

Moved: James Dixon

Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone

Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

3. Public Comment Period – No public comment.

4. Commissioner Liaison Forum –Chairman Hall introduced the Commissioner Webster as new Commissioner liaison for the Planning Commission as Commissioner Erb had retired. Commissioner Webster stated that the Planning Commission is an important part of the County and she is happy to be a part of this group and thankful for the opportunity. She has also enjoyed working with PennDOT over the years and will continue to look forward to the work.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

5. Appointment: BL-Diamond LLC Solar Facility – located along Hileman Hollow Road in Greenfield Township. Mark Moore, Project Manager at Ampliform provided a presentation on this development plan. This solar farm project is located on 334 acres but will only use two parcels that total 128 acres of the leased land. If at the end of the 30-year lease or when the panels' end of useful life occurs, the landowner does not want to renew the lease, Ampliform will decommission the project, removing all equipment panels, posts, etc. returning land to agriculture as before.

Each parcel will have two access roads. The seed mix to be planted under the panels will include pollinators to help sustain bee population. The system inverters are placed in the center of the solar panels to help reduce the minimal humming noise. The nearest house to the solar panels is 500 feet, most municipalities want at least 100 feet to the nearest solar panels. Ampliform is working with the Township engineer to meet requirements such as landscape buffers and a traffic study. There has been involvement from the Conservation District in terms of an NPDES permit and safeguarding downstream waters and a trout streams. An interconnection agreement has already been signed with First Energy and Penelec. A commercial operation date has been set for March 2025.

Mr. Moore responded to questions from Board members that included: how high from the ground are the panels; which are 7 to 10 feet off the ground but when fully vertical, the panels are about 10 feet from the ground. The platforms are about four to five feet from the ground. The life span of the panels have increased from 25 years to now they are 30 to 35 years.

Commissioner Webster asked if Ampliform's contract includes a trust or some type of protection for the homeowner to draw on in the event Ampliform goes out of business before the end of the 30-year lease. Because Ampliform is bonded, a surety bond would be put up for a complete removal, which includes removal of the posts.

Additional questions from the Board included: routine ground maintenance; of which there will be within the fenced area of the panels; outside the fenced area is up to the landowner to maintain, of which there is approximately 200 acres that can still be used for hay, etc. Tree planting as a buffer was discussed and Ampliform will be following the SALDO. Ampliform will also address any road bonding the Township will require. Mr. Moore also stated that FirstEnergy has many protection requirements that Ampliform will follow such as metering and sensors. He responded to a question regarding the height of the fence around the solar panels, which is 8 feet. With regard to security lighting, there will not be lighting, as most people do not like it; however, signage will be placed as per the requirement.

Mr. Moore stated that Ampliform intends to meet with the local fire department and emergency services, hopefully for a site visit. There are no batteries involved in this solar project. The fire safety information on solar panels, should they catch fire, is to simply let them burn, there are no firefighting best methods. The most flammable part is the mineral oil in the transformers. The Board viewed the site plan map as Mr. Moore provided details to include that they will avoid the wetland areas.

Ms. Caron added that the Planning Commission's review letter does address the need for buffers. She also pointed out to Mr. Moore that Greenfield Township does in fact have a solar ordinance, which they just adopted in July 2023 and that Ampliform should double check with Greenfield Township.

In summary, this proposal is consistent with countywide planning efforts as presented in the *Alleghenies Ahead* Regional Comprehensive Plan, adopted July 31, 2018, which includes comprehensive planning for Blair County.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #5 on this agenda
Moved: Nicola Ardizzone
Seconded: Lawrence Carter
Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

6. Comcast Telecom Building – located along Lampost Lane in Allegheny Township. Regional Planner MacKenzie Caron reviewed this land development plan that proposes construction of a 1,400 SF Comcast telecommunications facility with associated gravel parking on an existing grass lot. Stormwater management improvements are also included in this proposal. Access to the site is via a 24-foot-wide gravel drive from the existing Lampost Lane and a 6-foot-wide concrete walkway is proposed along the front of the building. Parking includes four (4) four standard gravel parking spaces and one concrete ADA space. No landscaping, lighting nor photometrics were included in the proposal. However, there is an eight (8)-foot high chain-link fence is proposed around the perimeter of the area to be disturbed. It is recommended that the developer ensure all landscaping is in accordance with Allegheny Township design standards. The developer should also ensure any lighting installed at the site is shielded and directed to prevent glare onto neighboring properties and roadways.

The review of natural features at this site reveals the presence of prime agricultural soils on portions of the property; however, this should not be a significant concern regarding this proposal, as the proposed site is surrounded by similar development and no potential farmland will be converted or developed. The site is located within the Beaverdam Branch of the Juniata River Watershed. Proposed stormwater management improvements include combined underground pipe and open basin infiltration systems, which should help to offset any potential increase in runoff as a result of this proposal.

In summary, this proposal is consistent with countywide planning efforts as presented in the Areawide Comprehensive Plan for Blair County.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #6 on this agenda
Moved: Lawrence Carter
Seconded: James Dixon
Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

7. Tussey Mountain Landscaping – located along Charger Highway in Blair Township. Regional Planner MacKenzie Caron reviewed this land development plan that proposes construction of a 24'x80' (1,920 square-foot) storage building at the current site of Tussey Mountain Landscaping with no change to the current site access. There is not enough increased traffic to warrant a Transportation Impact Study.

No landscaping, lighting and photometrics were included in the plan submission. The developer should ensure any landscaping at the site is designed in accordance with Blair Township regulations and that any new lighting installed is shielded and directed in a manner that prevents glare onto neighboring properties and roadways.

The review of the plan revealed the presence of prime agricultural soils, steep slopes and portions of the site are located within the 100-year-floodplain. Generally, we do not recommend development within the FEMA floodplain but as the site is already in use for landscaping storage, and the proposed storage building will be installed using flood vents, we do not oppose this development. Developers should consult with municipal engineers to ensure all design standards align with those of Blair Township. This site is located within the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Watershed. The project narrative specifies that no changes to the site's overall stormwater runoff are anticipated; however, developers should consult with Blair Township and the Intergovernmental Stormwater Committee in order to help mitigate any potential negative impacts on the watershed as a result of this proposal and ensure that all stormwater management facilities are designed in accordance with Blair Township regulations.

In summary, we find this proposal to be generally consistent with countywide planning efforts as presented in the *Alleghenies Ahead* Regional Comprehensive Plan, adopted July 31, 2018, which includes comprehensive planning for Blair County.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #7 on this agenda
Moved: Lawrence Carter
Seconded: James Dixon
Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

8. Coffee On Third – located along 3rd Avenue in Duncansville Borough. Regional Planner MacKenzie Caron reviewed this land development plan that proposes construction three, 12'x20' boutiques, a 12'x16' greenhouse pavilion in the vacant space behind the existing site of Coffee on Third. The village would be utilized several times during the summer for small makers to come in and sell their small business items. A crushed stone path is proposed to extend from the existing paved parking area to the boutique village. Additional site improvements include landscaping and stormwater management. No changes to the site's overall access are proposed. No additional parking is proposed beyond the current ~20 parking spaces; however, the developer should ensure that the amount of parking is appropriate for increased demand at the site. Landscaping plans include several different trees and shrubs throughout the site, large evergreen tree buffers between the proposed boutique village and nearby residential structures and a proposed landscaped sitting area. No lighting plan or photometrics were included with the plan; it is recommended that any exterior lighting to be installed should be shielded or directed to prevent glare onto neighboring properties and roadways.

The review revealed that the site is located within the 100-year floodplain. Generally, we recommend against development in the floodplain; however, we do not oppose this development due to the relatively low impact, provided the proposed structures are elevated above base flood elevation and include proper BMPs such as potentially installing flood vents. We recommend the developer consult with Duncansville Borough to ensure the proposed development is designed according to the Borough's Floodplain Ordinance. This site is located within the Beaverdam Branch of the Juniata River Watershed; the developer has specified the inclusion of an underground retention berm and basin, which should help to mitigate negative impacts on this watershed as a result of this proposal.

There was discussion regarding the proposed path to the boutiques in that crushed stone paths are not considered ADA accessible, whether for customers or employees. The reason for proposing crushed stone is to minimize the impact of impervious surface to the floodplain area; however, the plan does not specify whether or not the crushed stone is ADA accessible. There was also concern expressed by the Board regarding ADA accessibility up into the boutiques as well since they will be elevated due to the floodplain.

Motion: Not to approve the proposed development until developer ensures ADA compliance for Item #8 on this agenda
Moved: Lawrence Carter
Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone
Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

9. Staff Level Reviews – Planning staff has reviewed and responded to the following applications since the last meeting. Commission members were given an opportunity via email to review these applications prior to response letters being sent:

- City of Altoona – Cory Noel Lot Merge, 110 Caroline Avenue
- Greenfield Township – Tim and Brenda Moyer, located on Old Timberman Road
- Greenfield Township – Bonita Schultz Subdivision, located on Crabapple Lane
- North Woodbury Township – Township Salt Storage Addition on Cranberry Road
- North Woodbury Township – Sollenberger / Kulp Lot Line Change, Creps Road

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #9 on this agenda
Moved: Lawrence Carter
Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone
Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

At this time the Board made the decision to review Item #12 of this agenda for the purpose of having a full quorum to vote on this item; Board Member Benjamin Postles would soon exit the meeting (via phone).

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

12. Unified Planning Work Program and Master Grant Agreement FY2024-25 – Transportation Planner Wes Burket explained that in renewing the PennDOT grant agreement, a resolution is required to designate Planning Director David McFarland as the official to execute the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Master Grant Agreement FY2024-25 and subsequent work orders from the period of January 2024 through June 2025, which was recently approved by the MPO. The Program involves meeting state and federal requirements to keep the County eligible for transportation funding.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Items #12 on this agenda

Moved: James Dixon

Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone

Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

METROPOLITAN CLEARINGHOUSE

10. **Staff Level Reviews** – Planning staff has reviewed and responded to the following requests since the last meeting. Commission members are given opportunity via email to review these requests prior to response letters being sent:

- **City of Altoona** – PennDOT application to PA DEP for Water Obstruction and Encroachment Permit – S 12th Street Bridge #19 over Brush Run, S 16th Street Bridge #22 over Brush Run, East 25th Avenue Bridge #10 over Spring Run.
- **Antis Township** – Keller Engineers for DelGrosso Foods, Inc. – Application for PennVEST funding from the PA Infrastructure Investment Authority – Kristel Lane Pre-Treatment Facility
- **Catharine Township** – Penn Del Engineering for Penn England, LLC – application to PA DEP for Water Quality Permit – Home Farm Manure Storage Facility
- **Logan Township** – Altoona Water Authority – Application to PA DEP, Stream Encroachment Permit – Burgoon Run Stream Entry & Valve Removal
- **Logan Township** – LWCF Grant Application from National Park Service via DCNR for Strawberry Hills Outdoor Soccer Complex/Community Park Project.
- **North Woodbury and Taylor Townships** – Scotch Hill Solutions for Pleasant View Farm – Application to PA DEP for Chapter 102 Permit for Land Development – Animal Housing Facility
- **Tyrone Borough** – Markosky Engineering Group for PennDOT Engineering District 9-0 – Application to PA DEP for GP-11 Water Obstructions and Encroachments Permit – SR0453 14B over Sink Run Culvert Replacement

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Item #11 on this agenda

Moved: Lawrence Carter

Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone

Abstained: Benjamin Postles for Penn Del Engineering's PA DEP Water Quality Permit in Catharine Township

Voted: 4 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

11. **Grant Update:** – Strategic Planner Sherry Socie reported that she and Dave had worked on a grant application for Act 167 funding which she submitted to the DEP. The Planning Commission was awarded a grant in the amount of \$30,000.00 for the purpose of preparing a stormwater management plan. The grant agreement must be executed electronically by the Chairman and Secretary; as such they will need to meet with Ms. Socie to set up their online access.

Chairman Hall stated that 15 other grant applications were recently submitted by Ms. Socie; she explained that these 15 grant applications were for Local Share grants which will affect many municipalities in the area. She noted that the process was very interesting and educational. She is also working on several firefighter FEMA assistance grants for firefighter apparatus and PPE that must be submitted by March 8. She is also working on some municipal projects that would directly impact grants applications through the Department of Economic Development and the USDA Community Facilities covid money.

As Chairman Hall pointed out, the grant funding is somewhat a two-edged sword in that the Planning Commission needs more staff to carry out some of what the grant funding produces. Additionally, with Ms. Caron now in the Regional Planner's position, we are now in need of an entry-level Planner.

There was extended discussion regarding an issue expressed by Chairman Hall regarding programs that start out being managed by the Planning Commission and are subsequently taken over by the County, who in turn receive all the administrative monies that had previously accounted for a part of Planning Commission's budget. Mrs. Socie added that in terms of the all the municipal grant applications she processes the Planning Commission is not eligible for any funding for administrative costs for the grant application process and is why the Planning Commission asks for an administrative fee upfront from the requesting municipality.

Commissioner Webster asked if there are statistics on increased percentage of applications to justify municipal fees. Director McFarland is working on this process and noted that since covid there has been a heavier drain on the local share income. Discussion comments included having conversation with the municipalities if they want the Planning Commission to administer their grant or to charge a flat fee or charge a percentage to write the grant.

Commissioner Webster asked how often the County's Strategic Plan is reviewed. Chairman Hall stated it is every five years, re-writing the Comprehensive Plan every ten years and reviewed every five. Director McFarland noted that the way the current plan is written, it will not take much to update; the bigger push will be to address the 'missing middle' housing.

12. Planning Director's Report – The Planning Director stated that he had planned to have a discussion on making changes to the Job Description for Community Planner; this item is tabled due to lack of a quorum.
13. Commissioners' Forum – No comments or discussion for this meeting.
14. Question From the Media – Mr. Frank was not present at today's meeting.
15. Upcoming Events:
 - January 26 – Blair County Alliance Annual Meeting
 - February 8 – Hollidaysburg Comprehensive Plan Consideration at Borough Council
 - February 19 – President's Day, Planning Commission Office closed
 - February 22 – Juniata Forward Steering Committee Meeting
 - February 26 – All Together Altoona Steering Committee Meeting
 - February 29 - Blair County Planning Commission Meeting

ADJOURNMENT

The next Planning Commission Board meeting is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 29, 2024 at the Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania.

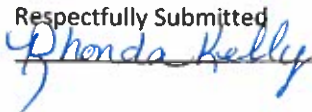
Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Moved: Lawrence Carter

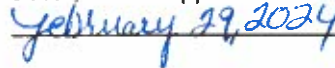
Seconded: James Dixon

Voted: 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

Respectfully Submitted

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Date Minutes Approved

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