



Blair Planning

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

REVISED

BLAIR PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA

REGULAR MEETING on October 31, 2024

Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA

CALL TO ORDER at 8:30 a.m.

1. Roll Call - to publicly determine which members are present and if a quorum is present.
2. Approval of Minutes - Meeting minutes of September 26, 2024 will be considered for approval.
3. Public Comment Period - Public comment will be received at this time on all matters not appearing elsewhere on the agenda. Public comments regarding specific development applications or agenda items will be taken when those items come up for consideration.

APPOINTMENT

4. 8:35 A.M. - Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP & DC) -
 - Mr. Slusser will give a presentation of the newly proposed Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, which provides direction for economic development activities for the 2025 - 2029 time period. A public comment period is now open for comment on the plan.
 - Mr. Slusser will also give a presentation on regional planning efforts at Southern Alleghenies, including potential upcoming projects to include a new regional comprehensive plan and a new regional greenways plan.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

5. Sheetz Shwellness Center - Sheetz Altoona has submitted a low-impact land development plan located at 5800 6th Avenue in the City of Altoona. The proposed project is to perform a complete interior renovation of an existing building to create a wellness center for routine medical appointments, physical therapy and behavior consultations for their employees. The project also includes some exterior improvements as well.
6. Simington Plaza - Simington Enterprises LLC has submitted a land development plan located at 1301 Broadway in the City of Altoona. The plan proposes two parking lots with driveway entrances from North 14th Avenue and with exits on to North 13th Avenue with associated stormwater management along North 13th Street.
7. A. Duie Pyle Facility - A. Duie Pyle has submitted a land development plan located along Cotton Town Road in Greenfield Township. The plan proposes an office building with 42 dock doors and a maintenance building with associated truck/trailer and employee parking areas.

8. 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: 400 East 25th Avenue -PC3-DG Altoona LLC Lot Consolidation
 - City of Altoona: Heaton No Impact Subdivision, 2000 – 2006 15th Avenue
 - Frankstown Township: Woomer Lot Merger, Scenic Knoll Drive
 - Huston Township: Piney Creek School Side Lot Addition, Piney Creek Road
 - Logan Township: Meling Subdivision – Lot Consolidation, N. 7th Street and N. 19th Ave
 - Logan Township: Castle Farms Phase 2B, C Subdivision & Replot, Queens Way & Avalon Rd
 - Logan Township: Holmberg Subdivision, Lot Consolidation, 1601 Princeton Road
 - North Woodbury Township: Kensinger Lot Line Change, 166 Orchard Lane
 - Woodbury Township: Simendinger Subdivision Side Lot Addition, Royer Mountain Road

REVIEW OF ACTIONS BY GOVERNING BODIES

9. Hollidaysburg Borough – for the proposed Rezoning Amendment Petition No. 911 for the area of Newry Street, Porter Alley and Hetherington Alley. The subject area is currently zoned Residential/Business (RB); the proposed amendment would rezone the area to Limited Industrial (LI).

METROPOLITAN CLEARINGHOUSE

10. Blair County FY2024 CDBG Application – Proposed projects for inclusion in Blair County's 2024 CDBG Funding application:
- | | |
|--|--------------|
| • Neighborhood Facilities:
(17 non-entitlement = \$20,000; Antis Township \$98,569.00) | \$118,569.00 |
| • Demolition & Clearance (Spot Basis) for Hollidaysburg Borough
(Eliminate Spot Blight) | \$ 45,565.00 |
| • Owner-Occupied Single Unit Housing Rehabilitation
(17 non-entitlement, Frankstown Twp & Tyrone Boro) | \$378,859.00 |
| • Housing Rehabilitation – Sewer Laterals
(Reservoir Rd Sewer Ext Project, Blair Twp) | \$83,506.00 |
| • Economic Development: Micro-Enterprise Assistance, Hollidaysburg
(general support services to owners and developers of micro-enterprises) | \$ 45,565.00 |
11. Hollidaysburg Borough -Joe Krentzman & Son Inc, PennDOT 2024 Rail Freight Grant Program, Letter of Support
12. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – Review and comment on the proposed rulemaking affecting Class A Stream Re-designations.
13. 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:
- Frankstown Township -Levine Engineering LLC for Frankstown Township's Sylvan Heights Drive Sewer Extension Project, NPDES Chapter 102 permit application
 - Huston Township -Gunnnett Engineers LLC for Vernon Martin, 334 Sportsmen's Road, Sewage Facilities Planning Module
 - Juniata Township -Geotech Engineering Inc for RES Coal LLC, Laurel Gap Operation, Proposed New Surface Mine, General Information Permit Application

- Logan Township – EADS Group for Plank Road Drainage Improvement Project, Chapter 105 Water, Obstruction and Encroachment permit application
- Tunnelhill Borough-Stiffler McGraw for Gallitzin Borough Sewer and Disposal Authority to discharge treated effluent to Bradley Run, NPDES permit renewal
- Tyrone Township – John Delacio for Jeannine Wonderling Property a single residence sewage treatment plant, NPDES General Information Authorization application

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

14. Advancing the Alleghenies -- Formal comment on the Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
15. Juniata Forward – Formal review and comment on the new watershed plan developed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. This plan provides analysis and policy guidance for the entire Juniata River watershed from the upcoming twenty years. Jennifer Farabaugh was here in 2023 to present the initial phases of the plan and solicit the Commission's input. The document is now substantively completed. The public comment period closes on October 31.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

16. All Together Altoona – Staff will provide an update on the ordinance rewrite currently underway to implement the City's comprehensive planning efforts.
17. Hollidaysburg Comprehensive Plan – Staff will provide an update on the Hollidaysburg comprehensive plan.
18. Bellwood-Antis Comprehensive Plan – A very brief update will be given on the DCED-MAP grant application status for a proposed joint comprehensive plan for Bellwood Borough and Antis Township.

COORDINATION

19. Emergency Services Study – The current update of the hazard mitigation plan will be calling for a study to be undertaken by DCED on sustainability of our emergency service throughout Blair County. This will likely be undertaken at no cost to Blair Planning or the local jurisdictions. A brief update on the status of this effort will be presented.

GRANTS

20. Local Share Account Grants – Announcement of 2024 awards and status on applications for the current open application period.

HAZARD MITIGATION

21. BRAVE 2025 – Update on the draft hazard mitigation plan for the period 2025 – 2029. Adoption of this plan will occur over the winter (2025) once approved by PEMA and FEMA.

PUBLIC HEALTH

22. WalkWorks – Revitalization of the WalkWorks program throughout the County through partnerships, re-establishment of groups, and events for 2025.

TRANSPORTATION

23. Trail Planning – Coordination with the Chamber's Transportation Committee on trail planning through the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan and subsequent Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

24. General Liability Insurance - Approval of a renewal contract in the amount of \$3,601.00 annually for General Liability Insurance from Cincinnati Insurance, brokered by Gingrich Insurance.
25. Worker's Compensation Insurance - Approval of a renewal contract in the amount of \$1,312.00 annually for Worker's Compensation Insurance from Cincinnati Insurance, brokered by Gingrich Insurance.
26. Memorandum of Understanding - Approval of an MOU agreement with the Blair County Commissioners to transition Sherry Socie from the Blair County Commissioners Office to the Blair Planning Commission and to cover our cost of benefits in the amount of \$2,710.22.
27. Planning Director's Report - The Director will offer a report on any miscellaneous items not otherwise covered on the agenda.
28. County Commissioner Liaison Forum - The liaison Commissioner may make any reports, comments, or findings to the Planning Commission.
29. Planning Commissioners' Forum - Planning Commission members may bring items of relevant interest to the attention of the body as a whole.
30. Questions from the Media - The Commission will address any questions asked by the media needed to clarify any points made or agenda items discussed during the meeting.
31. Announcements
 - November 7 - Chamber Policy Committee
 - November 7 - Local Emergency Planning Committee
 - November 11 - Veterans' Day (BCPC office closed)
 - November 13 - WPC Hollidaysburg Advisory Committee
 - November 20 - GIS Day
 - November 20 - Southern Alleghenies CAP monthly meeting
 - November 21 - SAP&DC Listen and Learn: PA Rural Population Revitalization Commission
 - November 21 & 22 - Chesapeake Bay Landscape Training, BCCD
 - November 25 - HBCC Steering Committee
 - November 28 and 29 - Thanksgiving Holiday (BCPC office closed)
 - December 5 - Chamber Policy Committee
 - December 5 - Local Emergency Planning Committee
 - December 12, 2024 - BCPC Meeting and Annual Holiday Social

ADJOURNMENT

The next board meeting will be the Annual Meeting and Holiday Social scheduled for Thursday, December 12, 2024 at 4:00 p.m. at White Oak Hall, 383 Fort Roberdeau Road, Altoona.



BLAIR COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting Minutes for October 31, 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
Patrick Baechle
Lawrence Carter
Thomas M. Holsinger
Amy Webster, Commissioner

Representing:

Townships Collectively
City of Altoona
City of Altoona
Boroughs Collectively
City of Altoona
Townships Collectively
Commissioner Liaison

Members absent:

Herbert Shelow, Sr., Secretary
Benjamin Postles
Linda Smith

Boroughs Collectively
Townships Collectively
Townships Collectively

Guests:

Commissioner Dave Kessler
Sherry Socie
Walt Frank
Carol Dannenberg
Regis Nale

County Commissioner
Chief Clerk / County Administrator
Altoona Mirror
Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog
Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog

Staff:

David McFarland III, Planning Director
MacKenzie Caron, Regional Planner
Wes Burket, Transportation Planner
Rhonda Kelly, Planning Aide

Staff Absent: Emily Evey, Community Planner

Chairman Hall explained that Board member Mr. Shelow has been absent in recent months due to a medical circumstance.

2. Approval of Minutes – A motion was made to approve the Planning Commission minutes of the September 26, 2024 meeting; Motion passed.

Motion: To approve the minutes of the September 26, 2024 meeting, Item #2 on this agenda:

Moved: Thomas Holsinger

Seconded: James Dixon

Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

3. Public Comment Period – Regis Nale, Hollidaysburg resident provided comment on the rezoning petition listed on this agenda as Item #9. Mr. Nale stated the proposed rezoning to industrial for this particular tract would be the correct thing to do and might eliminate a perception that this area is spot zoning.

APPOINTMENT

4. 8:35 a.m. -Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission (SAP & DC) – Lee Slusser thanked to Board for the opportunity to be able to speak at the Planning Commission Meeting. The SAP & DC performs a variety of functions, one of which serves as a six-county regional planning agency that includes the counties of Cambria, Blair, Huntingdon, Somerset, Fulton and Bedford. The subject of Mr. Slusser's presentation is the newly proposed 2025–2029 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the economic development of the region and is also used as a guide for federal and state funding applications. A CEDS is required by the U.S. Department of Commerce and must updated every five (5) years. This proposed CEDS update is currently open for public comment. The CEDS must include background studies, a workforce development board analysis, a survey, prioritized goals, objectives and strategies and measurable outcomes. The CEDS must address the region's economic development, resiliency and equity.

The presentation provided some of the factors considered to determine the economic development for this six-county region, such as the continuing decline in the overall population, adding to that is the decline in the workforce population due in part to aging out as well as the challenge of attracting new, working-age people to this area because of the lack of available housing among other needed improvements. Another factor to be considered for economic development is the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In the last five (5) years Blair County's agricultural industry has surged. In 2019-2022 (the pandemic period), the GDP actually increased for the area despite the smaller, declining workforce. In 2022, Blair County was the fifth in Pennsylvania for milk production (Huntingdon seventh) and is the second (2nd) most expensive farmland to rent per acre (Lancaster is highest) in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Slusser reviewed the background studies and goals of the CEDS and reported on the SAP & DC's regional planning efforts in terms of potential upcoming projects that include a new regional comprehensive plan and a new greenways plan. The CEDS document is available to view on the SAP & DC's website.

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

5. Sheetz Shwellness Center – located at 5800 6th Avenue in the City of Altoona. The plan proposes a second renovation to the former Kopp Drug building to create a Sheetz Shwellness Center that will provide routine medical and wellness appointments for their employees. This plan includes complete interior renovations and a new entrance vestibule, as well as exterior improvements that include lighting, sidewalks, landscaping and resealing and striping of the adjacent asphalt parking lot. It is recommended that the number of parking spaces be reduced and replaced with landscaped islands. The current access to the site will remain via the existing bi-directional road and an existing one-way road that wraps around the building. Other recommendations made are for the developer to consult the City of Altoona to address any concerns related to the anticipated increase in traffic as well as to ensure all proposed landscaping meets the City's requirements. It is also recommended that sidewalk improvements be included along both streets and to install an inverted U-style bike rack that will promote active mobility.

Although prime agricultural soils exist at this location, there are no immediate environmental concerns. The site is located within the Beaver Dam Branch of the Juniata River Watershed; however the impact is expected to be minimal as a result of this development.

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: James Dixon

Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone

Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

6. Simington Plaza – located at 1301 Broadway in the City of Altoona. The proposed plan includes the demolition of two sections of the existing Juniata Fabrics Building to create two parking lots for three existing buildings on the property. Site improvements also include sidewalks, landscaping and three asphalt parking lots. The City's parking minimum for this size/type of development is 40 spaces; this proposed plan includes 82 standard parking spaces, eight ADA spaces and bicycle parking. It is recommended to reduce the number of parking spaces and replace with landscaping to reduce the impervious surfaces. Site access will be via an existing driveway and two new, one-way drives that connect to public roads. Due to the anticipated increase in vehicle trips, it is recommended the developer consults the City to address any traffic concerns. It is also recommended to include a turnaround area by the dumpsters and concrete pad area. The developer should also ensure the landscaping meets the City's requirements.

Portions of the site are located within both the 100-year and 500-year floodplains and an AE Floodway; the property owner should keep mitigation in mind. It is recommended that the amount of impervious surface be reduced by including additional landscaping and more infiltration islands as needed. The site is located within the Beaver Dam Branch of the Juniata River Watershed. Although no stormwater management plans were submitted, minimal impact to this watershed is expected due to the inclusion of three infiltration islands.

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 #6 on this agenda

Moved: Nicola Ardizzone

Seconded: Lawrence Carter

Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

7. A. Duie Pyle Facility – located along Cotton Town Road in the Marasco Business Park in Greenfield Township. This development plan proposes new construction of a 25,820 sf office building, 42 associated dock doors on +/- 35-acre parcel, construction of a 12,000 sf maintenance building, truck/trailer and associate parking, associated access drives and stormwater management improvements. The 417 total parking spaces proposed for this project will create 10.7 acres of impervious surface at this site. No parking metrics were included in the submitted plan; it recommended, if feasible, to reduce the number of parking spaces reduced/replaced with additional landscaped islands or bioretention facilities to limit the impervious surface and reduce the potential runoff resulting from this proposed development.

Proposed access to the site is via an improved bidirectional access drive from Cotton Town Road. It is recommended the developer consult with Greenfield Township regarding the vacation of the cul-de-sac. Although no vehicle trip estimates were provided in the submission, a new trucking facility has the potential to generate significant addition vehicle trips in this area. It is recommended the developer consult with PennDOT and Greenfield Township to address any potential negative impacts on local transportation.

Landscaping improvements are proposed, including a forested riparian buffer and a chain-link fence. The developer should ensure all landscaping meets the Township's landscape requirements. It is recommended that any exterior lighting be shielded/directed in a manner that prevents glare on neighboring properties and roadways.

Environmentally, this site reveals the presence of prime agricultural soils, significant wetlands and the 100-year flood plain exist on portions of the site. The conversion of active farmland for development of any kind is not typically recommended; however, the developer specifies this was previously subdivided as part of the Marasco Business Park in 2014. It is noted that since then, Blair County has adopted more stringent environmental protections that include conservation and preservation of agricultural and other natural resources. Additionally, a High-Quality Cold-Water Fisher, Beaver Dam Creek runs through this property. The engineer has stated the infiltration testing was completed and the results show unfavorable ground water elevation for infiltration. A forested riparian buffer is proposed along Beaver Dam Creek to provide water quality treatment for the site's runoff.

The site is located within the Frankstown Branch of the Juniata River Watershed; the post-construction stormwater management plan states that a series of subsurface pipe detention systems are proposed to provide rate control with discharge to three level spreader locations throughout the site. The proposed stormwater management measures should help mitigate runoff, the proposed impervious surface area appears to encroach the floodplain and wetlands. It is recommended the developer consult with Greenfield Township and the PA DEP to ensure all facilities are designed in accordance with the Township's Floodplain and Stormwater Management Ordinances as well as meet the stringent requirements for development in regard to the High-Quality CWF found on this site.

It is the opinion of the Blair Planning Commission that this proposal, for the reasons stated above, is not consistent with the with countywide planning efforts as presented in the *Alleghenies Ahead* Regional Comprehensive Plan, adopted July 31, 2018, which includes comprehensive planning for Blair County. If additional studies/reviews are completed and submitted to the PA DEP, Blair Planning Commission would like the opportunity to review those details further before making any additional motion on this development.

Motion: To table Item #7 on this agenda

Moved: Nicola Ardizzone

Seconded: Lawrence Carter

Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

8. 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: 400 East 25th Avenue -PC3-DG Altoona LLC Lot Consolidation
 - City of Altoona: Heaton No Impact Subdivision, 2000 – 2006 15th Avenue
 - Frankstown Township: Woomer Lot Merger, Scenic Knoll Drive

- Huston Township: Piney Creek School Side Lot Addition, STREET?
- Logan Township: Meling Subdivision – Lot Consolidation, Intersection of N. 7th St and N. 19th Ave
- Logan Township: Castle Farms Phase 2B and 2C Subdivision/Replot, Queens Way and Avalon Rd
- Logan Township: Holmberg Subdivision, Lot Consolidation, 1601 Princeton Road
- North Woodbury Township: Kensinger Lot Line Change, 166 Orchard Lane
- Woodbury Township: Simendinger Subdivision and Side Lot Addition, STREET?

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #8 on this agenda

Moved: James Dixon

Seconded: Patrick Baechle

Vote: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

REVIEW OF ACTIONS BY GOVERNING BODIES

9. Hollidaysburg Borough – The Borough submitted Rezoning Amendment No. 911 in the area of Newry Street, Porter Alley and Hetherington Alley. The proposed amendment would effectively rezone the area from Residential - Business (RB) to Limited Industrial (LI) zoning for the future expansion of McClanahan's Corporate Office. The site does fall within the 500-year floodplain; otherwise, there are no immediate environmental concerns. Any future development should align with both the Hollidaysburg Borough SALDO and the Blair County Regional Comprehensive Plan, the *Alleghenies Ahead*, adopted July 31, 2018.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #9 on this agenda

Moved: James Dixon

Seconded: Patrick Baechle

Vote: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

METROPOLITAN CLEARINGHOUSE

10. Blair County FY2024 CDBG Application – Proposed projects for inclusion in Blair County's 2024 CDBG Funding application:

- Neighborhood Facilities: \$118,569.00
(17 non-entitlement = \$20,000; Antis Township = \$98,569.00)
- Demolition & Clearance (Spot Basis) Hollidaysburg Borough (eliminate spot blight)..... \$ 45,565.00
- Owner-occupied, single unit Housing Rehabilitation \$378,859.00
(17 non-entitlement, Frankstown Twp & Tyrone Boro)
- Housing Rehabilitation, - sewer laterals\$ 83,506.00
(Reservoir Rd Sewer Ext Project, Blair Twp)
- Economic Development: Micro-Enterprise Assistance, Hollidaysburg\$ 45,565.00
(general support services to owners and developers of micro-enterprises)

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #10 on this agenda

Moved: James Dixon

Seconded: Patrick Baechle

Vote: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

11. Hollidaysburg Borough – Transportation Planner Wes Burket explained that PennDOT has requested comments on the grant application for the 2024 Rail Freight Program funds for the purpose of expanding the railroad by about a tenth of a mile to accommodate additional rail cars to be recycled. Blair Planning Commission provided a letter of support for this grant application.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #11 on this agenda
Moved: Patrick Baechle
Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone
Vote: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

12. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – The Blair Planning Commission was requested to provide comment on changes proposed for the Commonwealth Code regarding the redesignation of numerous Class A Streams throughout the Commonwealth. Three of these streams are located in Blair County and all three will become designated as high-quality, cold water fish streams. Bells Gap Run (borders Bellwood Antis Community Park), Homer Gap Run (from game lands down to the impound in Logan Township) and Boiling Spring Run in Greenfield Township (behind A. Duie Pyle, listed on this agenda).

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations for Item #12 on this agenda
Moved: Nicola Ardizzone
Seconded: Lawrence Carter
Vote: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

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

- Frankstown Township -Levine Engineering LLC for Frankstown Township’s Sylvan Heights Drive Sewer Extension Project, NPDES Chapter 102 permit application
- Huston Township -Gunnnett Engineers LLC for Vernon Martin, 334 Sportsmen’s Road, Sewage Facilities Planning Module
- Juniata Township -Geotech Engineering Inc for RES Coal LLC, Laurel Gap Operation, Proposed New Surface Mine, General Information Permit Application
- Logan Township – EADS Group for Plank Road Drainage Improvement Project, Chapter 105 Water, Obstruction and Encroachment permit application
- Tunnelhill Borough-Stiffler McGraw for Gallitzen Borough Sewer and Disposal Authority to discharge treated effluent to Bradley Run, NPDES permit renewal
- Tyrone Township – John Delacio for Jeannine Wonderling Property a single residence sewage treatment plant, NPDES General Information Authorization application

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Items #13 on this agenda
Moved: Thomas Holsinger
Seconded: James Dixon
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

LONG-RANGE PLANNING

14. Advancing the Alleghenies –Planning Commission staff recently performed a formal review related to the SAP & DC presentation made earlier in this meeting by Mr. Slusser and is now provided at this meeting a written strategy of objectives, comments and recommendations for this document. The CEDS reviewed five years ago was the basis for this review of Advancing the Alleghenies. The comments focused on housing, aging infrastructure and public transit (both rural and urban). Comments were also made pertaining to the economic development related to telecommuting as well as using the Gross Domestic Product as a measurement for the county’s economic health. Mr. McFarland provided an overview of the staff’s review.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Item #14 on this agenda
Moved: Nicola Ardizzone
Seconded: Patick Baechle
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

15. Juniata Forward – This is a watershed management plan currently open for public comment. This Plan focuses on the entire watershed that spans the upper regions of the Allegheny Front down to Duncannon, Pennsylvania and includes heavy input and recommendations from Blair County. This is not entirely an environmental plan, it also focuses on biology, historic resources and land use and also integrates stormwater and flooding initiatives as well for updating ordinances and plans to better facilitate the integration of what impacts the environment. The Juniata Forward plan includes a direct integration with hazard mitigation plan in terms of linking floods and stormwater. Mr. McFarland provided an overview of the Planning Commission's input and recommendations. The Juniata Forward is available online.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Item #15 on this agenda
Moved: Patick Baechle
Seconded: James Dixon
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

16. All Together Altoona – An open house was held on Tuesday, October 29, 2024 with approximately 50 attendees at the Margaret Avenue facility. The largest concerns are walkability, connectivity and bicycling.
17. Hollidaysburg Comprehensive Plan –The final (of three) public open house was held in October. The participation at these open houses was very successful. The input gathered at these open houses was then reviewed by Andy and Ethan from Hollidaysburg and MacKenzie from the Planning Commission and the data was integrated into the Plan. Adoption of the Hollidaysburg Comprehensive Plan is anticipated to occur in Spring 2025.
18. Bellwood-Antis Comprehensive Plan – A grant application was submitted for funding to develop a joint comprehensive plan for Bellwood Borough and Antis Township. It is anticipated the determination of a grant award should be available at the beginning of the year.

COORDINATION

19. Emergency Services Study – This study is listed in Blair County's Hazard Mitigation Plan and will soon be ready to move forward to begin the study. The study might be completed at no cost (other than staff time) through PA DCED. Chairman Hall stated this may be one of the more important plans, noting the recurring theme is that our Emergency Services volunteer people, fire, ambulance, etc. are all aging and it is a challenge to maintain adequate numbers for these services.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations to submit a grant application to PA DECE for Item #19 listed on this agenda
Moved: James Dixon
Seconded: Thomas Holsinger
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

GRANTS

20. Local Share Account Grants – In late October, PA DCED announced the local share grant awards from its statewide accounts; this grant does not require a match. Out of the eligible 2,748 applications submitted, over \$1.6 billion dollars was requested. 1,069 grants were awarded at a total of \$346 million dollars, which is almost \$100 million more than what they provided in 2022. Sherry Socie had submitted 15 grant applications on behalf of various municipalities; of those 15 applications, four were awarded, mainly the Human Society; Freedom Township, North Woodbury Township, Williamsburg Volunteer Fire Company. The last three award coincide with the DCED moving forward study. Allegheny Township had also received grant funds from a grant application the Township submitted on its own.

The total grant funds awarded for this year are \$169,000,632.00 dollars; the total grant awards received in through the Planning Commission office since 2021 is \$6,010,507.00 dollars.

Two other grant applications were submitted by MacKenzie Caron, one for Taylor Township and Freedom Township for equipment.

Chairman Hall still questions how to resolve the issue of how the Planning Commission is paid for the grant work, perhaps through the upcoming restructuring of the fee schedule.

HAZARD MITIGATION

21. BRAVE 2025 – The Planning Commission would like to submit to PEMA the updated plan for *BRAVE 2025* to PEMA for their review comments and then finalize the update to get it out to municipalities of Blair County and have it adopted by February 14, 2025. Chairman Hall questioned if this includes ‘marrying’ the hazard mitigation plan with the flood control. Mr. McFarland responded that flood control will be more a part of the new and upcoming Stormwater Management Plan.

PUBLIC HEALTH

22. WalkWorks – Ms. Caron explained that the Planning Commission is partnering with AmeriCorp to provide assistance for their volunteer, Zhorea who is working with the Altoona Family Physicians office. Zhorea’s core project will be a fund raiser to be held in May at the PNG Field. The Glow Night event will benefit homelessness and homeless shelters in the area and can help kickoff the revitalization of the WalkWorks program.

TRANSPORTATION

23. Trail Planning – Mr. McFarland and Mr. Burket met on October 24, 2024 with a Blair Alliance committee, as they are interested in further development of the county’s trail systems. Through coordination efforts by the Blair Chamber of Commerce’s Transportation Committee and through the Blair Planning’s MPO Long-Range Transportation Plan and subsequent Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan, Blair Planning was able to provide a trail inventory at this meeting. Blair Planning will work with the County GIS to furnish maps. Another meeting will be scheduled with the Alliance Committee for further discussion and prioritization and if there are any conceptual trails to be considered.

ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

24. General Liability Insurance – Mr. McFarland provided a brief overview of the renewal contract, in the amount of \$3,601.00 annually.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Item #24 on this agenda

Moved: Nicola Ardizzone

Seconded: James Dixon

Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

25. Worker's Compensation Insurance – Mr. McFarland provided a brief overview of the renewal contract, in the amount of \$1,312.00 annually.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Item #25 on this agenda
Moved: Thomas Holsinger
Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

26. Memorandum of Understanding - Mr. McFarland explained an MOU contract for benefits coverage for Sherry Socie in the amount of \$2,710.22 during her transition back to the Planning Commission Office.

Motion: To approve the staff actions and recommendations listed for Item #26 on this agenda
Moved: Lawrence Carter
Seconded: Nicola Ardizzone
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

27. Planning Director's Report – Mr. McFarland reported that three staff members recently attended the State's APA conference in Erie, PA., each covering mostly separate discussion sessions. He commended this year's conference had provided a broader selection of projects from across the State versus highlighting projects located only in the surrounding conference area. He conveyed the staff appreciated being able to attend and be involved. Another staff member will be attending a tri-state planning conference in the state of Indiana in early November for the purpose of attending keynote and public sessions highlighting projects the Planning Office specifically was involved with in Hollidaysburg. involved in.

Chairman Hall commented on the presentation from PA DCED last month and is pleased that the State has initiated three planning districts to assist with the local planning initiatives.

28. County Commissioner Liaison Forum –Commissioner Webster introduced Commissioner Kessling to talk on the topic of trails. Chairman Hall offered, as in the past, that the Commission liaison discussion can be moved to the front of the agenda. Commissioner Webster was appreciative of the offer but commented that it is important for the Commissioners to know what is going on county-wide; she further commented that a lot of the things the Commissioners do will have an impact on Planning things.

Commissioner Kessling started he appreciates the opportunity to present to the Planning Commission Board today and also appreciation as the Board of Commissioners for the Planning Commission's willingness to sign an MOU with regard to Sherry Socie. He expressed that Sherry is a gem, that no matter who she works for or where she works, she puts forth 110 percent and is committed to Blair County in any role she performs.

Mr. Kessling is presenting today on behalf of the Board of Commissioners to explain a decision and to answer questions related to *Explore Altoona* (TPA). He explained that the Board of Commissioners (past and present) have asked multiple times for *Explore Altoona* to consider a different direction but they have refused. The door is still open for them to join the Commissioners in their vision for a new direction.

Explore Altoona was created by the County and nearly all funded by the County; this year's projected funding is approximately \$953,000.00 in hotel tax money to promote Blair County. Commissioner Kessling stated that the Commissioners are NOT saying *Explore Altoona* does not do a good job of

promoting Blair County – what the Commissioners are saying is, that the Board (and past Boards) are interested in asset development. The Commissioners do not want *Explore Altoona* to stop marketing but wants them to use some of the hotel tax money to develop assets as well. The Water Authority has opened 15,000 acres for trail development. Cambria, Bedford and Centre County have all questioned and commented that Blair County is the missing link and does Blair County want to partner to build and extend trails from county to county to county for all to benefit. ABCD Corp has also stated that this would be a good idea.

Commissioner Kessling stated that the Commissioners could choose for the County to NOT collect a bed (hotel) tax; this would not require a vote and would shut down *Explore Altoona*, but the Commissioners chose not to do that so they will put it to a vote. He explained that because the Planning Commission plans for the future, that this would be a good place to explain why the Commissioners are putting this to a vote and how building the County's assets will help attract people to Blair County; with the current trajectory of people leaving the area, those remaining will be paying more taxes.

Commissioner Kessling responded to Board Member Mr. Ardizzone that yes, this project would create jobs; Mr. Ardizzone stated that this concept should be brought out big. Board Member Mr. Baechle expressed that he has been on bicycle trails all over and is amazed by the upkeep but commented on the long-standing issue of the White Bridge. Mr. Kessling responded that with an Authority there is more ability to secure additional grant funds and also stated that a local engineer is currently working on a plan in connection with the White Bridge.

Board Member Mr. Holsinger expressed destruction concerns about ATVs on the trails. Commissioner Kessling stated that whether or not ATV trails are built, some ATV's will be on the walking trails; with trails specifically built for ATVs, they will be more likely to stay on those designated trails.

Mr. Kessling thanked the Board for its time.

Commissioner Webster added comment that the Commissioners' vision is different than past Boards. Other comments included that part of the reason the White Bridge was not replaced is due to the cost. She offered additional comment on the decertification of *Explore Altoona* (TPA); that by creating a new authority and utilizing the hotel tax funds (currently going to the TPA) along with grants, it will help in doing things to attract people to the area, not only for recreation but to live here. Commissioner Webster explained that part of the legal process of decertification includes a vote from the municipalities to allow the Commissioners to proceed with the decertification; this process includes public meetings to gather input for the Commissioners to consider before making a decision. Commissioner Webster reiterated that Blair County is the missing link in connecting the regional trail system. She responded to Mr. Baechle that the ABCD Corp would be the avenue to market Blair County, in addition to an authority.

Board Member Mr. Ardizzone commented that it would be beneficial for the Commissioners to get the word out and advertise what their plan actually is with regard to a new authority and Commissioner Webster agreed.

Commissioner Webster reported that a couple properties have been identified for the proposed prison.

29. Planning Commissioners' Forum – No comment at this time.

30. Question From the Media – Mr. Frank vacated the meeting prior and therefore there were no questions from the media at this time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

31. Upcoming Events:

- November 7 – Chamber Policy Committee
- November 7 – Local Emergency Planning Committee
- November 11 – Veterans' Day (BCPC office closed)
- November 13 – WPC Hollidaysburg Advisory Committee
- November 20 – GIS Day
- November 20 – Southern Alleghenies CAP monthly meeting
- November 21 – SAP&DC Listen and Learn: PA Rural Population Revitalization Commission
- November 21 & 22 -Chesapeake Bay Landscape Training, BCCD
- November 25 – HBCC Steering Committee
- November 28 and 29 – Thanksgiving Holiday (BCPC office closed)
- December 5 – Local Emergency Planning Committee
- December 12, 2024 -Annual Meeting and Holiday Social

ADJOURNMENT

The next Planning Commission Board meeting is scheduled for 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 12, 2024 at the White Oak Hall, 331 Fort Roberdeau Road, Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 11:35 a.m.
Moved: James Dixon
Seconded: Thomas Holsinger
Voted: 6 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

Respectfully Submitted



Date Minutes Approved


