

**BLAIR COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**

Regular Meeting of August 26, 2021, 8:30 A.M.  
Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, Pennsylvania

**MINUTES**

**CALL TO ORDER**

1. **Roll Call --**

**Members present:**

William R. Hall, Chairperson  
James M. Dixon, Treasurer  
Pat Baechle  
Vincent G. DiLeo  
Thomas M. Holsinger

**Representing:**

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

**Members absent:**

Randy Isenberg  
Benjamin Postles  
Herbert F. Shelow Sr., Secretary  
Linda K. Smith

Boroughs Collectively  
Boroughs Collectively  
Townships Collectively

**Commissioner Liaison**

Bruce Erb

County Commissioner

**Solicitor:**

None

**Guests:**

Walt Frank  
Carol A. Dannenberg

*Altoona Mirror*  
Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog Group

**Staff:**

David McFarland III, Planning Director  
Jamie L. Klink, Regional Planner  
Sherry Socie, Strategic Planner  
Rhonda Kelly, Planning Aide

**Staff absent:**

Wesley Burket, AICP, Transportation Planner

2. **Approval of Minutes** - The minutes of the July 29, 2021 Blair Planning Board meeting were considered for approval.

**Motion:** To approve the July 29, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes:

**Moved:** Thomas Holsinger

**Seconded:** James Dixon

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

3. **Public Comment Period** – No comments were given from the public guest in attendance.

## ACTIONS BY GOVERNING BODIES

4. Meadows Miniature Golf – Located along Municipal Drive in Allegheny Township. The proposed renovation project removes existing batting cages and a miniature golf course, which will be replaced with a new, larger miniature golf course. No new structures or changes are proposed for the site access or parking. It is recommended the developer should ensure any landscaping, lighting and photometrics should comply with Allegheny Township's requirements. A negative impact is not anticipated for peak hour traffic. The proposed renovation project does not pose a significant environmental concern, as the project site is on a previously developed site. This project reduces the impervious surface, which will reduce stormwater runoff and mitigate negative impacts on the Beaverdam Branch of the Juniata River Watershed. In summary, the proposed plan is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.
  
5. Willowbrook Mobile Home Park – Located along Mill Road, in Allegheny Township. The project proposes 17 additional, double-wide mobile home lots with gravel parking and various stormwater management facilities. The additional lots are to be located within three (3) separate sections of the mobile home park. Access to the new lots will be gained from an existing gravel driveway and re-routing an area for two (2) of the new proposed lots. It is recommended the developer comply with Allegheny Township's parking area ordinance, minimally tar and chip. A brief discussion occurred regarding lot paving and to clarify that there is not access to Mill Road from Elcona Street from within the mobile home park. It is recommended the developer meet the Township's ordinance requirements with regard to sidewalks, as well as any landscaping, lighting and photometrics. It is also recommended the developer consult with Allegheny Township to assess any potential negative transportation impacts that could result from increased traffic during peak hours. The steep slopes of any new proposed lots will be mitigated by re-grading. It is recommended the developer ensure the proposed stormwater facilities comply with the Allegheny Township's requirements to mitigate any negative impact on the Beaverdam Branch of the Juniata River Watershed. In summary, the proposed plan is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan. In summary, the proposed plan is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.
  
6. Pine Creek Structures, LLC – Located along E. Pleasant Valley Boulevard in Antis Township. The project proposes construction of a 504 square-foot building to be used for office space with an ADA accessible ramp and paved parking. Access to the site is through an existing 24-foot-wide gravel driveway, which will include a right-turn ingress and a right-turn egress only. A second existing driveway will be removed, as it is near a busy intersection at East Pleasant Valley Boulevard and Skelp Mountain. Sidewalks do not currently exist at this site and are generally recommended along public streets; however, if Antis Township agrees that the roadway shoulder provides an acceptable pedestrian walkway, the omission of sidewalks is not opposed for this plan. It is recommended that for any landscaping, lighting or photometrics, the developer should ensure such elements comply with Antis Township's requirements. Although no negative peak-hour traffic impact is anticipated, it is recommended the developer consult with Antis Township. The proposed project does not pose a significant environmental concern, as the project site is on a previously developed site. The developer has stated the project will not increase of impervious surface, which should minimize the impact on the Little Juniata River Watershed. In summary, the proposed plan is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.
  
7. Sandy Ridge Wind LLC II – Located in Snyder Township, Blair County and in Rush and Taylor Townships in Centre County. The proposed project includes construction of 11 wind turbines across three (3) land parcels, as well as various appurtenant structures, stormwater management controls, transmission lines and access roads. Site access will primarily be from State Route 453 with construction of new access roads branching off existing access roads. No significant concern is anticipated in relation to site access or delivery/construction of wind turbines and there will not be public access. The developer included studies on potential impacts related to the proximity of residential properties. Noise level is expected between 30 to 42 decibels, equating to a soft whisper at five (5) feet. The viewshed and photographic simulations determined only a marginal increased impact on the viewshed of the existing Sandy Ridge turbines. Shadow flicker calculation results are no more than a cumulative 12-hour timeframe for an entire year. The project site is not located within a Federal Aviation Administration Part 177 Airport Hazard Area, however, the developer included lighting to comply with FAA lighting regulations. A negative impact is not anticipated for peak hour traffic beyond the occurrence during delivery/construction phase. The project site, which is mostly in the Allegheny Front Landscape Conservation Area, does have some steep slopes, prime agriculture soils and portions are in the 100-year flood plain. Regrading will address any significant concern with these environmental features.

Dialogue occurred regarding preservation of the environment and wildlife in the area. To minimize potential impacts on vegetation and animals within the project area, the developer should make every effort to comply with the recommendations and requirements in the extensive documentation provided by the regulatory agencies. The project site is located within the South Bald Eagle Creek, Little Juniata and Moshannon Creek Watersheds. The developer has stated the project is designed in accordance with PA Chapter 102 regulations, Snyder Township's ordinance regarding stormwater management and follows stormwater Best Management Practices. The developer has consulted with the Blair County Conservation District regarding Erosion and Sedimentation planning. In summary, the proposed plan is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

8. **Stone Family Farm** – Located along Piney Creek Road in Woodbury Township. The proposed project includes construction of an 8,400 square-foot dairy heifer barn, stormwater management controls and gravel driveway extensions. Site access will be from existing gravel driveways that connect to Lower Piney Creek Road. No new parking areas are proposed. It is recommended the developer ensure any lighting is shielded to prevent glare on neighboring properties and roadways. The potential of increased traffic is not expected to be a significant negative impact on peak hour traffic. The project site is located within the Canoe Creek Watershed Important Mammal Area; however, no trees will be cut and does not create a significant concern to the local bat population. The developer should ensure the proposed stormwater management controls will limit post construction runoff rates that comply with Woodbury Township's requirements. In summary, the proposed plan is consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

**Motion:** To approve the staff actions and recommendations of Items #4 through #8 on the agenda  
**Moved:** Vincent DiLeo  
**Seconded:** Patrick Baechle  
**Voted:** 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson

9. **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: Ballos/Gibney Lot Merger
- City of Altoona: Hrzic Lot Consolidation
- Antis Township: Hegarty – Koch Property Line Change
- Antis Township: Learn Side Yard Addition
- Antis Township: Michael P. Tyler Living Trust Subdivision
- Greenfield Township: Clemens Subdivision/Lot Line Change
- Logan Township: Detrich Subdivision
- Logan Township: Lambert Subdivision/Lot Consolidation

**Motion:** To approve the staff actions on item #9 of the agenda  
**Moved:** Thomas Holsinger  
**Seconded:** James Dixon  
**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 were given an opportunity via email to review these requests prior to response letters being set:

- Tyrone Borough, Antis and Snyder Townships: Northern Blair County Regional Sewer Authority -2021 Sewer System Repairs – Chapter 105 General Permit (GP-11)
- Allegheny Township: Willowbrook Associates, Additional Lots at Willowbrook – NPDES Permit
- Allegheny Township: Sugar Run Disposal Site -NPDES Permit
- Frankstown Township: Curry Supply Co. -Surface Coating Plan Approval – PA DEP Air Quality Program, State Only Operating Permit Modification

- Logan Township: Westfall Park Disposal Site – NPDES Permit
- North Woodbury Township: Curryville Water Authority Interconnection, Public Water Supply Minor Amendment
- Woodbury Township: Mock Pavilion project, Chapter 105 Permit and Army Corp. of Engineers, Section 404 Permit

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

**Moved:** Patrick Baechle

**Seconded:** Thomas Holsinger

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

## ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

11. 2021 – 2022 Operating Year – At the July 29, 2021 Planning Commission meeting, two budget choices were presented. One scenario includes provisions to hire a Community Planner, which would be contingent on adopting a deficit spending budget utilizing stabilization funds to cover a two-year period. During the two-years the Planning Commission will determine if it can access additional funding sources. The other scenario omits the position of a Community Planner. The new hire budget deficit is \$31,300.00; the no new hire budget is a positive balance of \$17,000.00.

The new Community Planner would begin as a two-year position, knowing continued permanent employment is contingent upon the Commission securing additional funding sources. The Community Planner's duties will provide valuable time for the Director and Regional Planner to focus on projects that had to be delayed and to address important projects coming up, such as non-motorized transportation and infrastructure to benefit the municipalities in Blair County.

The staff base salaries for 2021-2022 averages a two (2) percent cost-of-living increase. The exception being the potential new Community Planner position of course, which did not exist in 2020-2021 budget. The Strategic Planner salary appears to be larger than two (2) percent because last year's budgeted amount was when the position was filled for only a half year. The salary adjustment for the Planning Aide was increased based on a recent County salary study. The salaries are set as follows: new Community Planner at \$40,000.00 (pro-rated); Planning Aide at \$35,568.00; Planning Director at \$78,625.00; Regional Planner at \$47,725.00; Strategic Planner at \$51,375.00; Transportation Planner at \$70,750.00.

The local share cost is increased. The Planning Director explained that two years ago, the local share was expected to increase by five (5) cents but actually was increased only three (3) cents, with the expectation the remaining two (2) cents would be added into last year's budget but there was zero (0) increase due to COVID. The Planning Commission, under its operating contract, must adjust its figures based on the decennial Census. Although the Census figures are not available until the end of September, the adjusted figures provided are estimated to within a percentage point or two of the actual real numbers and will be further adjusted when Census data is available the end of September.

The Director noted that over many years, there have been several lengthy periods of time, up to ten years at a time, during which there were no increases. If regular increases had occurred to keep up with the cost of doing business, the per capita rate would calculate to be at about \$1.23.

In summary, with a new Community Planner position, the lack of full increases the past two years, and the general increased costs to operate (inflation), the local share fees have been increased based on an increase to 50¢ per capita. It is important to note that the rate of 50¢ per capita, Blair County still remains the lowest rate in the State.

The Review Fee Schedule was discussed regarding the increase and will be effective September 1, 2021.

The budget discussion resulted in Board agreement to use the budget that includes a new Community Planner position.

**Motion:** To approve the recommendations of the 2021-2022 Blair Planning Commission Budget and all items listed in Item #11 on the agenda: the 2021-2022 salary schedule, the 2022 local share rate, the development review fee schedule and hiring a new Community Planner:

**Moved:** Patrick Baechle

**Seconded:** Thomas Holsinger

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

12. Planning Commission Forum: The Executive Committee will not meet for the next two weeks. The Chairman welcomed all members of the Planning Board to attend the Executive Committee meetings.
  
13. Questions from the Media – Mr. Frank asked for clarification on several items: the developer for the wind turbine project being Liberty Power / Algonquin Power; the infrastructure money being federal monies; and local share rate being raised to \$.50 and clarifying last year's rate at \$.42, which is based on 2010 Census data.

Update from Strategic Planner

The Strategic Planner provided an update on the USDA Federal Grant application for the Local Food and Economic System that was submitted at the end of March 2021. This was a competitive round and, although Blair Planning Commission did not receive the grant for this year, the USDA Grant representative made contact and advised that it is likely to go through for next year's round.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The next Planning Commission Board meeting is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, September 30, 2021 at the Altoona Water Authority, 900 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona, PA.

- Motion:** To adjourn the meeting at 9:40 a.m.  
**Moved:** James Dixon  
**Seconded:** Thomas Holsinger  
**Voted:** 5 in favor, no abstentions, so ordered by Chairperson