



THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



COMMISSIONERS

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Executive Director

PLANNING COMMISSION

Government Services Center, Suite 270
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MINUTES: Regular Monthly Meeting
Chester County Planning Commission

Hybrid – GSC Suite 270
April 10, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Michael Heaberg, Chair; Roberta Cosentino; Matt Hammond; Molly Morrison; Andrew Wright.

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Doug Fasic; Frank Furman.

STAFF PRESENT IN PERSON: Brian O'Leary, Executive Director; Carol Stauffer, Assistant Director; Carrie Conwell; Beth Cunliffe; Angela Dracup; Paul Fritz; Rachael Griffith; Gene Huller; Jake Michael; Kevin Myers; Nancy Shields; Brian Styche.

STAFF PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Glenn Bentley; Chris Bittle; Steve Buck; Richard Drake; Gwen Duli; Carolyn Oakley; Chris Patriarca; Patty Quinn; Sally Warren; Diana Zak.

VISITORS PRESENT IN PERSON: Todd Wilson.

VISITORS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Scott Dickinson; Carrie S.

CALL TO ORDER:

The regular monthly meeting of the Chester County Planning Commission held in person at the Government Services Center Suite 270 East and via Zoom audio/video on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, was called to order at 2:01 P.M. by Chair Michael Heaberg.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

ACTION ITEMS:

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE MARCH 13, 2024, MEETING OF THE CHESTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION WAS MADE BY MR. WRIGHT, SECONDED BY MR. HAMMOND, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Act 247 Reviews:

Subdivision and Land Development Reviews:

There were sixteen (16) Subdivision and Land Development Reviews prepared in March 2024.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE SIXTEEN (16) SUBDIVISION AND LAND DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS WAS MADE BY MS. MORRISON, SECONDED BY MS. COSENTINO, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Mr. Hammond recused himself from the following applications: SD-02-24-17991; SD-02-24-17989.

Comprehensive Plan, Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Amendments, Miscellaneous Reviews:

There were nine (9) Comprehensive Plan, Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance Amendment, and Miscellaneous Reviews prepared in March 2024.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE NINE (9) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, ZONING AND SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE AMENDMENT, AND MISCELLANEOUS REVIEWS WAS MADE BY MR. HAMMOND, SECONDED BY MS. MORRISON, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Ms. Cosentino recused herself from the following application: ZA-02-24-17994.

Act 537 Reviews:

Ms. Conwell presented the Commission with two (2) major Act 537 reviews for the month of March 2024.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE TWO (2) MAJOR ACT 537 REVIEWS WAS MADE BY MR. WRIGHT, SECONDED BY MR. HAMMOND, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Mr. Heaberg recused himself from the following application: Valley Forge Sewer Authority Special Study.

Ms. Conwell presented the Commission with two (2) minor Act 537 reviews for the month of March 2024.

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE TWO (2) MINOR ACT 537 REVIEWS WAS MADE BY MS. MORRISON, SECONDED BY MS. COSENTINO, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION ITEMS:

Sustainability Division Update:

Ms. Griffith reported that Chester County has been awarded a SolSmart Gold designation from ICMA, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy. The following programs contributed to attaining this award: solar ordinance inventory and outreach; solar power guide; solar adopters' conference; solar webpage and map; EEAB programs; and the community revitalization program allowing solar as an eligible use to be consistent with the climate action plan.

Next, Ms. Griffith reported that DVRPC completed the priority climate action plan for the Philadelphia MSA region. The first deliverable was a one-million-dollar planning grant from EPA's climate pollution reduction program. Chester County applied for a two-million-dollar implementation grant to reduce carbon pollution by constructing a net zero bus depot consisting of solar canopies for the county's Chesco Connect service.

Ms. Griffith reported that a DEP technical assistance grant helped finance a food waste diversion study at the Pocopson Home by assessing on-site and off-site composting.

Keep PA Beautiful, an affiliate of Keep Chester County Beautiful, choose Kelly McDowell as the Volunteer of the Year. Ms. McDowell coordinates litter clean up on Route 1.

Lastly, Ms. Griffith reported that the next step to the open space outreach will be the development of an open space accelerator program which will help and encourage municipalities to move their open space opportunities forward. A DCNR grant has been applied for along with a partnership grant to create a mini-grant program. Municipalities who apply for this program will have an assessment of their previous plans and priorities, an implementation plan, and a community event. CCPC will provide on-going support for implementation. A pilot program will take place later this year.

Multimodal Transportation Division Update:

Mr. Styche reported that the Commonwealth Financing Authority announced the approved project awards for the PA DCED multimodal transportation fund program. Chester County received a \$907,000 award for the one-mile extension of the Enola Low Grade trail into Atglen Borough as part of the Chester Valley Trail. Nine Chester County recipients received awards totaling \$4,951,730.

Next, Mr. Styche reported that he and Mr. Buck conducted a field view of the P&T corridor. They reviewed the exclusionary fencing at both ends of the Downingtown Trestle bridge and investigated potential connections to the Oak Ridge development, the East Branch Brandywine trail, and into the borough of Downingtown. Next, they visited the Skelp Level bridge, which will be replaced under the municipal bridge retro reimbursement program.

Mr. Michael reported on the 2023 Protected Open Space. As of December 31, 2023, there were 151,000 acres of protected open space in the county, representing 31.1% of the county as permanently preserved.

Design and Technology Division Update:

Mr. Fritz reported that the 247 planners reviewed and processed plan and ordinance submittals, as usual. Research on agricultural-related zoning for the county's municipalities continued. To date, thirty municipalities have been sent letters with information on how to make their zoning ordinances more ag-friendly.

The GIS staff assisted the Community Planning and Sustainability Divisions with mapping and analysis requests for work program projects. Staff also addressed data and map requests for *Landscapes3* metrics. The Graphics team assisted with various ongoing projects, including the Village Preservation Design Guide executive summary, 2024 Farm Guide, and the 2024 Town Tours and Village Walks brochure.

Mr. Fritz highlighted the following from the quarterly report: proposed townhouses have made up almost half of the proposed residential units; and twenty-five ordinance reviews, including comprehensive plan reviews, have been completed.

Community Planning Division Update:

Mr. Myers reported on the 2024 VPP grant round 1 timeline: March 22 – grant applications were due by 4pm; April 10 – the VPP subcommittee meets to recommend round 1 grant recipients; and May 8 – grant recipient recommendations are presented to the CCPC board for approval.

Active VPP projects consist of 19 single municipal projects and five multi-municipal projects. Active VPP projects nearing completion or hitting major milestones include: City of Coatesville zoning amendments and maps; East Caln comprehensive plan update; East Vincent zoning amendments; Penn Township comprehensive plan update; and West Sadsbury comprehensive plan update. Awarded VPP projects that will begin soon include: Pennsbury Township - ordinance update; West Chester Borough – parks, recreation, and open space master plan update; West Goshen Township – parks, recreation, and open space update; Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad – heritage interpretation plan; and West Nantmeal Township – comprehensive plan update.

Ms. Horwitz gave an update on the 2023 Housing Report. Housing report numbers are based on assessment data. Major takeaways include: median housing prices rose from \$466,480 in 2022 to \$492,000 in 2023; after adjusting for inflation, this is the highest median sale price in 33 years; new home sales decreased by 32%, while the median sales price increased to \$596,938; the median price for single-family detached homes of \$552,815 was significantly higher than attached sales prices of \$410,000; the number of both total and affordable sales decreased; 1,637 units were built during 2023; and an apartment construction decline resulted in a 35% drop in new unit construction.

Director's Report:

Mr. O'Leary introduced Angela Dracup, the newest member of the CCPC administration team.

Next, Mr. O'Leary reported that CCPC is hosting an in-person event on May 14, 2024 at the GSC, titled *A Changing World and Chester County*, which include a presentation of CCPC's five-year assessment of *Landscapes3* and a discussion about current trends. Throughout the summer, *Landscapes 3* recommendations and how they have been implemented will be highlighted at the CCPC board meetings.

Lastly, Mr. O'Leary introduced a potential rolling VPP mini-grant program . The rolling VPP program would consist of small mini grants for a maximum of \$10,000 and the projects must be completed within a year. There was a CCPC board consensus to move forward with the rolling VPP program. The next step will be to share the concept with the County Commissioners' office for input.

ADJOURNMENT

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 3:24 PM WAS MADE BY MR. WRIGHT, SECONDED BY MS. COSENTINO, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE COMMISSION.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian N. O'Leary, AICP
Secretary

BNO/ncs