

CRAWFORD COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

July Regular Meeting Minutes Crawford County Public Safety Building, Meadville, Pennsylvania

Commissioner Dreese, Chair, called the Regular Meeting of the Crawford County Planning Commission (Planning Commission) to order at 3:30 p.m. on July 25, 2022.

1. Roll Call:

Present –

John Frye
Maria Dreese, Chair
Katie Wickert, Vice-Chair
Travis Palmer
Austin Rock
Jessica Hilburn
Scott Sjolander

Absent –

John Lawrence
Ron Mattocks, Secretary

Other Attendees –

2. Action on the May 2022 Meeting Minutes:

Commissioner Dreese requested a motion to approve the May 2022 Regular Meeting minutes. Commissioner Hilburn moved to adopt the minutes. Commissioner Wickert seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Communications:

Mr. Norwood provided an update on the communications received by the Planning Commission since their May 2022 regular meeting. Communications included:

- NW RPO PennDOT District 1 (May & July)
- Letter from the Crawford County Board of Commissioners

4. Reports:

A. Standing Committees –

Transportation Committee: Commissioner Frye reported that the committee has not met but will likely meet in August.

Agricultural and Environmental Concerns Committee: Commissioner Wickert reported that the committee has not met and that she is unsure about the status of the County Forest Strategic Plan.

Personnel Committee: Commissioner Dreese reported that the committee met twice in May to discuss a variety of organizational items and the nature of its service for the Planning Commission.

Planning Initiatives Committee: Commissioner Hilburn reported that the committee met to discuss its proposal for affordable housing.

B. Planning Director's Report –

[ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES]

STAFF VACANCIES AND CAPACITY FILLING

Starting August 1, 2022, Ann Knott will be joining our team in the role of Office Manager. Ann's position will work to increase assistance with administrative functions of the office (i.e., work on our business, not in our business). The position was posted and competitively searched per union requirements. A total of four applications were received.

Peter Grella has accepted a position with the City of Meadville. His last day with the planning office was on July 20, 2022. Peter will be the City's new planning and zoning administrator. Staff congratulated Peter by taking him out for ice cream and joining Peter after office hours to celebrate. We wish him success in his new professional endeavor.

I am working with the Board of Commissioners and staff to determine how best to advance the office with decreased human capacity. Conversations include filling existing vacancies, examining organizational hierarchy, and addressing the underlying issues resulting in high levels of staff turnover.

PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION – NORTHWEST SECTION

The Northwest Section of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association (PA APA) is seeking interested individuals to serve on the section board as volunteers. Crawford County registers the Planning Commission as members of the PA APA annually, which entitles Commissioners to participate in events, trainings, or benefit from networking, online resources, and professional development.

Commission members interest in learning more about the Chapter or the [NW Section](#) should visit <https://planningpa.org/>. Upcoming workshops and webinars are available on the chapter calendar, <https://planningpa.org/events/2022-07/>. Additional materials or resources such as an [orientation guide](#), [monthly newsletters](#), and [trainings](#) for commissioners.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PROJECTS

CONNEAUT VALLEY BOROUGH'S MULTI-MUNICIPAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A draft of the Conneaut Valley Boroughs Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan was submitted to the project steering committee. The committee is meeting the evening of July 25, 2022 in Conneautville to discuss the final plan and prepare for the adoption process. Staff is working with the committee to determine how best to present the final plan to the communities in August.

ERNST TRAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

The Northwest Transportation Advisory Committee during their quarterly meeting on June 28, 2022 approved the Ernst Trail Feasibility study. A digital copy of the study will be available on the Planning website and the Northwest Commission's website.

ERIE TO PITTSBURGH TRAIL GAP STUDY

The Northwest Transportation Advisory Committee during their quarterly meeting on June 28, 2022 approved the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Gap study. A digital copy of the study will be available on the Planning website and the Northwest Commission's website.

2023-2026 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Northwest Rural Planning Organization (NW RPO) approved the 2023- 2026 TIP Update at their June 28, 2022 meeting. This plan sets the investment projects for the next four years throughout the region. Commission members interested in reviewing the plan can obtain a copy by contacting the planning director or through the Monday.com July 2022 regular meeting board.

NW RPO - COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR NORTHWEST PENNSYLVANIA

The Northwest Commission received approval from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the regions 2021 comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS). CEDS is not only a cornerstone of the U.S. EDA's programs, but successfully serves as a means to engage community leaders, leverage the involvement of the private sector, and establish a strategic blueprint for regional collaboration. The plan identifies four goal areas for the northwest: 1) entrepreneurship development, 2) business expansion, retention, and recruitment, 3) workforce development and education, and 4) infrastructure, place, and tourism development. Crawford County can leverage this plan to build partnerships across the region and seek funding for improving our communities. Commission members interested in reviewing the plan can obtain a copy by contacting the planning director or through the Monday.com July 2022 regular meeting board.

COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

The County Planning Office is working with the Board of Commissioners and Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) to revise a grant contract to authorize the use of funds for planning services associated with preparing (1) technical comprehensive plan study data and reports and (2) a model subdivision and land development ordinance specific to Crawford County based on new ideas and procedures for streamlining and simplifying the development review process.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Crawford County received an executed contract for our FY 2021 CDBG contract along with an amendment to our CDBG-CV (Coronavirus relief) contract in June. The County plans to make a competitive CDBG-CV application on August 1, 2022 to DCED for the Huidekoper Park improvements project. Anticipated total of this project is \$1.5 million. Community development staff met with North and South Shenango Joint Authority to discuss two potential CDBG projects. Deadline for project submissions is Monday July 25, 2022. Staff anticipate a handful of project submissions will be received.

APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION GRANT – ERIE TO PITTSBURGH TRAIL

Crawford County has contracted with Herbert, Rowland and Grubic, Inc. (HRG) for the engineering and construction services for the East Branch Trail and Knox & Kane Trail projects funded by ARC. It is anticipated the project kickoff meeting will be in August with a nine- month (9) timeframe for the project.

CRAWFORD COUNTY ACT 13 PROGRAM

Crawford County received funding from the Commonwealth as a result of the Public Utility Commission's (PUC) Act 13 program. The County's 2022 Environmental Initiatives allocation is \$83,942.36, an increase of 69.2% from 2021. Additionally, the County received \$4,061.54 in Impact Fee allocations in 2022. We are still awaiting final determination regarding the At-Risk Bridge allocation. Staff will work over the fall to prepare a public notification regarding the County's program seeking applications 2023.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

PA APA LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

On Thursday June 16, 2022, Zach Norwood was approved to serve on the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association's Legislative Committee. This is a standing committee of the Chapter and works to advocate for planning issues with local, state, and federal elected officials and monitors, recommends, or takes positions on State and Federal legislation or regulatory actions. As a result of Zach's involvement with this committee, information about legislation or regulatory actions will be available to Crawford County Planning more regularly.

- House Bill 2104 – Preemptive Regulations for Decommissioning of Solar Energy Facilities
 - Would create requirements at the State level regarding decommissioning and regulation of solar energy.
- Senate Bill 284 – Preemptive Standards for Decommissioning of Solar Energy Facilities (similar to HB 2104)
- House Bill 2366 - Transportation Funding Bill
 - Would allow local governments the ability to tax for surface transportation funding. Appears to allow for a tax on “Uber” style transportation and local services.
- Act 15 of 2022 – Local Open Space Tax
 - Allows municipalities to create a tax to preserve, acquire or hold land for open space uses.
- House Bill 2428 – Amendment of Meeting Standards to enable Hybrid Meetings

Additionally, there are multiple bills in draft to address issues voiced about delays in receiving and complexity of permit for municipalities to access streams for cleaning and stormwater management practices. Crawford County Planning Commission can determine if communication on any of the above bills should be sent to Senator Brooks or the County's representatives.

COMMONWEALTH'S 2022/2023 BUDGET

In the 2022/2023 budget (SB1100, HB 1421), the Commonwealth approved a Growing Greener 3 Initiative, now known as Outdoor Rec Program and Clean Streams Fund. The program allocates the following:

- \$100 million for DCNR projects (State parks & forest infrastructure and recreation projects),
- \$220 million to a newly created Clean Streams Fund which includes:
 - Agricultural Conservation Assistance (\$154 million)
 - PennVEST (\$22 million)
 - Nutrient Management Fund (\$22 million)
 - DEP stormwater management grants (\$8.8 million) – could be leveraged to update the Act 247 plan
 - DCNR – Keystone Tree Fund (\$8.8 million)

- Abandon Mine Drainage abatement (\$4.4 million)
- \$320 million for Commonwealth Finance Authority (CFA) for water/sewer projects including:
 - \$105.5 million for PA Small Water and Sewer grant programs

Additionally, the budget provided funding to DEP's Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG) in the amount of \$3 million. Application deadlines for this program are August 26th and December 16th of this year.]

5. Public Comment:

None.

6. Subdivisions, Land Developments & Zoning Reviews:

A. North Shenango Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment –

Mr. Gilbertson provided an overview of the propose zoning ordinance amendment in North Shenango Township concerning the regulation of solar energy systems. The primary concerns cited comprised the recommendation to limit the permission for solar energy systems only to areas that can accommodate them without experiencing adverse impacts and issues with select definitions within the proposed amendment. Commissioner Dreese requested questions and upon hearing none, called for a motion to convey the review letter on to North Shenango Township. Commissioner Wickert moved to forward the County Planning Agency's review on to the North Shenango Township Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Hilburn seconded that motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Vernon Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment –

Mr. Gilbertson provided an overview of the proposed zoning map amendment in Vernon Township and the nature of the Planning Office's comments. Commissioners Hilburn and Wickert expressed concerns over some of the language used within the letter to inform Vernon Township that the County Planning Agency has thirty (30) days to provide comments before their local hearing. The Planning Commission agreed by consensus that the last sentence of the letter be removed. Commissioner Dreese requested questions and upon hearing none, called for a motion to convey the review letter on to Vernon Township. Commissioner Sjolander moved to forward the County Planning Agency's review with amendments as discussed on to the Vernon Township Board of Supervisors. Commissioner Wickert seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Administrative Subdivision Reviews –

Mr. Norwood provided an overview of administrative reviews completed by the Crawford County Planning Office since the Planning Commission's May 2022 regular meeting. The report includes reviews conducted during June and July of 2022.

7. Old Business:

A. Discussion – 2020 Planning Agency Strategic Plan –

Commissioner Dreese discussed the need to get back into the Planning Agency Strategic Plan and review how the agency's plan may have been impacted by recent direction provided by the County Board of Commissioners.

B. Discussion – Commission Annual Self-Evaluation –

Commissioner Dreese discussed the Planning Commission's self-evaluation report and requested for commission members to complete their survey if they haven't already.

8. New Business:

A. Action – Planning Initiatives Committee Affordable Housing Proposal –

Commissioner Hilburn provided an overview of the affordable housing proposal supplied by the Planning Initiatives Committee. The main objectives of the proposal are centered on blight remediation, blight prevention, and historic conservation. Commissioner Hilburn continued by providing an overview of the program's component recommendations and strategies. Discussion was held concerning how the proposal may fit into the Planning Commission's work given the new direction provided to it by the County Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Sjolander moved to forward the proposal on to the County Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Rock seconded. Commissioner Hilburn commented on the importance of letting the Board of Commissioner know about the work that went into the proposal and that efforts to implement it can be viewed as an activity secondary to the county comprehensive plan. Commissioner Dreese called for the vote. Motion carried unanimously.

B. Discussion – County Planning Priorities & Policies Update –

Commissioner Dreese opened discussion on the letter sent to the Planning Commission from the County Board of Commissioners concerning new direction for the Planning Commission. The Board of Commissioners has instructed the Planning Agency to only file applications for subdivision and land development proposals and to pivot its focus primarily to conducting an update of the county comprehensive plan. Commissioner Wickert expressed concerns about the lack of communication and discussion between the Planning Commission and the Board of Commissioners prior to the issuance of the new directive. Additionally, concerns were raised about how local municipalities will be able to handle the subdivision and land development process without the County's guidance. Discussion of this agenda item was decided by consensus to be taken in tandem with agenda item C under new business concerning the comprehensive plan update. Several members raised concerns about the County's ability to restart conducting development reviews after taking nearly two years off from providing comments to local municipalities. Commissioner Wickert moved to amend the current meeting agenda to include an action item concerning the possibility of sending a letter to the County Board of Commissioners requesting a meeting with the Planning Commission to discuss the recent changes to the planning agency's direction. Commissioner Sjolander seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

E. Action Item – Letter to the County Commissioners concerning a meeting to discuss the recent directive to the Planning Commission –

Commissioner Wickert moved to send a letter to the County Board of Commissioners requesting a meeting to discuss the recent direction provided to the Planning Commission. Commissioner Frye seconded. It was discussed that the Planning Commission should prepare for the requested meeting with

the County Board of Commissioners by forming an ad-hoc committee to formulate a consistent message. Motion carried. Motion carried.

C. Discussion – Comprehensive Plan Update –

Mr. Norwood mentioned that the Planning Office is working to compile and develop the data necessary to support the comprehensive plan update as well as the creation a proposal for the planning process. Much of the focus on the Planning Office’s work will be centered around the implementable comprehensive plan approach.

D. Discussion – Planning Commissioner Comments –

Commissioner Hilburn – Expressed concerns about how to best focus her mental energy to support the Planning Commission considering the possibilities for abrupt changes in direction. Additionally, Commissioner Hilburn announced her new job as the Co-CEO and administrator of the Crawford County Federated Library System.

Commissioner Wickert – Announced her new role as Assistant City Manager for the City of Meadville and mentioned her role in overseeing planning and zoning. Commissioner Wickert also discussed her effort to develop an autism and sensory handicapped persons trail.

Commissioner Rock – Attended an event at the Meadville Airport that did an excellent job showcasing the Meadville area to the public.

9. Adjournment:

Commissioner Dreese requested a motion for adjournment. Commissioner Wickert moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Hilburn seconded. The July 2022 Crawford County Planning Commission Regular Meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m. on Monday, July 25, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Dreese, Chair
Crawford County Planning Commission

cc: Crawford County Board of Commissioners
Crawford County Planning Commission September 2022