



Photo Credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_Township,_Crawford_County,_Pennsylvania

2015

Annual Report

Crawford County Planning Commission

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Crawford County Planning Commission provides a wide variety of professional planning services to the citizens of Crawford County. Throughout 2015, the Planning Commission and staff have experienced a series of changes administratively and developmentally. This annual report documents and highlights the accomplishments and the hard work that all staff members in the Planning Commission have been involved with throughout 2015.

A few projects that the Planning Staff has assisted with and will be discussed in this report are as follows:

- Co-hosted a land banking workshop with the Crawford County Commissioners, with representation from the Pennsylvania Housing Alliance as guest speakers, in Cambridge Springs.
- The administration and management of the Act 13 Marcellus Legacy Fund including the At-Risk Bridge funds.
- The beginning stages of two NEW Municipal Comprehensive Plans for Wayne Township and East Fairfield Township.
- Assisting the Commissioners with the Judicial Building project.
- Leading the Commissioners in the creation of a survey and action items for the County Forest.

As a new management staff was formed, a portion of 2015 was spent revising and updating current policies, creating forms, checklists, brochures and literature to help educate the municipalities. As the year went on, the Planning Staff felt the best way to relay all the information was to plan a municipal workshop that would discuss the process and procedures of different ordinances. This workshop is planned to take place for Summer 2016.

The Planning staff is determined to keep the communication and professional relationships we have formed with the municipalities and other entities our main goal. We also take pride in assisting the citizens of Crawford County and hope to keep that our top priority.

If anyone should have questions or need assistance please contact our office at: planning@co.crawford.pa.us or call us at (814)333-7341.

Sincerely,

Arlene Rodriguez
Planning Director

FORWORD

Planning Commission

The Crawford County Planning Commission has experienced many changes from the beginning of the year right to the end. At the end of 2014, Kate Preston from Centerville Borough resigned from the Planning Commission. This put a vacancy in the Commission starting in January 2015. This vacancy did not get filled until June 2015 by John Lawrence, Richmond Township. John was a Supervisor in Richmond Township and currently is the Chairman for Richmond's Planning Commission. This provided the planning commission with its first full quorum since 2014.

In August of 2015, we were back to an eight (8) person planning commission after having to say our final goodbyes to a long-time member of 37 years after battling cancer for several years. Roy Brant, has been on our Planning Commission since 1978, he has served on multiple committees and was known for his passion with transportation in Crawford County. Roy was nominated in the "Planning Leadership Awards: Citizen Planner" to the PA Chapter of the APA and was accepted. Unfortunately, before Roy was able to accept this award he passed away. In honor of his achievement, his wife and sons accepted the award on his behalf in September 2015 in Pittsburgh, PA.

In December 2015, we introduced a new member to the board, James Glaspy of Springboro Borough. Jim serves on the Borough as the President and has been a member for many years. By having Jim on board, this gave us a full quorum and we were grateful to have all seats full to end 2015. Below is the listing of the Planning Commission Members as of December 2015.

Name	Municipality
Dick Astor	Vernon Township
James Glaspy	Springboro Borough
John Lawrence	Richmond Township
Louis Gago	Bloomfield Township
Lynn Cressman	Oil Creek Township
Mark Nickerson	Blooming Valley Borough
Robert Klasen	Cochran, PA
Robert Moyers	Conneaut Lake Borough
Scott Sjolander	Meadville, PA

2015 Crawford County Planning Commission Members



From left to right: (Front) Robert Moyers, Zachary Norwood, James Glaspy, Arlene Rodriguez, Karen Peterson, Heather Euard, Scott Sjolander, Robert Hopkins. (Back) Mark Nickerson, John Lawrence, Robert Klasen, Louis Gago, Dick Astor, Zachary Pyle. Absent from photograph: Lynn Cressman.

Crawford County Planning Commission Christmas Party



From front to back: (Left) John Lawrence, Heather Euard, Arlene Rodriguez, Karen Peterson, Commissioner Francis Weiderspahn, Commissioner Jack Lynch, Lynn Cressman. (Right) Mark Nickerson, Scott Sjolander, Zachary Pyle.

Planning Staff

The Crawford County Planning Office started 2015 short staffed after a few staff members accepted employment outside of Crawford County. Not only did one of our staff members accept a job in Erie County, PA, but the Planning Director, Alan Knapp, also accepted a job in his home state Ohio, in early January. For the first few months of the year, the staff was managed by the Assistant Planning Director, Arlene Rodriguez, who was named interim Planning Director and then became the permanent Planning Director in March 2015. Arlene Rodriguez has worked with the planning commission since November 2008 as a Planning Assistant II and then worked her way up to the Assistant Planning Director.

A few months went by where the Planning office was low in staff. An office that was once staffed by seven (7) individuals, dwindled down to five (5). In April 2015, the Planning Commission and County Commissioners approved the hire of Zachary Norwood as the Deputy Director (title formally known as the Assistant Planning Director). Prior to joining the Crawford County Planning Commission Zach Norwood was the Chief Planner for the Indiana County Office of Planning & Development. During his time in Indiana he worked on projects ranging from developing land use regulations to neighborhood plans and transportation projects to managing an internship program. Zach joins the Crawford County Planning Commission with a wealth of experience and passion for creating vibrant unique communities.

Shortly after Zach joined the staff, our Planning Assistant II, Amanda Chapel also known as the Grant Administrator for a short time, decided to put her resignation in June 2015. Amanda Chapel worked with the Planning Commission for 2 years prior to her resignation.



Arlene Rodriguez,
Planning Director



Zachary Norwood,
Deputy Director



Zachary Pyle,
Assistant Planning Director -
Community Development



Photo Credit: <http://www.bethesdamagazine.com/Bethesda-Beat/2015/Developers-Unveil-Plans-for-First-Phase-of-Mixed-Use-Chevy-Chase-Lake-Project/>

By her leaving, this then opened up the opportunity for a change in titles and a new hire. In September 2015, Zachary Pyle joined the Planning Commission as the Assistant Planning Director of Community Development. This position is similar to the Grant Administrator and Planning Assistant II position because they both deal with the community on various projects and obtaining grants to fulfill these project goals.

Prior to joining the Crawford County Planning Commission, Zach Pyle was the River Towns Program Coordinator for the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership in Central PA. Between 2012 and 2015, he coordinated community, economic and recreation planning efforts within the 22 counties that make up the Susquehanna Greenway. Zach grew up in Fairview, Butler County where he served as Mayor, lived in State College while attending Penn State, and now resides in Springboro Borough where he enjoys fixing up his old house.

It is the plan of the Planning Commission and staff to hire another position in Summer of 2016 to assist in all Planning activities. Details of the new position have been and still are in the works for 2016. The Planning office staff members are listed below for easy access if anyone should have any questions:

Name	Job Title	Email
Arlene Rodriguez	Planning Director	arodriguez@co.crawford.pa.us
Zachary Norwood	Deputy Director	znorwood@co.crawford.pa.us
Zachary Pyle	Assistant Planning Director of Community Development	zpyle@co.crawford.pa.us
Robert Hopkins	Land Use Planner	bhopkins@co.crawford.pa.us
Heather Euard	Planning Assistant I	heuard@co.crawford.pa.us
Karen Peterson	Secretary	kpeterson@co.crawford.pa.us

LAND USE PLANNING

Subdivisions and Land Developments

During 2015, the subdivisions and land developments that have requested the Planning Office for review has maintained in number from the previous year. There were a total of eleven (11) land development plans submitted to the Planning Office for review (per the municipalities ordinance). The land development and when they were reviewed are listed below:

2015 Land Developments		
Month	Municipality	Project
February	Greenwood Township	Reash Community Church
	Woodcock Township	Bethesda Children's Home Education Center
March	South Shenango Township	Lago Winery & Soul Brewery Storm Water
April	Oil Creek Township	Champion Salt - Pilot Plant
June	Cambridge Springs Borough	Northwestern Rural Electric Vehicle Service Facility
July	Vernon Township	Cohn & Cohn Inv. LLC, Crawford Woodlands
August	Vernon Township	Honda Cars at Street Track n'Trail
September	South Shenango Township	Mark & Wendy Stabile Land Development
November	Woodcock Township	Dollar General Land Development
	Vernon Township	CATA Transit Facility Land Development
	Oil Creek Township	O'Reilly Automotive Store Land Development

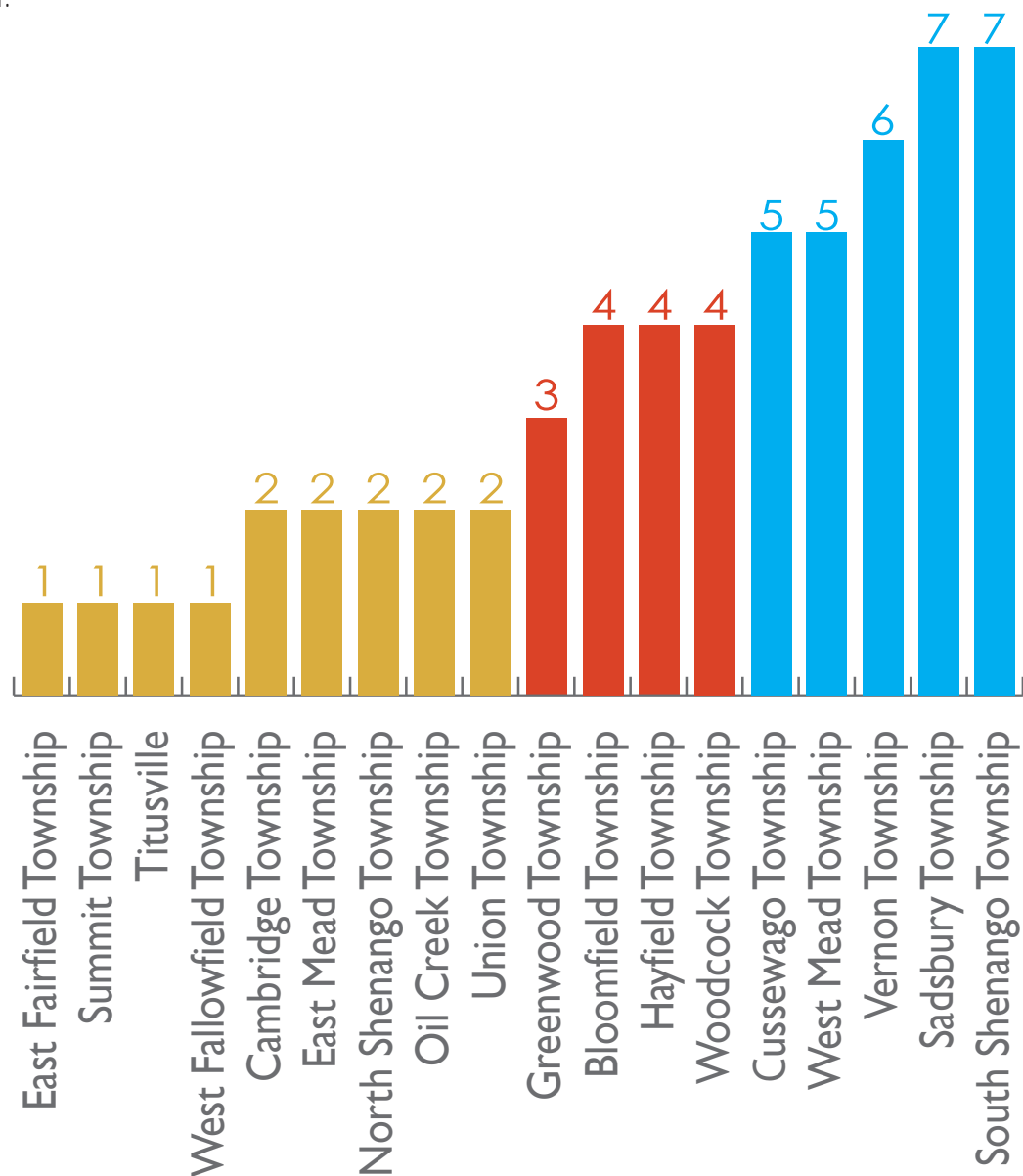


Photo Credit: <http://www.watershedcouncil.org/project-and-site-plan-review.html>

Along with the land developments, there were eleven (11) Subdivisions reviewed by the Commission with a majority of these subdivisions taking place in either the City of Meadville or Titusville. The subdivisions are listed below:

2015 Subdivisions		
Month	Municipality	Project
April	City of Meadville	Athletic Field Subdivision
	West Mead Township	Limber Creek Phase II Major Subdivision
May	City of Titusville	Titusville Redevelopment Auth. Subdivision
August	City of Meadville	Edward & Charlotte Sternby Subdivision
October	City of Titusville	Michael & Kathy Irwin Subdivision
November	City of Meadville	Crawford Co./Calamar: Meadville Senior Housing Subdivision
	Hydetown Borough	Donovan Quarry Subdivision
	City of Titusville	Todd C. Garrett Subdivision
	City of Meadville	Crawford Co./City of Meadville Subdivision #1
	City of Meadville	Crawford Co./City of Meadville Subdivision #2
December	City of Meadville	Talon Site Subdivision

The Land Use Planner also had a number of staff reviews from different municipalities for subdivisions. There were a total of fifty-five (55) subdivisions. These reviews are considered staff reviews because according to the independent ordinances within the municipalities, it states that the planning staff could review rather than it running through the County Planning Commission.



The Planning Commission also had the chance to review two (2) ordinances. One was an amendment to the zoning map for the City of Meadville and the other was a zoning ordinance amendment for Conneaut Lake Borough.

Comprehensive Plans

The Planning Commission staff has assisted the following Townships with the creation and/or update of the following Comprehensive Plans:

Linesville Borough/ Pine Township

Linesville Borough and Pine Township decided to develop separate comprehensive plans instead of creating a combined multi-municipal plan. The planning office was requested to assist both municipalities; however, Linesville Borough had difficulty gathering a steering committee for the project and by the time Pine Township was prepared for taking on the effort the County lacked the human capacity to fully assist the community. Staff requested that the two communities continue discussions internally and in early 2016 re-approach the planning commission for guidance when capacity increases and workload decreases.

East Fairfield Township

East Fairfield Township determined to complete individual comprehensive plans rather than a multi-municipal plan. East Fairfield and the planning staff developed a community survey questionnaire that was mailed out to each tax parcel for feedback. The County received 108 completed surveys, which resulted in a response rate of 24%. Staff worked with the community steering committee to create activities and gather information for the first public meeting held in September. Staff is working over the next few months to compile data, feedback from the public meeting, and draft goals for the community.

Wayne Township

Wayne Township determined to complete individual comprehensive plans rather than a multi-municipal plan. The township and the county planning staff developed a community survey questionnaire that was mailed out to each tax parcel for feedback. The County received 151 completed surveys, which resulted in a response rate of 19%. The Survey Review Committee had multiple meetings to discuss the data and activities created for the public workshop in November. Staff is working over the next few months to compile data, feedback from the public meeting, and draft the community vision.

ANCILLARY PROJECT

Crawford County Land Bank Workshop

On July 24, 2015 the Crawford County Planning Commission and Crawford County Commissioners held a land banking workshop at the Riverside Inn in Cambridge Springs. In addition to Crawford County staff and elected officials, representatives from the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania were invited as guest speakers to provide insight on the subject. The entry-level workshop highlighted the mechanics of a land bank program as well as the steps necessary to start and maintain a program. Over 50 individuals from various municipalities, county offices, local banks and community organizations attended the workshop.



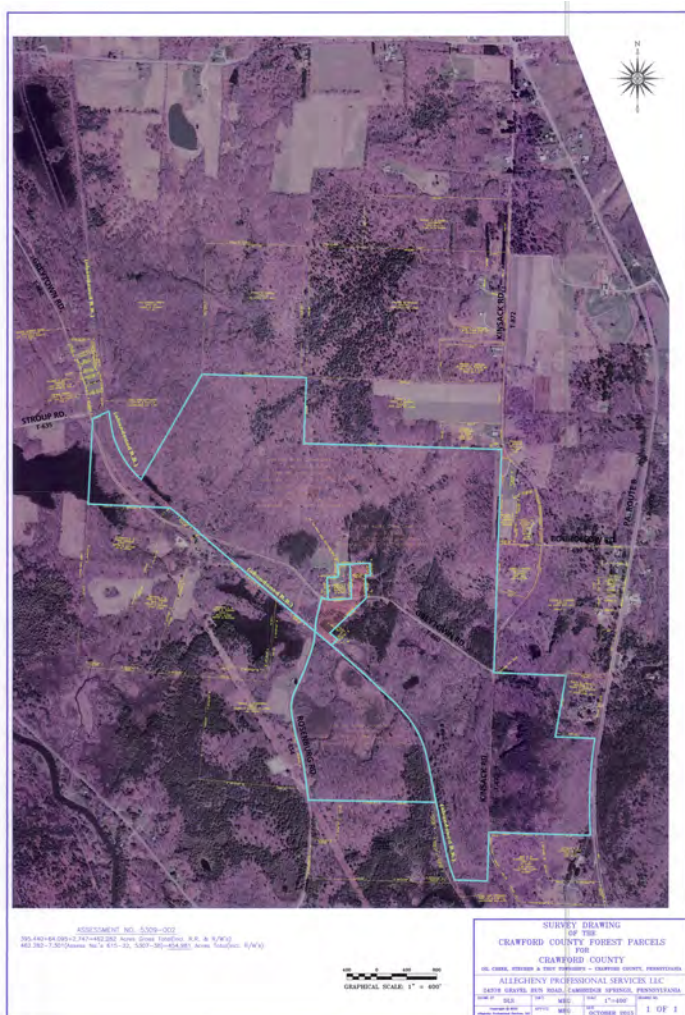
Top: Blight and land banking workshop at Riverside Inn, Cambridge Springs Borough.

Crawford County Judicial Building

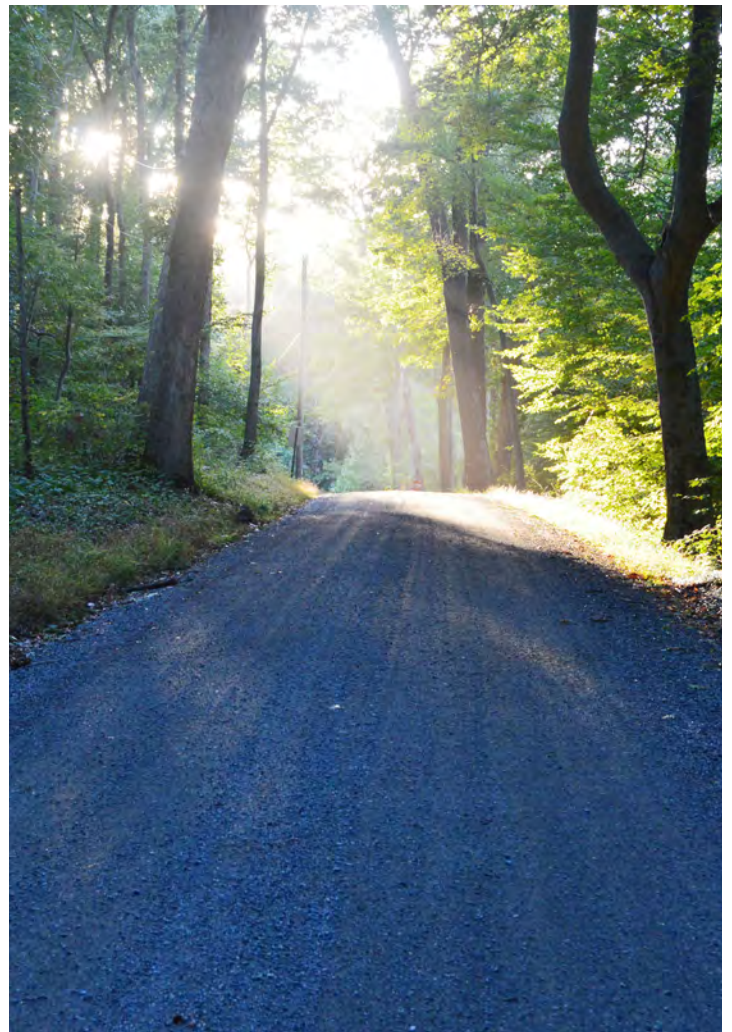
As of December 10, 2015, the Crawford County Commissioners broke ground on the Crawford County Judicial Building. Planning staff was requested to assist in the preparation leading up to the ground breaking. Preparation included designating locations and securing leases for parking, coordinating the application process with Weber Murphy Fox, complete required forms for demolition and other items as requested by the Commissioners. The Commissioners requested that staff continue assisting with the project throughout construction on various subjects.

Crawford County Forest

The Planning Commission staff received a report from surveyor Mark Galbo (Allegheny Professional Services) detailing the County's land holdings in the eastern portion of the County, mainly Steuben Township. The surveying work is done, corner pins set, maps drawn and deeds are assembled. This is an ongoing project; there are some small boundary issues with adjacent landowners to be cleared up. Decisions regarding short and long term use of this valuable resource will be made in 2016 and beyond.



Left: Draft property survey for the County Forest.



Right: Roadway through the Crawford County Forest.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

Crawford County was awarded \$255,616 as part of its yearly CDBG entitlement grant to carry out projects throughout the county to benefit low to moderate income families and individuals. The following are projects that have been approved and awarded for 2015.

Blight Removal (Centerville Borough)

Centerville Borough plans to improve its community gateway by acquiring and cleaning up an blighted property along Route 8. The proposed project will involve removing the existing structures, clearing brush and debris, and returning the site back to an open grass lot.

Total Project Award: \$20,000

Water Street Stormwater Project (Conneaut Lake Borough)

This multi-year funded stormwater project focuses on Water Street from 1st to 4th Streets and constructing a stormwater system. Other future improvements include locating all overhead utilities underground, sidewalks, lighting, and paving.

Total Project Award: \$37,469

Evans Square Senior Housing Project (Conneaut Lake Borough)

Hudson Asset Advisors, LLC are designing and planning a senior housing complex that will provide affordable housing to seniors across the county. The housing complex will be constructed on a vacant lot within Conneaut Lake Borough and will provide upwards of 40 units.

Total Project Award: \$30,000



Top: PALfund Neighborhood in Linesville Borough.

PALfund Neighborhood Waterline Curb Box and Valve Replacement (Linesville Borough)

Linesville Borough will replace deteriorated curb boxes and waterline valves that have been in existence since the senior housing neighborhood was constructed in the 1970s. Water system maps will be created to help locate the boxes and valves in the future.

Total Project Cost: \$25,400

Beaver Street Stormwater Project (Springboro Borough)

Springboro has been awarded a multi-year CDBG award to repair deteriorated stormwater pipes and inlets along Beaver Street. Frequent flooding events have caused property damage, road closures, and sinkholes. FEMA funded a stormwater project on Cussewago St that will directly connect to the CDBG funded portion (see more about FEMA below).

Total Project Cost: \$117,185

Fredericksburg Neighborhood Paving Project (Vernon Township)

As of 2015, Crawford County will be administering the CDBG program on behalf of Vernon Township. Vernon Township has identified several roads in the Fredericksburg neighborhood that will be repaved and widened to allow safer travel.

Total Project Award: \$77,541.66

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant

The county was awarded a FEMA grant to assist in the construction of a new stormwater system along Cussewago Street in Springboro. The project had their bid process in the Fall of 2015 and will start construction in early Spring and will be finished by Summer 2016.

Total Award: \$231,919.01

Act 13 Environmental Initiative & Impact Fee Grant

The Crawford County Act 13 Block Grant program was opened in late 2015 and applications were due January 11, 2016 to be considered for two different funds. The County received \$83,761.88 for the Environmental Initiative fund, \$17,259.23 for the Impact Fee fund and \$139,210.54 for the At-Risk Bridge Fund. Overall, the county received 17 environmental applications requesting a total of \$141,554.91 and 8 impact fee applications requesting a total of \$68,774. The At-Risk Bridge money for 2015 will be put on reserve for 2016. Reason for this is to provide a larger amount of funds that can be allocated to a project in 2016. Project awards for both the Environmental Initiative and Impact Fees will be made by March 2016.

Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Grant Conneaut Lake Stormwater Project

The County was awarded \$150,000 to assist Conneaut Lake Borough with its downtown stormwater project (same as mentioned in the CDBG section). The ARC funding will be used for construction activities.

Woodcock Lake Park Playground DCNR Grant

A DCNR Grant was awarded in 2013 to construct a new playground at the Public Beach at Woodcock Lake Park. Throughout 2015, site surveys and designs were completed to allow for project completion in 2016. In addition to the playground, an ADA accessible walkway/ramp will be constructed to make the park available for individuals with disabilities.

Total Project Award: \$73,663.15



Top: Beaver Street in Springboro Borough that is directly impacted by the new stormwater system on Cussewago Street and receiving funding through CDBG to continue the stormwater improvements.

Bottom: Location of future recreational playground at Woodcock Lake Park through the DCNR grant.



TRANSPORTATION

In late spring, the Planning Commission sent letters of solicitation to all municipalities requesting road or bridge projects that are a priority for the municipality. These solicitations are requested every two years for the Twelve Year Program (TYP). There were a total of seven (7) municipalities that responded out of 51. The importance of responses from the municipalities is high because it allows the planning office to assist the municipality by adding their requested projects in the Twelve Year Plan which may eventually be placed on the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). In the meantime, during the time the planning office was soliciting projects, the Long Range Transportation Plan was being updated by the Northwest Commission.

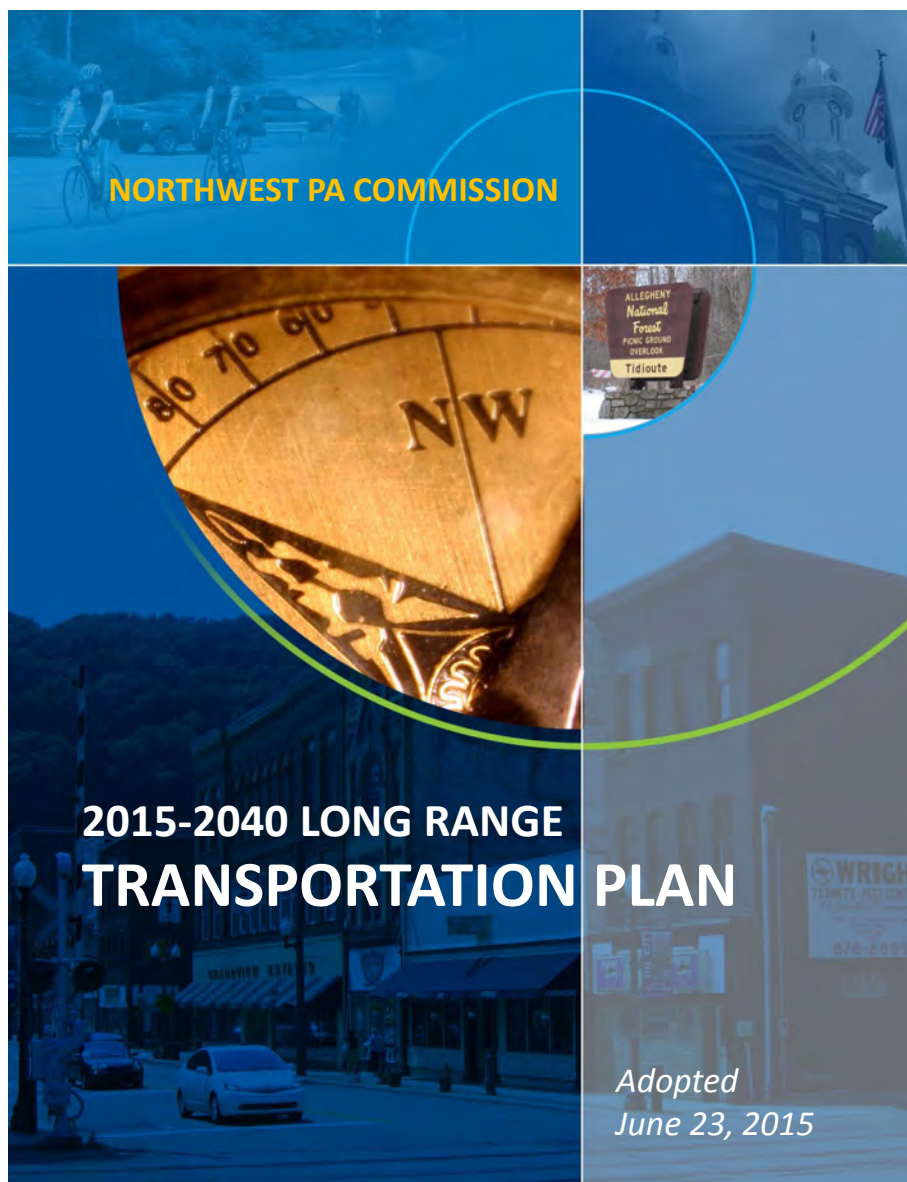
The Long Range Transportation Plan, adopted in June 2015, spans from 2015 to 2040 and covers five counties of Northwest Pennsylvania, Clarion, Crawford, Forest, Venango and Warren. As stated in the Long Range Transportation Plan, it “introduces a new process for measuring performance over time. An initial “report card” is included in the plan and will be updated on an annual basis as a means of providing better information to planners and decision-makers regarding the region’s transportation system performance. It is expected that measures will be adjusted over time, as the regions priorities continue to evolve.” (LRTP, pg. 3) This is why it is very critical that municipalities keep the planning office in the loop on transportation issues. This way when the plan is updated, municipal priorities are included in the report.

The Planning Director serves on the Rural Planning Organization and the Transportation Advisory Committee, both these committees serve as the driving force of plans such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Plan and other plans that are transportation related within the county. In 2015, Northwest Commission worked with



Top: PA Route 408 and Lyona Road in Richmond Township location of a potential future transportation project after a site visit with PennDOT District 1.

Quality Engineering Services (QES) on creating a “Redundant Bridge Study”. The purpose of the project is to “identify local bridges that are operationally redundant as potential candidates for closure and removal (pg. 1).” By identifying these bridges as regional, it assists counties and municipalities in making decisions on the repair, replacement or removal of those identified bridges. This report is scheduled to be completed and adopted by February 2016.



Top: Coverage of the 2015 -2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.

BOARDS & COMMITTEES

The Crawford County Planning Staff is involved in a variety of boards and committees to help stay in tune with all Planning related topics. By doing so this gives a great networking base, provides ideas and ways for the staff to bring back to Crawford County. The list below illustrates the few boards that members of the staff sit on:

- Crawford County Coalition on Housing Needs
- Crawford County Oil and Gas Task Force
- Critical Home Repair Cooperative
- Titusville Oil and Gas Task Force
- Titusville Transportation
- PA County Professionals Planning
- PA County Professional GIS Committee
- NWPA GIS Users Group
- Pennsylvania American Planning Association (PA APA)
- Northwest Commission
- Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Farmland Preservation Board
- Friends of Tamarack
- Conneaut Lake Community Development Committee (CLCDC)
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)
- Emergency Response Group (ERG)
- PA Route 6 Alliance Tourism Infrastructure Committee
- PA Housing Alliance

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Crawford County Planning Commission is currently coordinating efforts for the two following activities for 2016. More information regarding these activities will be distributed in 2016.

2016 Crawford County Municipal Workshop

In order to prepare for the upcoming municipal workshop in 2016 to better assist municipalities in understanding the process, permits, and persons for approval of subdivision and land development plans, County staff worked to develop templated checklists and letters for municipal secretaries. These documents are intended to minimize the mundane tasks required of municipalities and streamline the process to communicate effectively with residents, developers, as well as individuals with an interest in the community's regulations.

Crawford County Housing Survey/Study

The Planning staff has been talking about creating a housing survey/study which would help with the implementation of the Crawford County Comprehensive Plan. This study will then assist the County in defining what blight is. After that is completed, recommendations from the plan may gear the county into investigating if land banking is a tool that the County should get involved with. The planning of this study will not begin until the Municipal Workshop is completed, therefore this may not take place until Fall or Winter of 2016.