

**Venango County Regional Planning Commission**  
**Minutes**  
**4/20/21**

Those present at the public meeting of the Venango County Regional Planning Commission of April 20, 2021, at 6:30 p.m., held via teleconference.

Present: Bill Moon

Nancy Marano  
Nick Melnick  
Frank Pankratz  
John McClelland  
Greg Miller  
Tracy Jamieson  
John Neidich  
Ben Porter  
Sue Smith  
Anita Fuchs  
Glenn Speer

Guests: Kara O'Neil

David Weightman  
Amanda Rosser  
Nate Fox  
Paul Hughes

Staff: Ashley Smith  
Hilary Buchanan  
Alex Shreffler  
Joshua Sterling  
Jason Ruggiero

Absent Excused: Keith Klingler

Absent:

Monthly board meeting called to order by Chairperson Nancy Marano, at 6:30 p.m.

Majority of board members was present for the meeting. The attendance of 12 board members (of the 13 current appointees) was accounted for by Joshua Sterling.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- Sue Smith made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2021, board meeting. Greg Miller seconded. All approved.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

- None.

**SPECIAL PURPOSE MATTERS**

- None.

## **OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- A. Executive Committee – No report
- B. COG Meeting – The April 15 COG meeting was held at the Pinegrove Township Fire Hall. The Council approved, at the meeting, to award its joint bid for seal coating to Suit Kote.

## **SUBDIVISIONS AND LAND DEVELOPMENTS – ASHLEY SMITH**

- A. Ashley Smith, land use planner, began her presentation of a Conditional Approval request from Cypress Creek Renewables by introducing representatives from the developer. The Cypress Creek representatives were on call for the meeting to answer board member questions pertaining to a proposed solar farm development, in Cherrytree Township. David Weightman, of Cypress Creek, told the board that the development is planned on 324 acres in Cherrytree Township, which are owned by two separate private individuals. He added that construction is anticipated to begin in March 2022. He said the company has been working with Township officials to be compliant with the Township’s ordinances and wishes; and they’ve been visiting residents to absorb any concerns in order for the development to minimize any negative impacts to the residents. Weightman said the screening/fencing, as an added benefit, will alleviate the at-times treacherous snow drifting along the affected stretch of state Route 8. He noted that this development does not include the purchase of the land, but rather a 40-year lease. After the lease runs out, Cypress Creek plans to decommission the project and return it to usable farming land.

There were seven administrative conditions that came along with the Planning Commission Board’s prospective approval, which include: receipt of an approved stormwater plan from Cherrytree Township and reviewed by its engineer, Mark Corey; receipt of zoning approval from Cherrytree Township; receipt of E&S approval from the Conservation District; receipt of cost estimate in accordance with the PA Municipalities Planning Code; receipt of financial security in accordance with the PA Municipalities Planning Code; receipt of six fully-executed plan sets, with noted revisions and without any grammatical errors; and receipt of recording fee check made out to “Venango Register and Recorder.”

The proposed site improvements consist of ground-mounted solar panels on steel racks with driven steel beams as the preferred foundation support, with crushed aggregate access roads and operation/maintenance staging areas.

Frank Pankratz made a motion to grant conditional approval of the development, and Greg Miller seconded. All board members were in favor of the motion, which carried.

Smith planned to send a letter to the company notifying them of the conditional approval being granted prior to working with the company on the conditions to be met.

Board member Greg Miller asked if the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) had been made aware of this project. He said PSATS distributed a request for information from Townships across the state to feature solar power generation projects in its magazine.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND STAFF REPORTS

- A. Ashley Smith told the board that she has released the financial security letter for Team Hardinger, on the Barkeyville Borough project. She added she is still awaiting some outstanding items related to the following developments: Dollar General, in Pinegrove Township; Gahr's Tires, in Barkeyville Borough; and Chuck Carlson Garage, in Barkeyville Borough.
- She also noted that she has begun conversations with PowerHome Solar, in Rockland Township, and Foundation Solar Partner, which is looking at a possible development in Canal or Plum townships.
- Smith recapped her past month's work on stormwater and subdivisions. She approved seven small stormwater management projects. She completed 11 subdivision preliminary reviews; and approved eight subdivisions.
- B. Joshua Sterling told the board that he is working with Clinton Township and its engineer to draft up the bidding documents for an architectural barrier removal (ABR) project at the Township Municipal Building, a CDBG-funded project. He anticipates being ready to bid the project in early May.
- He said another CDBG-funded ABR project, at the Barkeyville Borough Municipal Building, is wrapping up, with only a couple punch-list items identified by the building inspector to be resolved.
- A CDBG project to install a power generator at a water pumping station, along Cornplanter Hill Road, in Cornplanter Township, is completed. However, the generator has failed its weekly tests for the past several weeks, with the exception of Tuesday's (4/20/21) test. He said the Township has been working with the Contractor and the generator's manufacturer on site to identify and resolve the problem.
- Sterling said another CDBG – to reconstruct the sidewalks along Main Street, in Rouseville – was recently bid out. The low bid exceeded available CDBG funding, so he is working with the Township and its engineer to slim down the project scope to fit the budget.
- On the subject of the Home Rehabilitation Program, Sterling said the first of many home rehab projects is almost under contract – this one in Sugarcreek Borough. However, he reported to the board that the program is having significant trouble getting the Contractor pool to reliably submit bids for the program. Under the HOME program grant in Franklin, two home rehabilitation projects are essentially completed, save for some lead hazard mitigation work; two others are in construction phase; and a fifth project is awaiting an engineering cost estimate to stabilize the home. Under the PHARE grant program, three projects are out for public bidding following an unsuccessful attempt at bidding through the Contractor Selection List process that has been in use for all home rehab projects, to date. Bids will be opened April 30.
- Sterling added that he was advised that the County's Pennsylvania Blight Remediation Program Planning Grant is expected to be up for approval at the May 25 Commonwealth Finance Authority meeting.
- C. Hilary Buchanan informed the board that she is finishing up the Legislative Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant (LPDM). She has coordinated the completion of the fiber installation at the

Sandycreek Fire Hall, Sandycreek Municipal Building, Franklin Professional Building, and the Franklin Wastewater Treatment Plant. She is currently awaiting reimbursement from PEMA for the generator portion of the project. Reimbursement will also be requested for the Emergency Operations Center upgrades, along with the fiber reimbursement, as they are both included on the same subgrant.

Under the subject of Liquid Fuels administration, Buchanan said there were no findings in a recent program audit.

Under the Bridge Program, she has reviewed bridge inspection reports and billed municipalities for their portions of the inspection costs. She also has processed a number of expenditures and receipts, as well as reviewing paid invoices from STV Inc and Frank Taylor Engineering. She noted that the Dotter Road Bridge deconstruction began Monday (4/19/21), and is expected to be completed in late July. The McClelland Avenue Bridge project is anticipated to be let in May.

On the subject of transportation planning, Buchanan said she is working with PennDOT to determine what measures can be taken at the intersections of state Route 8/62 and Otter and Liberty streets, in Franklin.

She said, on another topic, that she is working with DEP and other counties to determine whether the Planning Commission can become a Delegated Agency to enable us to review Sewage Planning Modules. She is currently awaiting a response from DEP as to whether they are interested in having a Delegated Agency in our region.

Further, Buchanan said she has begun training under Erik Johnson to take over municipal and CDBG billing in the office, in preparation for his transition to the Recycling Center.

- D. Alex Shreffler told the board she has been busy learning various floodplain- and environmental-review-related tasks. She added that she is working on different programming and web mapping tools that may be beneficial to a multitude of applications. Shreffler added that she's been discussing various utility mapping requests with Seneca Hills Bible Camp; and she has also been learning how to operate the County's GPS equipment.
  
- E. Jason Ruggiero reported that the multimodal hub, in Oil City, is now 98% completed. He said CATA intends to begin moving its furnishings and equipment in, this week. A tentative ribbon-cutting ceremony is set for sometime in the third week of May. He also explained that the roof project, at 100 Seneca at Cornplanter Square is being closed out after completion. Next, he said the fifth-floor buildout will soon go out to bid. Additionally, Bull Moose Marketing has launched the building's website and social media marketing campaigns. Jason added that the County received a DCNR grant for work at Two-Mile Run County Park to begin a series of upgrades to the park's infrastructure, such as restrooms, picnic areas, and pavilions, to bring it all into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. He said he's hopeful the upgrades can be completed, this summer. In the absence of Erik Johnson, who had the day off, Ruggiero reported that Johnson is working on fencing in the preparing the county's new Recycling Center. He said the electric contractor will soon be installing utility poles to help carry power to security cameras and lights. A skid steer has already been purchased for the facility, and is now on-site. A bailer will be the next piece of equipment to arrive on-site, sometime in mid-May. Johnson has

also ordered an industrial shredder. This project is funded by a DEP 902 grant. After CATA is moved out of the building and into its new multi-modal hub, the recycling center is expected to be more rapidly completed. The plan is to open the facility in June-July.

**PUBLIC COMMENT – GENERAL**

- Greg Miller asked if the next Planning board meeting could be held in-person, if outdoors. Jason Ruggiero replied by noting Planning staff is currently going through the process of becoming fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and that we would keep that conversation open to determine a best time to reconvene in person, with consideration to staff health and safety.

**ADJOURNMENT**

- At 7:21 p.m., Frank Pankratz made a motion to adjourn; Glenn Speer seconded. All approved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Joshua Sterling