

ELK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

ELK COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

April 23, 2025

John Schatz called the regular meeting of the Elk County Planning Commission to order at 4:30 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following were present:

Members: Dale Anderson, Cheryl Ruffner (on phone), Ron Minnick, Bill Chiesa, Becky Krieg, John Schatz and Jim McClain

Planning Department: Tracy Gerber, Becki Taylor and Kathy McClelland

Excused: Carl Gamarino

Absent: Brandi Hanes

Guests: P.J. Piccirillo, Horton Twp. Supervisor and Kyle Stauffer, Hawbaker Engineering

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were conducted at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dale Anderson asked Cheryl Ruffner regarding a comment she made from the October 23, 2024 minutes. Cheryl Ruffner had commented from the last meeting that she was going to meet with the Commissioners and ask them about the amount of government land in Elk County.

Cheryl Ruffner answered that she doesn't like Elk County not having "no net loss of land". She added that the Commissioners are adamant that they are not going to tell someone who they can sell their land to. She also stated that the Trail of Dreams is held up in Ridgway because of all the game commission property.

Jim McClain made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 23, 2024 meeting with one correction; Bill Chiesa seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

1. Presentation by Kyle Stauffer, Project Manager, Hawbaker Engineering. Ron Minnick made a motion to approve the Addition to the Agenda; John Schatz seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION

Mr. Stauffer began by stating that the Nittany Mart project will be at the intersection of Route 153 and Route 219. The biggest pre construction item to complete is the on the north side of the property, there is a hole to the right of the flood plain boundary that needs to be moved and raised so the entrance on Route 219 back to where it's there and have enough room for the turning lane. There will be quite a bit of fill coming to get the area raised up due to being close to the flood plain. There are wetlands to the south of the project which will not endear any disturbance. The building itself will not be in a flood plain. One of the things their being cognoscente of with the flood plain is it is at the 1504 elevation all of the storm water controls are above that elevation. An underground detention for stormwater had to be done rather than a basin. The underground detention for stormwater does take up more room but are very efficient at taking in additional stormwater that will come off the pavement and building. Mr. Stauffer stated that the bottom of the storm chamber is far enough above the flood plain that the only thing that sits in the flood plain would be the pipe.

Mr. Stauffer said that one thing has changed, because of the turning lane there is infiltration and rate reduction. They have the infiltration capacity to accommodate both the convenience store area and paving and also the new turning lane. However, Act 167 for the Township, one of the requirements is a 1-year storm event, offsetting other areas isn't an option because you have to catch every drop across the board; so, this was added to accommodate for the 1-year rate. They are currently working with PennDOT doing a PIA assessment.

Tracy Gerber stated that there is nothing with these plans that the Planning Department can hold up, it is with the outside agency permits and approvals. The Planning Commission Board can approve the plans for the Nittany Mart Project contingent on Horton Township engineer, Township Supervisors and all agencies involved will be the final approving body for the plans and permits. Ron Minnick made this motion and John Schatz seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

SUBDIVISION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Tracy Gerber stated that she did send out the completed list of subdivisions since the last meeting.

Dale Anderson questioned what EDC stood for.

Tracy Gerber stated that it stood for the St. Marys Economic Development Corporation.

OLD BUSINESS

Small Communities Entitlement Program (CDBG) Report

Becki Taylor stated that Thursday, April 24, 2025 at 3:00 is the first public hearing for CDBG 2025 Entitlement. Ms. Taylor stated that she has some municipalities interested in applying for funding.

Ms. Taylor added that FY2024 CDBG application, the Jones Township Water Meter Project that was approved at \$120,636. This project was approved via survey because it qualified low/moderate income. Their application was submitted in November and DCED came back and said that the project was ineligible. When we calculated the random sample of the surveys, it initially came out that we needed 43 surveys, DCED came back and said it was incorrect even though they had approved the project initially. DCED allotted 1 month for Jones Township to do another survey. Ultimately, this project was canceled and we had to move on to something else quickly. Ms. Taylor stated that in FY2024, we funded the Johnsonburg Bridge Street Project and Market Street Slum & Blight partially; we then used the balance of \$120,636 and divided the funds and fully funded those 2 projects. For FY2025, Jones Township is working on their survey in hopes of reapplying for their water meter project; with staffing changes though, it could be FY2026 until they are comfortable applying. For FY2023, Bergen Street Slum & Blight was approved. This project included 5 homes and will be out for bid tomorrow.

Dale Anderson asked if there was anything going on with the waterline project.

Becki Taylor answered that it is still being held up because of the easement.

Housing Report

Kathy McClelland stated that she currently has 3 accessibility modification projects and 1 housing rehabilitation project under contract. She added that the HOME Program has officially started. The HOME Program is being administered by Northern Tier Community Action Corp. in Emporium; the Planning Department will be drawing the funds down and paying contractors and agencies as bills come in for the program. The Ramps of Hope Program has started their construction season; 2 referrals have been made.

Becky Krieg asked how someone applies for the HOME Program.

Kathy McClelland answered that they can contact the Planning Department.

Directors Report

Tracy Gerber stated that she included her report with the mailed packets. She stated she wanted the Board to note the North Central Transportation Safety Action Plan. Ms. Gerber said that North Central is designing an action plan to help reduce traffic fatalities between automobiles and bike riders. North Central hired a consultant conducted a top 10 HIN (High Injury Network) for each county; Tracy added that she put together a group with PennDOT, North Central Transportation Staff and the Planning Department Staff to prioritize the top 5 for the Action Plan. The consultant designed the Action Plan across multiple counties, Clearfield, Cameron, Elk, McKean, Potter and Forest. The areas prioritized in each County came from data found on the number of deaths and injuries due to accidents in the area.

Bill Chiesa questioned on the safety side of transportation, are berms and the washout ever discussed.

Tracy Gerber answered that when she meets with PennDOT, road conditions are always discussed. She added that we think it is obvious that PennDOT knows the conditions of roads, but if nobody speaks up, some roads may not be on their radar like we think.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Officers

Ron Minnick suggested to keep the Officers the same. With the majority in agreement, Ron Minnick made a motion to keep the Officers the same: Carl Gamarino, Chairperson, Dale Anderson, Vice President and John Schatz, Secretary/Treasurer; Becky Krieg seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

Annual Report Card of Progress

Tracy Gerber explained that this is the annual report card for the Comp Plan. The report shows all the items that were put into the Comp Plan. Ms. Gerber stated that she did add to the Plan that the Board of Commissioners created the Elk County Healthcare Authority. Ms. Gerber asked the Commission to let her know if there is something going on in the County that she is not aware of to let her know.

Cheryl Ruffner announced that the Trail of Dream and ATV Mission has completed their first phase that is connected from Caymans Landing, Treasurer Lake in Clearfield County to the Benezette/Grant side in Elk County. This phase gives riders approximately 47/48 miles of trails. They are having a grant opening on May 17. This trail opening will help promote tourism and outdoor recreation in Elk County. Cheryl added that it has taken them 10 years to get to this point.

Tracy Gerber questioned Cheryl Ruffner that the bridge down behind the baseball field will be open or is it seasonal?

Cheryl Ruffner answered that the bridge will be open 365 days a year; but the road between Rt. 555 and downtown Benezette by the campgrounds, that will only be open from Memorial Day until the end of September. The reasoning for the shut down of this part of the trail is because it's fire season and after September it's hunting season. They are hoping this part of the trail will be exempt to allow it be open 365 days as well.

Tracy Gerber asked Cheryl Ruffner if she will have enough information to do a presentation at the July Planning Commission Meeting?

Cheryl Ruffner agreed to do a presentation at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Board Member Packets

Kathy McClelland asked the Commission if they would prefer their Meeting Packets emailed or continue receiving them in the mail. It was a consensus to continue mailing the packets.

COMMENTS FROM GUESTS

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 27, 2025 at 4:30 PM in Conference Room #2 in the Elk County Courthouse Annex.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Jim McClain made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 PM; Becki Krieg seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

