

ELK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

ELK COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

August 27, 2025

Dale Anderson 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, Ron Minnick, Bill Chiesa and John Schatz

Planning Department: Tracy Gerber, Becki Taylor and Kathy McClelland

Excused: Cheryl Ruffner, Carl Gamarino, Jim McClain and Becky Krieg

Absent: Brandi Hanes

Guests: Ryan Miller, ARS Engineering and Melinda Lewis, Johnsonburg Public Library

INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were conducted at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ron Minnick made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2025; John Schatz seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

SUBDIVISION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Tracy Gerber stated that she included the subdivision report with everyone's packet and asked for questions.

Dale Anderson questioned whose Elk River Lodging property is in Jay Township/Benezette way. Gregory and Donna Moore were the side addition lot to Elk River Logging Property.

Tracy Gerber answered that Elk River Lodging property are cabins down off of Rt. 555; they're still in Jay Township. The cabins are on one piece of property and the driveway is on another piece of property.

FY 2025 PROPOSED CDBG PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

At this time, Becki Taylor presented a short Power Point explaining the CDBG Program.

Johnsonburg Public Library - CDBG funds \$60,500

Melinda Lewis stated that they remodeled the library's room upstairs and it is now a multi-purpose room. Various local agencies have used the space for meetings or to hold programs. There are three windows on the back side of the building facing Center Street, they are the original windows to the building. The windows are deteriorating, brittle and not energy efficient.

Ron Minnick questioned how many windows are there.

Melinda Lewis answered there are three sections, each section has one window.

Bill Chiesa asked if any of these windows are above Accu-Grind.

Melinda Lewis answered that the window in the men's bathroom window is above the loading dock for Accu-Grind.

Bill Chiesa added that the back of the building is an "eye-sore", the buildings are historical but have broken windows that have never been fixed. He added that just the windows that are being asked for will make a world of difference.

John Schatz asked if the library was a three-story building.

Melinda Lewis answered that it is.

Bill Chiesa asked if there were plans for the third floor.

Melinda Lewis answered, technically that is the third floor. The basement of the building is where Accu-Grind is, and they are renters to the library. The library is on the second floor and has also taken over the other side of where the tax collector and water authority used to be.

Highland Township Municipal Authority – CDBG funds \$31,350

Becki Taylor reported on behalf of Highland Township Municipal Authorities proposed project. Ms. Taylor stated that the Authority is requesting funding for the proposed upgrades to their water treatment plant, which includes a pressure-based telemetry system. Recently, the Highland Township Municipal Authority underwent a DEP inspection with multiple violations noted at their antiquated water treatment plant which need to be rectified. The new Telemetry System would rectify the DEP violations as the water treatment plant can't communicate remotely with the operator at this time. The water tower can overflow due to human error causing chlorinated water discharge on the ground. The current method to operate the pump and water tower is based on a timer system that is set to 15-minute increments. This increment is set based off of the operator's best assumption of needed pump run time. The practice is no longer acceptable by DEP. The Telemetry System would control water flow based on equipment that would ensure proper water flow underneath the permit limit and prevent the water tower from overflowing.

Bill Chiesa asked what the total of the project is.

Becki Taylor answered that \$31,350.00 is the total. The Authority is going to order the system through The Meter Guy, which is a company that provides water equipment and installation. If they would install the system themselves, it would void the warranty.

Johnsonburg Borough – CDBG funds \$58,300

Ryan Miller stated that he was on behalf of the Borough of Johnsonburg. The project they are proposing is the Johnsonburg Community Center accessible entrance improvement project. The handicap accessible entrance to the building currently provides entrance through the gymnasium not the actual entrance of the building. There is still a step at the end of the ramp that you have to make in order to get up to the main level in the front entrance. The Community Center has received complaints and this has been the topic of conversation. The current entrance does provide entrance to the building but there are some obstacles in having to go through the gymnasium if it is being used. The project consists of taking out the existing ramp, it is not compliant with current ADA code; at the time it was constructed, it was compliant. The new ramp would be built to current ADA code, provide direct access to the front entrance of the building and would also put in a handicap accessible curb cut. There is one accessible parking space in front of the building however, the current entrance requires you to walk to the intersection in order to access the sidewalk. There is no dedicated curb cut for that parking space. Mr. Miller added that the sidewalks would be redone in that area as well because over there years there has been some settlement and is an uneven walkway. This project is ultimately tied into handicap accessibility.

Dale Anderson asked if the Community Center was on the list of national historic places.

Ryan Miller answered that the Market Street Business District is what is nationally registered, but is one of forty-two structures in that corridor that is included in that.

Bill Chiesa questioned what will happen with the side porch, will it still be handicap accessible?

Ryan Miller answered that the side porch will be handicap accessible, it would then become accessible through the building.

Bill Chiesa questioned that the building will lose handicap accessibility outside to go to that?

Ryan Miller answered that what the plan would be.

Tracy Gerber questioned Ryan Miller if he meant onto the side porch.

Ryan Miller agreed that yes onto the side porch with the possibility of push button be added to the inside to make them automatic doors.

Discussion followed.

OLD BUSINESS

Small Communities Entitlement Program (CDBG) Report

Becki Taylor reported the following:

- Johnsonburg Business District Sidewalk Project was completed on August 18, 2025. That project was completed in three days.
- Bergen Street/First Avenue Slum & Blight Project in Johnsonburg should be starting within the next month.
- Highland Township Park Project Notice to Proceed was finalized today. This project should be completed sometime this fall.
- Highland Township Water Meter Project for Fiscal Year 2023, half of the meters are installed.
- Horton Township Waterline Competitive Project the contractor is waiting on materials. There is also a permit that the engineer had to apply for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit; this was applied for very recently, hopefully they will receive this permit by the end of September. The contractor has a tentative start date for mid-October. The project is anticipated to take a month to complete. The funding expiration for this funding is March 2026 so the project needs to be completed at least 2 months prior to that or we will run into a big problem.

Housing Report

Kathy McClelland reported that she is working on four accessibility modification projects, two in the City of St. Marys, one in Fox Township and one in Horton Township. Ms. McClelland had no new updates; programs are all on track.

Directors Report

Tracy Gerber stated that it is required by the MPC (Section 207(a)) that the Planning Commission should have an annual report by March 1st of each year of activities to the governing body. Ms. Gerber added that she is not able to find an annual report that was done by the Commission or Department. She is currently working on creating a report.

NEW BUSINESS

Becki Taylor stated that there is enough funding to fund all three projects for FY2025 with a balance of \$28,838 left over. She asked that the Commission still prioritize them. Ms. Taylor said that she reached out to her grant manager and had conversations within the Planning office regarding what can be done with the left-over funding. The grant managers suggestion was to put it into slum and blight and to send a letter to each municipality asking if they have any structures that are in the County's repository that could benefit from the funds.

Dale Anderson asked if Ridgway Borough or the City of St. Marys apply for these funds.

Becki Taylor answered that they cannot. The balance of \$28,838 could possibly cover two slum and blight projects or one large project.

After discussion, Ron Minnick made a motion to prioritize the FY2025 CDBG Projects as follows:

1. Highland Township Municipal Authority
2. Johnsonburg Public Library
3. Johnsonburg Borough
4. Slum & Blight

John Schatz seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

COMMENTS FROM GUESTS

None.

SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 22, 2024 at 4:30 PM in Conference Room #2 in the Elk County Courthouse Annex.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Bill Chiesa made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:39 PM; John Schatz seconded the motion and carried unanimously.