



# COUNTY OF ERIE

PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Brenton Davis  
County Executive

Jessica Horan  
Director

## Erie County Planning Commission

### Minutes

August 8, 2024 6:00 p.m.

at the

Erie County Conservation District, 1927 Wager Rd, Erie, PA 16509

### 1. Pledge of Allegiance

### 2. Roll Call

Quorum = 4

District/Designation	Municipality	Name	Present
District 1	Millcreek Twp	Matt Waldinger (Chair)	Present
District 2	City of Erie	Lisa Austin	Present
District 3	City of Erie	William McLaughlin	Present
District 4		Vacant	
District 5		Vacant	
District 6	UC Borough	Cindy Wells	Present
District 7	McKean Twp	Ronald Bole	Present
At-Large	Girard Borough	Jeanne Miller (Vice Chair)	Present
At-Large	Elk Creek Twp	Michael Orr	Present
Alternate 1			
Alternate 2 (vacant)			
Alternate 3 (vacant)			

**ALSO in attendance:** Jayla Cook, Jessica Horan & Nancy Blimmel from the Erie County Planning Department; Benton Bainbridge; Mark Osiecki

3. Chairperson Matt Waldinger called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

4. A motion to approve the minutes from the June 13, 2024 meeting was made by Bill McLaughlin with a second from Michael Orr. The motion passed unanimously.

### 5. Hearing of the Public

- Mark Osiecki, a Capital Investment Project Manager, gave a brief presentation on American infrastructure trends and social justice focusing what can be done to lesser our footprint such as greenspaces and walking trails.
- Freda Tepfer spoke on the need for water bottle filling stations, turning Pleasant Ridge (county owned) into an agricultural preservation area, the need for accessible pedestrian intersections, the need for more public transit in terms of density and frequency and the necessity of connecting communities and including them in the process when decisions are being made in their communities. She also expressed the need for a virtual option for the Planning Commission Meetings.

### 6. Old Business:

- Jessica Horan gave the following update: the Proposed Solar Energy Facilities Amendment to the SALDO was presented to County Council on July 16, 2024. Council was favorable. The vote to approve the amendment will be on August 20, 2024 at the County Council Meeting. Lisa Austin requested a proposal/draft guideline to solar farm best practices be created

and adopted by the Commission. Matt Waldinger offered to work with Lisa on this.

- Jessica Horan updated the Commission on the Construction Trades Training program at EC3. The County received Whole-Home funds which were partially used to partner with the Erie County Community College to create a construction trade training program. The first round of students has completed the Erie Community College program. There were 14 students in this group. The next session begins in November and will have evening sessions.

## **7. New Business:**

- Jessica Horan reported on the Erie County CDBG funding. There is \$317,412 available for non-entitled municipalities. There are new maps/census tracts that change some eligibility for this program. The Planning Department is accepting applications. The Planning Commission will review these application and vote on the application at the next Planning Commission Meeting (October 10, 2024.) Please see the information provided by Tony Cunningham, CDBG Program Administrator.
- Jessica Horan reported that the Agricultural Land Preservation program is accepting applications through September 30 for the 2024 Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. These applications and application for the Agricultural Security Area Enrollment can be found on our website.
- The PA Chapter of the APA is holding their annual conference in Erie this year. It is October 13-15, 2024. Please contact Nancy if you are interested in attending.

## **8. Communications**

### **A.** Department of Planning and Community Development Report from Jessica Horan:

- We are applying for additional grant funding to support our Housing Rehab Program.
- Greenways Grants are available for Parks and Recreation project gap funding.
- International Coastal Cleanup is September 21. Please contact Audrey Knight, Recycling Coordinator if you are interested in volunteering.
- Our Household Hazardous Waste program continues. The next event is August 17, 2024 at the Greene Township Building on Tate Road.
- Erie County has not updated their housing plan since 2008. The Planning Department will be applying for a PA MAP grant to help us complete a new countywide study of housing condition, availability and need. This would allow for a strategic approach to addressing housing needs.
- Broadband update: we continue to work on opportunities to expand broadband to all un and underserved residents. An 8 county consortium is working together to consider creating an open access fiber network. There are approximately 30,000 underserved in the 8 counties and 70,000 who would be able to obtain service from the network. Erie cost would be \$46 million and approximately 15,000 addresses in Erie would benefit. We are applying for a federal BEAD grant to support the infrastructure build. Grant application is due on Oct 31.
- Budget season 2025 is quickly approaching. The Planning team currently has 11 members, 13 positions, 2 vacant, one municipal planner position has been difficult to fill due to low wage, the Davis Administration is allowing us to upgrade/create a deputy director position who would hand the municipal planning duties as well as other needed functions. We also have floater position open.

### **B.** Commissioner Reports

- **District 1:** Matt Waldinger reported that they continue to have a funding gap on the Peninsula drive trails and are looking for funding. They have applied for \$3 million grant. They are waiting to hear back on a West 6<sup>th</sup> Street grant

that they applied. The plan would bring the Peninsular Drive trail to 6<sup>th</sup> Street and then build sidewalks on both sides of 6<sup>th</sup> Street, with the goal to connect to the City of Erie sidewalks. Jessica Horan suggested that Emerson Bannon connect with Matt Waldinger to help look for funding.

- **District 2**, Lisa Austin introduced Benton Bainbridge, an artist whose gallery is located on State Street in old Sanner building, a media arts center. He can be reached at [benton@feed.art](mailto:benton@feed.art). Lisa Austin discussed the Connecting Communities grant and its importance for projects such as McBride viaduct and the need to create safe routes for pedestrians/non-vehicular; she also reiterated the need for the meetings to be virtual.
  - **District 3** Bill no new plans in District 3
  - **District 6**: Cindy Wells reported that the work on the \$800,000 grant is being completed. It includes sidewalks and is part of their active transportation plan; Devereaux Park near French Creek, is the next project. Sept 13 is Devereaux Day, 11:00-1:00 to kick off the project; Union City has finished 3 murals at Main Street gateway, funded by Erie Community Foundation; the gazebo near library will be done by end of Sept.
  - **District 7**: Ron Bole reported that McKean is looking for grants for parks
  - **Girard**: Jeanne Miller reported that the ECGRA money for Main Street project grant was received and work will start soon. PennDOT finished up new light poles/signal poles
  - **Elk Creek**: Mike Orr reported that they are finishing up road reconstruction; Sherrod Hill Rd Bridge is still in works; Recycling Day at Franklin Township; there is a new business in Albion – Dutch Trading Center in old gas station, east of McDonalds
9. Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Bill McLaughlin and seconded by Ron Bole. The meeting adjourned at 7:36 pm. The next meeting is October 10, 2024 6:00 pm First United Methodist Church, Union City.

