

# ELK COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

## ELK COUNTY COURTHOUSE ANNEX

August 21, 2024

Dale Anderson called the regular meeting of the Elk County Planning Commission to order at 4:33 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The following were present:

Members: Dale Anderson, Cheryl Ruffner, Brandi Hanes, Ron Minnick, Bill Chiesa and Becky Krieg

Planning Department: Tracy Gerber, Becki Taylor and Kathy McClelland

Excused: John Schatz

Absent: Carl Gamarino and Jim McClain

Guests: Ryan Miller, ARS Engineering, Dan Swanson, Press, Barbara Swanson, Press, Kelly Launer, Jones Township Municipal Authority, Brett Morgan, Jones Township Municipal Authority

### INTRODUCTIONS

Introductions were conducted at this time.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Dale Anderson made one correction to the minutes.

Cheryl Ruffner made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2024 meeting with one correction; Brandi Hanes seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

### ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

None.

### SUBDIVISION REVIEW AND APPROVAL

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

Dale Anderson questioned the Ray Krise subdivision. Mr. Anderson asked how much land is being exchanged with the Krise and the PA Game Commission?

Tracy Gerber answered that for Lot 1 is being added to Lot 3 to give 1.063 acres, but the .063 is a right of way. For Lot 2, it will be added to lot 4 to give 10 acres to the PA Game Commission.

Dale Anderson stated that the 1 for 10 land swap has been a long time concern for him.

Barb Swanson questioned if the subdivisions needed to be approved by the Commission.

Tracy Gerber answered that they are approved through the department.

### FY 2024 PROPOSED CDBG PROJECT PRESENTATIONS

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

Cheryl Ruffner questioned why Ridgway Borough gets funding and Johnsonburg Borough is separate.

Becki Taylor stated that Entitlements are based off of population of the municipality.

Tracy Gerber added that the municipality has to be over 4000 persons in order to be considered an entitlement.

### **Jones Township Municipal Authority – Water Meters**

Brett Morgan, JTMA stated that they are asking for funding to replace approximately 191 meters, which is all of their customers. Mr. Morgan added that the new meters would include software so the JTMA could monitor every water customer instantaneously if needed. Currently, the JTMA bills their customers quarterly. In the event there is a leak in the residence, it goes unnoticed for up to 3 to 4 months.

Becki Taylor added that to qualify this water meter project, they conducted a random survey of the area, they received 49 surveys and the LMI came out to 56.25%. This makes the project qualify because it's above the 51% guideline.

Dale Anderson questioned if the chosen meters and software are available now.

Brett Morgan answered that both meters and software are available now.

Dale Anderson questioned Mr. Morgan if he had to, could this be a multi-year project.

Brett Morgan answered that they could if the CDBG program allowed it.

Tracy Gerber added that traditionally, the County Commissioners have never committed the next years funding for a project.

Brett Morgan stated that the major cost of this project is the software.

Cheryl Ruffner questioned how much the JTMA could afford to put towards this project.

Kelly Launer answered that they don't have funds in their budget to put towards this project. The meters are needed because they are old and the battery life is diminishing. She added that you can't just replace a battery, you have to replace the whole meter.

Cheryl Ruffner questioned if there was any money in their capital fund for this kind of project.

Kelly Launer answered that there aren't funds available.

It was questioned what the total cost of the meters and software was.

Becki Taylor answered that the meters are \$289 each for a total of \$55,199, the software cost is \$27,310 and installation is \$38,000.

Cheryl Ruffner asked there was a maintenance or IT support package that comes with this quote.

Brett Morgan stated that he believes there is a support package built into the given price.

Bill Chiesa questioned if there was a reason that JTMA wasn't including commercial businesses.

Brett Morgan answered that they aren't eligible through the program, they don't qualify as low income.

### **Johnsonburg Borough - Bridge Street Sidewalk Replacement**

Ryan Miller, ARS Engineering stated that the Borough is asking for \$129,600 to replace the old, deteriorating, shifted and sunken sidewalks on Bridge Street which are a safety hazard with brand new sidewalks. The area of sidewalk replacement is approximately a block and a half on both sides of the street, a section on Market Street in front of the Municipal Authority office as well as the front entrance of the Johnsonburg Community Center. New sidewalks would make pedestrian traffic much safer and easier. The goal is to be able to access the new businesses in the redevelopment area that is coming to Johnsonburg and hope to see it continue to progress of the next few years.

Chery Ruffner asked how the Borough would choose what sections would get done in the event they are not funded fully.

Ryan Miller answered that the way the sections are mapped out, they would complete it a section at a time. The Borough will not do "patch work" in between the sections.

Chery Ruffner gave kudos to the Johnsonburg Community Trust for all the amazing work their doing.

Bill Chiesa questioned if National Fuel or the Water Authority have any plans for projects.

Ryan Miller answered that the municipal authority has plans of doing sidewalks around their building but he's not sure where that is at because the majority of their funding has been put towards repairs or extension of their water system.

Cheryl Ruffner questioned if he had the costs of each section.

Ryan Miller answered that the cost estimate has the details for each section.

### **Johnsonburg Borough – 512 Market Street Slum & Blight Demolition**

Ryan Miller stated that the Borough is asking for \$46,575 which includes the demolition, clean-up and site restoration for this parcel. The Borough has already purchased the building out of the County Repository. The Borough would continue the maintenance of the property until there is another use for the property.

Becky Krieg asked if this is a project that needs to be fully funded in order to do anything with it.

Ryan Miller answered that yes, to fund this through the Borough's budget would take multiple years.

Tracy Gerber questioned if the two structures share a common wall.

Ryan Miller stated that the structures do not share a common wall. In the demolition phase, we would proceed with caution and regroup if something different was found.

Dale Anderson questioned if the sidewalk project or demolition project was first priority.

Ryan Miller answered that the sidewalks would be priority. The sidewalks are a full time use advantage once they are complete.

Becky Krieg questioned if there is concern that this structure will come down on its own like the theater did in the event of a strong storm.

Ryan Miller answered that at some point the possibility could happen on the rear side of the structure. There is also the chance of squatters getting into the building. The Borough is trying to be proactive.

Becky Krieg asked that if this building would fall down, does the Borough have the funds to clean it up this year.

Ryan Miller answered that the Borough does not have the funds and would have to work with the contractor or figure something else out.

Dale Anderson asked the if the building is secure, is there constant vandalism or squatters.

Ryan Miller said that the building is secure and locked, but it's able to be accessed in the rear.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Small Communities Entitlement Program (CDBG) Report**

Becki Taylor stated that on the report that was included in your packet, that the FY20/21 West Center Storm Sewer Project was changed from full construction to materials only with the exception of the curbing which is out for bit right now. Bids are due September 4, 2024. PennDOT will be doing the construction of the storm sewer.

Project updates:

- FY20/21 Johnsonburg 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. Parking Lot project is complete. S.E. Rodich Excavating was the contractor for the amount of \$20,825.
- FY20/21 Ridgway Borough has a curb cut project in the works. Steger Masonry is the contractor.
- FY21/22 Ridgway Borough curb cut project will start when FY20/21 project is finished.
- Millstone Township Accessibility project was awarded to S.E. Rodich Excavating in the amount of \$13,630. This project should be starting soon.
- FY22 Johnsonburg Borough – Harrison Avenue Storm Sewer project should be starting soon.
- CAPSEA Stairway project's funding was lowered to \$9,520. Of the \$9,529, \$3,080 from that comes from the Ridgway Borough's entitlement \$6,440 comes from the CDBG program. This is a Fair Share project because the building lies within the Borough.

### **Housing Report**

Kathy McClelland reported that Elk County was awarded 3 grants through the PHARE program. They are as follows: \$100,000 for Housing Rehabilitation/Accessibility, \$20,000 for Ramps of Hope and \$100,000 for CAPSEA for their elevator project at their new building.

Ms. McClelland stated there has been no release of awards yet for the HOME grant that Elk County applied for.

Becky Krieg asked what is done with the Housing Rehabilitation program.

Ms. McClelland answered that she mostly is asked for Accessibility projects. Accessibility projects include, stairlifts, ramps, step in showers and removal of barriers. In the summertime, Ms. McClelland stated that persons needing a ramp in the summertime, are passed on to the Ramps of Hope program.

### **Directors Report**

Tracy Gerber stated that North Central is doing a multi county Safety Action Plan compiling safety hazards between cars, bikes, pedestrians etc.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

After a group discussion of the proposed projects, they have been prioritized as:

1. Jones Township Municipal Authority - Water Meters

\$120,635.40

Brandi Hanes made a motion to fund the Jones Township Municipal Authority Water Meter Project in full for the amount of \$126,035.40; Becky Krieg seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

2. Johnsonburg Borough – 512 Market Street Slum & Blight Demolition \$30,000.00  
With a PHARE match of \$12,500 per Kathy McClelland

3. Johnsonburg Borough – Bridge Street Sidewalk Replacement \$28,252.60

Brandi made a motion to approve the Johnsonburg Borough, 512 Market Street Slum & Blight Demolition for \$30,000 with a PHARE match of \$12,500 per Kathy McClelland AND the Johnsonburg Borough Bridge Street Sidewalk Replacement in the amount of \$28,252.60; Ron Minnick seconded the motion and carried unanimously.

### **Comprehensive Plan**

Tracy Gerber stated that the draft was presented at the April 24, 2024 Planning Commission meeting. There was a 45-day comment period that ran from April 25 – June 8, 2025; a public meeting was held today, August 21, 2024 at 3:30 PM to accept any comments. Ms. Gerber stated that she is asking the Board to recommend the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan to the Board of Commissioners for adoption at the regularly scheduled Commissioner’s meeting, August 22, 2024 at 10:00 AM.

Tracy Gerber stated that all comments and concerns were addressed. This process was started in August 2022, with 8 focus groups and one on one interviews. She added that with the comments received on the “no net loss” and public “land vs. private land”, the Commissioners have added a sentence to the Comprehensive Plan stating “The County recognizes that there continues to be discussion on the advantages verses disadvantages of increasing public land ownership in Elk County.” This sentence will be placed of page 62 in the Payment in Lieu of Taxes section under Land use section.

Cheryl Ruffner made a motion to send the Comprehensive Plan to the Board of Commissioners as presented, knowing that it is just a plan; Brandi Hanes seconded the motion. At this time, the Board went into discussion. Motion did not get approved.

Cheryl Ruffner questioned how much the County loses because of the “In Lieu of Taxes”.

Tracy Gerber answered that she does not have that information but does know that with the PILT increase up to \$9.00 per acre, the County is actually receiving more than what the land would’ve been taxed at. She wasn’t positive what land exactly and doesn’t have access to that information but what she was told.

Dale Anderson stated that he is not positive that the Bill wasn’t passed to approve the \$9.10 per acre.

Ron Minnick agreed that he believe the last he heard, it was \$3XX.

Dale Anderson asked for a Roll Call Vote, the vote passes with 5-1. Bill Chiesa, Ron Minnick, Cheryl Ruffner, Brandi Hanes and Becky Krieg voting Yes; Dale Anderson voting No.

### **COMMENTS FROM GUESTS**

None.

### **SCHEDULING OF NEXT MEETING**

The next regular meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 23, 2024 at 4:30 PM in Conference Room #2 in the Elk County Courthouse Annex.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business, Cheryl Ruffner made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:05 PM; Ron Minnick seconded the motion and carried unanimously.