**ATHENS COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**ATHENS COUNTY, OHIO**

**MINUTES FROM MEETING January 12, 2023**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:**

ATHENS COUNTY: Neal Reynolds, Warren Jeffers

ATHENS CITY/COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT **–** Jack Pepper

ATHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Charlie Adkins, Chris Chmiel, Lenny Eliason

ATHENS CITY: Steve Patterson, Rob Delach, Solvieg Spjeldnes

CITY OF NELSONVILLE – None

VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVE: Gary Goosman

TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVE: Steve Pierson

ATHENS COUNTY ENGINEER – Jeff Maiden

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT**: Scott Dunfee, Cathy Bobo, Don Gossel, Meredith Erlewine, Jeff Jenkins

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Upon determination that a quorum of at least nine (9) voting members was present, Vice-President Warren Jeffers called the January 12, 2023 meeting of the Athens County Regional Planning Commission to order at 8:01 AM. The meeting was held at the ACEMS Station #51, 21 Kenny Drive, Athens, OH 45701.

**GUESTS PRESENT**: Erin Stevens (SOPEC), Diane Pennington, Anthony Pennington, Rusty Rittenhouse

**MINUTES:**

Motion by Commissioner Eliason, seconded by Councilman Reynolds to approve as presented the meeting minutes of the November 10, 2022 Athens County Regional Planning Commission. All voted yes, motion passed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Pennington Cemetery: Originally brought up in the November meeting, the ACRPC had concerns that there was not enough information to approve a variance for this split. Attorney Rusty Rittenhouse had since worked with the Health Department to include restrictive language on the deed. Typically, the Health Department discourages lot splits this small, however they do have a history of granting variances for cemeteries if specific language is included in the deed. Rittenhouse has added such language. Jack Pepper reported that based on a sewage viewpoint, the Health Dept. would approve this variance if the ACRPC approves it in today’s meeting. Steve Pierson suggested treating this as a public road variance. The County Engineer’s Office had discussions in their office as well and feel that a variance is appropriate for this. Steve Pierson asked if this cemetery will have access recorded. Rittenhouse explained that the main purpose of this split is to be able to put the cemetery into a survivorship deed. Daine Pennington reported that Lodi Township was in favor of approval as long as it is fenced in and easement is recorded. Both have taken place. Mayor Patterson made a motion to approve the variance to the required road frontage. Commissioner Eliason seconded. All in favor. Motion passed.

**CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS**

* **US 50 Corridor Sewer Expansion Project/Commissioner Eliason**
  + Commissioner Eliason reported that the first wave of properties have been connected to the sewer lines. The next group of connection letters will be going out in the next three weeks. Contracts have been signed for Phases 6&7.
* **Athens County Land Bank/Commissioner Chmiel** 
  + Athens County Landbank just completed multiple demolitions. The state provided reimbursements for some of those demolitions and the Land Bank hopes to receive more soon.
  + The Landbank has sold it’s first renovation project in Buchtel.
  + Commissioner Chmiel reports that the landbank is also a community improvement corporation so they have a broader mission than just tearing down structures. They are working with Heritage Ohio to sponsor a workshop on Feb. 23 at the Southeast Ohio History Center to discuss community revitalization and historic tax credits. The venue can fit up to 100 guests. People will need to pre-register and more information will be available soon.
* **COVID-19 Health Emergency/Jack Pepper**
* Jack Pepper recommended removing this as a standing agenda item. We have transitioned into a phase where we are learning to live with the disease. The HD is having more conversations around Flu and RSV than COVID right now. While COVID is not gone, it is starting to fade into the background. The disease is still highly contagious but far less severe than in earlier stages of the pandemic. Vaccines slowed down mid December and we have not seen that pick back up.
* Mayor Patterson reported that the city is still monitoring the viral load and has seen it continue to go up and down.
* **Broadband Expansion and Access**
  + HAPCAP is still working with the Village of Amesville
  + Spectrum says they will start work in the Spring or Summer.
* **Age Friendly Athens County (AFAC)/Jack Pepper**
  + Jack Pepper reported that there are two subgroups working on Age Friendly Initiatives: the large group and the executive committee. The large group met this week. There’s also a handful of subcommittees working on each of the domains. The group is still looking to hire an Executive Director but the budget has changed drastically. The group is hopeful to collect the funding to make a director position happen. Sister’s Health Foundation contributed $10k and the Athens County Foundation contributed $25k. The health department has made a commitment for annual funding as well. The goal is to make the position sustainable long term.
  + Mayor Goosman reports that the next steps will be to host community conversations throughout the county. These will be held at various libraries.
* **SR 682 Corridor/Steve Pierson**
* Mr. Pierson emailed Alan Craig, ODOT, mentioned they were waiting to secure funding for a roundabout similar to Logan. ODOT received $2million and are now in the design phase for the creation of a roundabout that is slated to begin construction in 2024. ODOT has been very responsive to requests. ACRPC members suggested that we invite District 10 to a meeting while they are still in the design phase.
* Scott Dunfee raised the question of signaling near the new apartment complex.
* Solveig Spjeldnes reported that she spoke with Athens City Service Safety Director Andy Stone about the Luhrig Rd. area and he suggested that someone speak to ODOT while in the design phase to see if improvements can be wrapped into their project since major work is already happening.
* **Appalachian Community Grants**
  + Mayor Patterson reported that for the $50 million in available implementation grant funding, the Govenors Office of Appalachia had received $350 million in requests. Mayors Partnership for Progress made a request for planning funds. OUHCOM, in collaboration with another university department, also made a request.

**PLANNER’S REPORT: Laura Olbers**

* The Village of Chauncey has requested assistance from the Planners office to continue the process of getting back into the National Flood Insurance Program.
* The Village of Jacksonville has also requested flood plain management assistance from the Planner to address violations.

**CITY, VILLAGE, TOWNSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:**

* **Athens County Engineer/Jeff Maiden**
  + Athens County Engineer Jeff Maiden reported that his office is working on 7 bridges, with three coming out May/June. Four more are in the pipeline. Two bridges have been closed.
  + The Engineer’s Office has been working with the Commissioners and have received funding from the Commissioners for an upgraded radio system. Tuesday morning saw 26 County Roads underwater. The digital radio system was failing due to age. County crews were unable to communicate with one another.
  + There is a major paving project upcoming. It will be the largest at the county level. The Engineer’s Office received $2 million in grand funding for this project, after applying in 2018. They were unable to build last year due to the increased cost of the project. Both the Engineer’s Office and the County Commissioners contributed to the increased cost to ensure this project could happen.
* **SOPEC/ Erin Stevens**
  + Ms. Stevens wanted to remind the group that SOPEC tries to be innovative and reinvest in the communities that they serve. They are currently looking into the inflation reduction act and how they are able to make an impact. Their website has a tool free number that takes you directly to an AEP Representative that knows exactly what SOPEC’s energy plan is like.
* **Village of Amesville/Gary Goosman**
* The Village of Amesville has been working with the Athens County Creating Healthy Communities Coalition on their complete streets policy as well as looking to get upgrades to improve safety.
* **Athens Township/Steve Pierson**

A township-wide paving contract for CY 2023 to total no more than $400k has been awarded to McKee Paving.

The Village Council of Chauncey has approved a zoning resolution and is now seeking services of an inspector at 10 hrs./week. As opposed to townships which have no statutory authority to impose rental registration requirements, including fees, villages and cities can do that and it is included in the zoning code. Revenue will be used to fund the inspector’s position.

Ms. Olbers will be assisting the Village of Chauncey to regain good standing in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

In the Athens Township portion of The Plains start of construction is expected soon for the

Hopewell Healthcare campus on S. Clinton Street, the Hocking/Athens/Perry Community Action Program (HAPCAP) HeadStart pre-school on Connett Road, across from The Plains Volunteer Fire Department facility, and the 911/EMA Center, also on Connett Road, across from the Athens Intermediate School.

The Elm Street project is complete and open to the public. The project included new full depth asphalt, a bike lane, 5 ft. wide sidewalks, ADA compliant curb ramps at street intersections, and street lighting. The project extends from SR 682 to Athens High School and is the main point of access for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The project was a joint effort between the ODOT Transportation Alternative Program (TAP) and Athens Township.

* **Creating Health Communities/Athens City-County Health Department**

The CHC is working with Amesville on safety improvements on SR550/329. They applied to Buckeye Hills for mating funds.

Ohio University has about 9,000 digital thermometers and thousands of gloves left over from COVID. If someone knows of an organization who could benefit from these resources, please reach out to Meredith Erlewine. They must be a government or a nonprofit organization.

* **Village of Albany/Council President Neal Reynolds**

Albany has been working on a lot throughout 2022. They are finishing up their comprehensive plan and hope to have that finished and in print shortly.

The Village is working with the EDC on a community reinvestment area program.

The County Commissioners have agreed to fund part of the sewer project in the Village and DLZ has completed the engineering on that.

* **Athens County Auditors Office/ Scott Dunfee**

With the power outage this past Sunday, there was a power surge and drive failure. Only one drive out of three survived. The GIS and Auditor’s sites are suffering from that. The Office asks for your patience while they recover their data.

* **Athens County EMA/Don Gossel**

FEMA has reached out to the state regarding the property acquisition program. County EMAs are used to view the properties that FEMA has acquired and make sure they are staying compliant.

* **Athens County Commissioners**
* **Soil and Water Conservation District/ Cathy Bobo**

On February 2, 2023, Soil and Water is partnering with Ohio EPA and Hocking and Vinton Soil and Water for a 401 Information session. This is open to land owners, elected officials, and anyone looking to deal with 401 permits.

Soil and Water is currently in the middle of their annual tree packet ordering.

* **City of Athens: Solveig Spjeldnes/ Mayor Patterson**

Solveig is on the Pedestrian Accessibility Committee. That Committee is planning on giving their report on pedestrian access soon.

Mayor Patterson reported that the City of Athens has received $1.4 mil in funding for the preliminary design for a roundabout at the SR 682/SR 56 area. The City is also close to the final design for the forest station headquarters. They have received $3.2 mil funding for the Stimson Ave Bridge Rehabilitation project.

The City has secured a purchase agreement with Third Sun Kokosing for a solar array at the Community Center. Construction should begin next month in front of the community pool, will move to working on the roof of the Community Center, and end with an array near the dog park.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

There being no further business to come before the Commission and no additional comments for good of the order, on a motion Mr. Pierson, seconded by Mr. Reynolds and all voting member voting yes, Vice-President Jeffers adjourned the meeting at 9:09 AM.

The February 9, 2022 meeting of the Athens County Regional Planning Commission is anticipated to be conducted at the Athens County EMS Station 51, 21 Kenny Drive, Athens, Ohio at 8:00 AM.

Respectfully Submitted by Laura Olbers, Director, Athens County Regional Planning Commission

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_