**ATHENS COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**ATHENS COUNTY, OHIO**

**MINUTES FROM May 11, 2023 MEETING**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:**

ATHENS COUNTY: Gregg Andrews, Warren Jeffers, Neal Reynolds

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

ATHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Lenny Eliason, Chris Chmiel

ATHENS CITY: Steve Patterson, Rob Delach

CITY OF NELSONVILLE –

VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVE: Gary Goosman

TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVE: Steve Pierson

ATHENS COUNTY ENGINEER -

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT**: Scott Dunfee, Jason Pyles, Jeff Jenkins

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Upon determination that a quorum of at least nine (9) voting members was present, President Warren Jeffers called the May 11, 2023 meeting of the Athens County Regional Planning Commission to order at 8:02 AM. The meeting was held at the ACEMS Station #51, 21 Kenny Drive, Athens, OH 45701.

**GUESTS PRESENT**:

**MINUTES:**

Motion by Commissioner Chmiel, seconded by Mr. Reynolds to approve as presented the meeting minutes of the April 13, 2023 Athens County Regional Planning Commission. All voted yes, motion passed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Mr. Pierson shared that Senior Resource Day is taking place today, May 13th, 2023 at the Athens Community Center. He clarified that Senior Resource Day is geared towards those who are aging, while Age Friendly Athens County encompasses individuals of all ages.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

* Breezeway Subdivision
  + Due to technical difficulties, this discussion was tabled until next month.
* Community Reinvestment Areas
  + Commissioner Chmiel discussed that Mollie Fitzgerald has brought this to the Commissioners. The Commissioners have been working with her to explore the creation of CRA’s in the unincorporated areas of the County. The goal is to create incentives with taxes to encourage development within Athens County. As the legislation is currently written, it’s quite broad. Guidelines can be included after the fact to narrow it down. As it’s written, a Housing Council will be created. Someone from the Regional Planning Commission will be appointed to the Housing Council. Village of Albany is also working to set up CRAs with help from Mollie Fitzgerald. Next Wednesday, Neal Reynolds will be introducing an ordinance to Albany Council. One issue that Albany has faced is finding the balance between tax abatement and still garnering enough taxes to maintain the Village. Commissioner Chmiel mentioned that the County discussions around CRAs are were specifically started at this time because of interest from the industrial park on Poston Road.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

* **New Officers:** 
  + We are still looking for a secretary. Commissioner Chmiel might have an idea.

**CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS**

* **City/County Sewer Expansion Project/Lenny Eliason**
  + The Commissioners received an acceptable bid for repaving and everything is on schedule and moving along. Paving is estimated to be completed in 2-3 months. The end of project is still anticipated for 2024. About 200 dwellings have been connected so far.
* **Athens County Land Bank/ Commissioner Chmiel** 
  + More demolitions are happening. The Land Bank has their monthly meeting next Wednesday. There are some controversial issues to be discussed at that meeting, particularly surrounding 47 Main Street in Chauncey.
  + Ric Wasserman, Chris Chmiel, and Aaron Dye attended the land bank conference and learned a lot of great things. Land banks are a CIC so they can do all the things that a CIC can do. Cuyahoga County shared discussions about the fact that land banks can also issue bonds.
* **Broadband Expansion and Access/Jeff Jenkins**
  + Not a lot of new news. Spectrum is still surveying for their ARDOF. A contractor reached out and said they were interested in doing the access roads.
  + Amesville project is still stalled due to an ownership clause through the ARC. The RFP is completed, just waiting to be greenlighted.
* **Age Friendly Athens County (AFAC)/Jack Pepper**
  + A new director has been hired. They will start May 17th.
  + Mr. Pierson asked about the subcommittees. Pepper responded that the group intends to give the new hire autonomy on how to move forward so we should expect more information to come in the near future.
* **SR 682 Corridor** 
  + President Jeffers reported that he sees lots of ODOT workers out and working diligently
  + Mr. Pierson mentioned that Hopewell Health will be starting their work soon. Additionally, HAPCAP is building their new head start on Connett, where there are existing traffic problems. The County is also planning to build a new 911/EMA center off of Connett Road.
* **Appalachian Community Grants/Mayor Patterson**
  + The technical assistance is still in a holding pattern. MOU’s are still waiting to come out. Any level of planning you can start now, it’s recommended you do. The timeline for planning is shrinking quickly.
  + Anyone thinking about Round 2 funding, whole proposals might be approved but line items within them might not be

**PLANNER’S REPORT: Laura Olbers**

* Team registrations for Athens County Together are still open. So far two teams have registered.
* Athens County Planning Office will be applying for the ODNR Natureworks Grant.
* Bikeway resurfacing project has been reworked and will hopefully be out to bid for a third time soon.
* The Active Transportation Group is conducting a walk audit of the SR 682 corridor between Buckley Brothers and the Bikeway on Tuesday, May 16th, at 5:15pm. Non walking options are available. Any and all are encouraged to attend.

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

* **Village of Amesville/Gary Goosman**
  + Met with Designing Local for the Technical Assistance grant. Also worried about the timeline of the Appalachian Community Grant
* **Athens Township/Steve Pierson**
  + Contacted by the Census Bureau to make sure the boundary map for The Plains is correct. In discussions about changing the boundary of The Plains, as it stands the Community Park and the Intermediate School are not residing in the boundary of The Plains. There has been discussions again about possible incorporation. Because Athens City is so geographically close, they have a say in that decision.
  + Mr. Pierson mentioned that the largest violations they have reported by the Athens County Sheriffs Office is speeding.
* **Athens City-County Health Department/Jack Pepper**
  + Strouds Run Accessibility Project is moving forward. Funding has been identified.
  + Participating in conversations with Alexander School District about adaptive playgrounds.
  + May 11th is the official last day of the pandemic. The Health Department has been busy planning around this, preparing for the change of the emergency declaration and the end of funding streams from that. Particularly, in regards to fully insurance individuals getting no cost vaccinations.
  + President Jeffers asked for clarification on recommendations of boosters for those aged 65+. Mr. Pepper confirmed that the current government recommendation is every 6 months.
* **Village of Albany/Council President Neal Reynolds**
  + Sewer expansion is ongoing. The engineer’s estimate came out to be a little over $900,000, not including design. That’s moving along faster than expected. That gives access to the last part of the incorporated area
  + Bid opening June 13th for paving project.
  + Continuing discussions with different entities to discuss development of the downtown area.
* **HAPCAP/Jeff Jenkins**
  + Mr. Jenkins is also in the Community Development department at HAPCAP now as well and can assist with CBDG for anyone interested, as well as other grants.
* **City of Athens/ Mayor Patterson**
  + Suggested bringing the Governmental Relations Liaison from Kanawha River Railroad coming to the RPC at some point to discuss safety protocol.
  + MPP meets today at noon.
  + The City of Athens went through thorough outreach to the land lords of the city to find out what the capacity was in 2020 and plan to challenge the Census Bureau on the accounts. It won’t change the 2020 census but will change the projection for future counts.
  + Mayor Patterson applauded Nelsonville’s efforts to maintain their city status, but without going through the census, things such as their CBDG funding allocations are still affected.
  + West Union/Herald Drive project has failed twice to get acceptable bids. The project will be split in half and bid separately.
  + Mariette Memorial Health Care is putting in a lot of fill on Columbus Road to move their project forward.
  + Drive Ohio is finalizing two autonomous vehicles and have finalized two test tracts in the County. Those vehicles will have a safety driver and a co-pilot in them.
  + Solar panels are going up on the 2.4 million watt solar array in Athens. That project has three phases. One at the city pool, one at the community center rooftop and the third at the former dog park. The city is now planning a solar array of the 6th floor of the parking garage, solar on top of the armory building and solar on the new fire station.
  + The new fire station received acceptable bids and we should be seeing significant movement happening there soon.
* **Athens County Auditor’s Office/ Scott Dunfee**
  + GIS advanced and basic parcel viewers are up and hitting the Enterprise portal now. They are working to integrate that data back to the auditor’s site and should see that completed in a couple of weeks.

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

* Mayor Patterson mentioned that the new President of Ohio University has agreed to attend a meet and greet with the community at the Community Center in early August. Once that date is finalized, he will share that with the group.

There being no further business to come before the Commission and no additional comments for good of the order, on a motion by Commissioner Eliason, seconded by Rob Delach adjourned the meeting at 9:05 AM.

The June 8th, 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: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_