**ATHENS COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

**ATHENS COUNTY, OHIO**

**MINUTES FROM May 9, 2024 MEETING**

**VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:**

ATHENS COUNTY: Neal Reynolds, Warren Jeffers, Jen Seifert,

ATHENS COUNTY ENGINEER – Jeff Maiden

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

ATHENS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS: Charlie Adkins, Chris Chmiel

ATHENS CITY: Solveig Spjeldnes, Meghan Jennings,

CITY OF NELSONVILLE –

VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVE: -

TOWNSHIP REPRESENTATIVE: - Steve Pierson

**NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT**: Ben Ziff, Drew Daniels, Jason Pyles, Teresa Fouts-Imler, Mollie Fitzgerald, Scott Dunfee, Tim Kirkendall, Paige Gates, Meredith Erlewine

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Upon determination that a quorum of at least nine (9) voting members was present, President Warren called the May 9, 2024 meeting of the Athens County Regional Planning Commission to order at 8:00 AM. The meeting was held at the ACEMS Station #51, 21 Kenny Drive, Athens, OH 45701.

**GUESTS PRESENT**: Erin Stevens

**MINUTES:**

Motion by Neal Reynolds, seconded by Steve Pierson to approve as presented the meeting minutes of the April 11, 2024 Athens County Regional Planning Commission. All approved.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

* The Athens County Floodplain Regulation updates are happening. The new FEMA FIRMs have been approved. The updated regulations must be adopted by September 26, 2024. Two public readings must take place before the adoption, this will happen in a Board of Commissioners meeting. There are no regulatory updates, just expanding on definitions and providing more detail/clarity. Planner Laura Olbers is working with ODNR to get these approved by FEMA in time for the September adoption date.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS**

* **City/County Sewer Expansion Project- Commissioners Adkins and Chmiel** 
  + Radford Road project is wrapping up. Sewer is going out to the Country Club.
  + There’s bore going under SR 56.
  + New Marshfield and Cannanville Sewer is still being discussed.
* **Athens County Land Bank-Chris Chmiel**
  + There is another application that has been submitted for another round of demolitions. Currently awaiting word on that.
  + There will be a Board Meeting next Wednesday.
  + The Land Bank hopes to get a grant for a new roof on one of the downtown Glouster buildings.
* **Broadband Expansion and Access-**
  + Athens County put in another application for the Appalachian Regional Commission for additional support for broadband.
* **Age Friendly Athens County (AFAC)- Amy Lipka**
  + There was a kick-off event for the recipients of the recent grants awarded through AFAC. Lots of excitement happening around those projects.
* **SR 682 Corridor-** 
  + County Engineer Maiden received a link yesterday with the Phase 2 drawings for the roundabout at SR682/US33 interchange.
* **Appalachian Community Grants-** 
  + Chauncey received nearly $2 million in funding for a streetscaping project to include a crosswalk across SR13 to the park. There is a study underway for the feasibility of a grade separation for West Bailey Road.
  + City of Athens received funding for streetscaping and improvements along Carpenter Road.
  + Mount Zion received over $7 million for restoration.
  + Southeast Ohio History Center received around $2 million for renovations.

**PLANNER’S REPORT: Laura Olbers**

* The subdivision regulation update committee met to discuss the regulation updates. It was determined the areas in need of most attention are the lot size and frontage definitions.
* The Active Transportation Plan draft is being circulated around. There is one more section that needs to be completed, which will be facilitated by Toole Design. This will be a two hour meeting with the Regional Planning Commission and the Active Transportation Steering Committee. Toole Design has proposed two potential dates: June 27th, from 11:00am-1:00 pm, OR July 11th, from 8:00-10:00am. The July 11th date would be in lieu of the regular Regional Planning Commission meeting. Commissioner Chmiel made a motion to utilize the July 11th RPC meeting for the Toole Design facilitated Active Transportation meeting. Jen Siefert seconded. All approve.

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

* **Athens County Auditor’s Office**
* **Village of Amesville-Mayor Goosman**
* **Ohio University-Jason Pyles**
  + Projects will be kicking off soon so stay tuned for updates.
* **Athens City County Health Department**
  + The ACCHD is mostly back to business as usual, performing public health duties behind the scenes as is typical.
  + Toole Design consultants will be facilitating the Active Transportation meeting for the Active Transportation Plan on July 11th.
  + The Ohio Department of Health grant for the Creating Healthy Communities Coalition was submitted
* **City of Athens-Solvieg Spjeldnes, Meghan Jennings**
  + Last Wednesday at the City Planning Commission meeting, changes were approved regarding lot splits and lot sizes. The changes still need to go through Council.
  + There is a Hocking River Corridor Study happening with the Army Corps of Engineers to study the area from White’s Mill to Richland Ave. This study will look at the biodiversity and the naturalization of the corridor. The study is expected to be completed in 2030.
  + There will be a focus group on May 18th regarding the Ridges Renovations, specifically surrounding senior living. So far there are approximately twenty individuals anticipated for that focus group, though 2-3 more individuals that would be interested in living at the Ridges are needed. This focus group will discuss what active senior living will look like, with the hopes of making it a model for active senior living within the Country.
  + West Union Street construction is still underway. The Chamber of Commerce attended a Council meeting to discuss how the work is impacting businesses. The City is trying to get emergency funding to help the work be completed faster. Shelly & Sands has been asked for a bid though it has not been provided. The City is exploring all options for funding with nothing successful as of yet. There’s a possibility the City might entertain borrowing $100,000 to get this project wrapped up.
* **Athens Township- Steve Pierson, Warren Jeffers**
  + Columbia Gas will be doing pressure tests on the main line in The Plains starting in about two weeks.
  + Tennessee Gas Pipeline will replace a 23” diameter, 1.5 mile pipeline through The Plains. That project will be time intensive.
  + Athens County Active Transportation Plan draft has come out. The plan will assist in getting funding for safety projects and such within The Plains community.
  + Athens Township drafted a policy with the Prosecutor’s Office for public meetings to ensure a fair policy for residents to provide public comment and that everyone is treated equally.
  + Discussions are ongoing with the US Census Bureau to change the boundary lines of The Plains. According to the US Census, The Plains is the only area in Athens County that has grown.
  + Spring Clean up will take place Saturday, May 11th. Hopewell Health Centers is allowing use of the old school property for dumpsters on the old basketball courts. Richland Area Fire Department on Hooper Rd. will also have dumpsters available to the public.
* **Village of Albany – Tim Kirkendall, Neal Reynolds**
* **City of Nelsonville-**
* **SOPEC**
  + Erin Stevens shared that folks should be aware that AEP Ohio has raised their transmission fees. AEP Ohio has nothing to do with SOPEC. SOPEC partners with AEP Energy.
  + Ms. Stevens mentioned that if you have an event in your community, she would be interested in attending and teaching residents how to read their utility bills. If this is something your community is interested in, regardless of upcoming events, reach out to Ms. Stevens to see how you can schedule that.
* **Athens County Engineer’s Office**- **Jeff Maiden**
  + Two projects are going to bid on May 28th, including the Trimble Township 315 bridge project, which is an anticipated $1 million project. The Director of Ohio Public Works was recently in Athens to look at those projects.
  + The Plains bikeway along Johson Road project was awarded funding at $1.5 million. This will include a multiuse path, lighting, stormwater infrastructure and more. The project was funded at 100% construction and 95% design/right of way acquisition.
  + Featherstone Road Bridge now has a load limit set at 5 tons after the bridge inspection process.
  + One new truck and three used trucks were purchased.
  + Columbia Ave, south of the University Airport has a pipe running along which often gets beavers in it. The beavers create blockage, backing water into the Village of Albany. The damage has created leaks, which have been fixed, but new leaks are being created. This has lead to a sinkhole near the pipe. The Engineer estimates that this will be a $250,000 replacement project.
* **Athens County Commissioners-**
* **New Leaf Justice Enterprises-Jen Seifert**
  + Many renovation projects are moving along.
  + One renovation project, 93 N. High Glouster, will be going out to bid today. The others will follow soon.
* **Athens County Economic Development Council- Mollie Fitzgerald**
  + The Albany spec building has partial walls up. President Jeffers asked if there had been any interested expressed by businesses for this building. Ms. Fitzgerald said there was interest from both area businesses looking to expand, as well as outside businesses hoping to move in.
  + Ms. Fitzgerald sat on a panel at the Ohio Brownfield Conference where there were discussions about the advocacy underway at their office.
  + Nelsonville is inching toward support from Jobs Ohio for the Eagles building.
* **Athens County 911**
  + Athens County 911 is working with the County Engineer to submit road damage and slippage reports to FEMA for funding.
* **Athens County Visitors Bureau- Boone Troyer**
* **Village of Chauncey-Drew Daniel**
  + Village Council has passed ordinances regarding water and sewer processes
  + The Village is working with Jen Siefert as well as David Funk (Capstone), who purchased the 38-acre property on the edge of town. They are hoping to change the land use to business and hope to bring new businesses to the community. They have been in communication with John Hensler of ODOT about funding for the roadways in that area of the Village.
  + Columbia Gas is moving the gas line in preparation for the new water/sewer lines.
* **Athens County EMA-Melissa Blank**
* **HAPCAP-**
  + Transit Line 5 will be reopened May 13 for AM shift only. Line 5 transfers to Line 2. Line 4 will run PM shift.
  + The Transit Development Plan’s second survey is being distributed. This survey provides the public with two very different service scenarios. The goal is to get opinions on each scenario so that HAPCAP can work on a service scenario that is tailored to the area and public need.
  + Working with Athens County Foundation, Jessica Stroh is looking for a piece of land to be suitable for providing homeless safety and shelter. This would be an emergency shelter, which Athens County does not have, that would offer temporary and complimentary services such as safe parking lots and restroom access.
* **Athens County Soil and Water District- Cathy Bobo**
* **COAD-Megan Riddlebarger**

**GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

* President Jeffers wanted to share a reminder regarding spring weather and mowing concerns. Recently the area near the SR682/US33 interchange was mowed by caring folks, however, all the grass was blown into the roadway. ODOT had to send a crew out in the evening to blow the roadway off. People are used to be mindful when mowing their yards. If you mow grass into the roadway, please be sure to blow or sweep it clean. Grass in the roadway can cause hazardous conditions to motorcyclists and others.

There being no further business to come before the Commission and no additional comments for good of the order, on a motion by Chris Chmiel, seconded Neal Reynolds adjourned the meeting at 9:00 AM.

The June 13, 2024 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: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_