

New Brighton-Fallston-Daugherty-Pulaski Implementable Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance

Steering Committee Meeting 1 – Nov. 10, 2020, 6 p.m.

Fallston Borough Building, 90 Beaver St., Fallston

Agenda

Introduction and overview

1. Elaine Kramer introduced Pashek+MTR, a 15-person landscape architecture and planning firm based in Pittsburgh's Northside. The team for the NB-D-F-P planning and zoning project also includes Jenni Easton and Jim Pashek from Pashek+MTR and Laura Ludwig from HRG. Laura will lead the part of the project covering new zoning regulations.
2. The purpose of this project is to create a multi-municipal comprehensive plan for the communities. PA's Municipalities Planning Code recommends that communities should update their comp plans every 10 years. In creating a comprehensive plan, the communities decide how they want to change in the coming years and how to implement those changes. The plan is a policy guide that will help the communities align official decisions, policies and regulations with the decisions regarding "what they want to see happen." A zoning update project follows the planning process because zoning and subdivision and land use ordinances are an important tool for putting the plan into action.
3. The state's planning code lists a dozen topics that comp plans should cover. Traditionally, comprehensive plans dedicate one chapter to each of the topics. However, Pashek+MTR feels that few community issues rest in a single silo, but actually have elements from two or more of the planning code topics. Therefore, the firm's approach is to first ask the communities, "What are the problems you want to solve and strengths to build on?" Then we organize the comprehensive plan process around those "Key Issues." That is the process we are beginning today with the steering committee's help: Understanding the communities' problems, goals, aspirations and strengths.

Project roll-out

1. Jenni Easton provided a brief overview of the project scope and timeline. There are two major work components, the Implementable Comprehensive Plan and the Joint Municipal Zoning Ordinance.
 - a. The plan will be about a 16-month effort consisting of two phases.
 - Phase 1 is “listening to the community,” involving a rigorous effort to let people know that the plan is underway and give them every opportunity to be a part of it. We will consider a variety of approaches to get out into the communities and ask people what they think the most important issues are. The input will help the Steering Committee identify and validate a handful of Key Issues that will form the framework of the plan.
 - Phase 2 is “drilling down for solutions.” Here Pashek+MTR will identify some best practices and suggest specific, realistic solutions to problems. We will focus significant time and energy on finding ways to build capacity and find resources, helping get the communities moving forward on achieving goals that are important to the people who live here.
 - The draft plan will undergo an official 45-day review period before elected officials vote to adopt. We anticipate this happening in early 2022.
 - b. The zoning component will begin toward the end of the planning process in fall 2021. It will last about 10 months.
 - The communities will appoint a multi-municipal planning commission to serve as the working group for this part of the project. The group will meet to review and create regulations across the communities according to consistency with the new plan, reflecting updates in case law, current best practices and emerging topics.
 - The group will work through a variety of topics, including signage, parking, where and how different land uses are permitted, where buildings can be sited and how large they can be, buffers, landscaping and more.
 - Laura from HRG, who will lead zoning, will be involved during the planning process to lead discussions about land use, ensuring that zoning will fully integrate the results of the planning process.
 - Transparency and participation will be very important to this process, so the group will need to engage elected officials as well as present developing ideas to the public. Following the review and

enactment process required by the state, the zoning project will wrap up in mid-2022.

2. Jenni presented Pashek+MTR's approach to developing an implementable comprehensive plan.
 - a. This process is deeply rooted in community outreach. Pashek+MTR is not writing its own plan for the communities; local direction and input from residents, business owners and other stakeholders will determine what priorities rise to the surface.
 - b. Comprehensive plans often look like *encyclopedias of stuff*, thick exhaustively researched documents with long chapters on planning topics like housing, environmental conditions, community facilities, etc. What we are doing is different – our plan will be organized around detailed action plans to address a handful of Key Issues, strategies that the communities think will really make these places better in the long run.
 - c. The Implementable Plan approach means that we spend less time on background research, documenting facts that are already familiar to many here, and more time on figuring out what should happen next and, most importantly, how ideas can come to fruition.
3. Jenni explained the importance of the zoning work.
 - a. Undertaking the plan and zoning as one project gives the communities a significant advantage, as the plan is the legal basis for local land use regulations. It is also a policy basis: Our plan will help determine how people think neighborhoods can improve, and zoning in turn can set the stage for desired things to happen.
 - b. We can help remove red tape where it shouldn't exist and, at the same time, make sure there is local control over the things that you want to require a little more oversight.
 - c. Zoning is a tool that can be effectively used in many ways. In places where property rights are paramount, a zoning ordinance can help protect them. In fine-grained downtown settings, zoning can help enhance the features that attract and retain people and businesses. Our zoning project is a way of making sure that local voices steer how these communities develop. It is potentially a very powerful way to implement the new plan.
4. Jenni also set out the role of the Steering Committee:
 - a. We ask for a commitment that you try to attend all the meetings (we won't meet just for the sake of meeting). The planning process requires your guidance throughout, for:
 - Engaging with the community

- Determining whether the process and the contents are on the right track.
 - Later, garnering support for the plan so that it gets implemented.
- b. We will ask you to give us honest and timely feedback via your reviews and comments when we send out materials for consideration.
 - c. We will ask for steering committee members' opinions as one form of public input and engagement, starting tonight with the question, "What are the Key Issues?" – what are the main problems to solve or strengths to build on?

Key Issues in your Communities

What topics are important to people in your communities?

Infrastructure and Land Use

- Daugherty's farmland does not have a public sewer system. Is there a way to affordably build out sewerage infrastructure to help people realize their land value if they want to sell it? What about grinder pump systems? (Steve Balik, Bill Pasquale, Erica Doud)
- Is Daugherty's land mass big enough to attract national manufacturing? Job creation would be extremely valuable to stabilize the middle class in our community, but we don't know if there is enough land. (Steve Balik)
- The Country Club (part of which is in Fallston) is for sale. Could that be sold for housing, maybe patio homes? Note that the property has a liquor license. (Ted Smakosz)
- Is Daugherty's land mass appropriate for building pockets of denser housing as self-contained neighborhoods, as Cranberry is doing? This will have transportation access components. (Bill Pasquale)

Property Maintenance

- Can anything be done to address blighted properties and spur reinvestment, such as using a community land bank? (Steve Balik)
- Ensure a viable future for some of the grand old homes, small churches. (Tom Albanese)
- What about tearing down dilapidated properties? NB has an informal side lot program). What are implications for removing properties in a community with a small downtown/neighborhood feel? (Sharon Kovach, Tom Albanese, Bill Pasquale)

Downtown business and community development

- Can New Brighton’s downtown be made more walkable, more accessible, and just more enjoyable and inviting for people of all ages - with additional business, amenities and things to do? Fountains, seating, community garden, access to park, etc. We want more people to stop, not drive through. (Alyssa DeMarco, Mandy Albanese)
- People in New Brighton support the businesses and efforts of other people in New Brighton, and this is an asset for the comprehensive plan (Mandy Albanese)
- Emphasize small, local businesses (Erica Doud)
- Increasing and improving walkability is important. Tie in Big Rock Park to the downtown area. (Johnathan Proano)
- Fallston has six liquor licenses, which is an economic generator (Ted Smakosz)

Recreation and Parks, Outdoor Living

- Big Rock Park is improving. The Rec Commission hopes to add a fitness trail.
- The river is an important community asset, and should be developed for recreational use. (John Proano)
- Can the communities expand how they think about recreation? The rec commission’s work is great for bringing people to our communities, but can there be more programming (movie nights? Bus trips?) to serve residents? (Tom Albanese)
- Community Garden is a nice asset (Sharon Kovach)
- Oak Hill Playground attracted a lot of use in its day, but was made into soccer fields that now aren’t used much. (Sharon Kovach)
- Parks seem kind of hidden, which could invite trouble (or the perception of it). Can they be more strategically placed or opened up to be visible and more accessible? (Alyssa DeMarco, Ted Smakosz)
- The Yacht Club has been an asset for Fallston (Ted Smakosz)

Transportation

- Is it possible to work with PennDOT to improve traffic flow? (Ted Smakosz)
- Beaver County Transit used to go up Penn Avenue and across 10th Street Bridge. (Sharon Kovach)
- 16K vehicles go through NB daily. (John Proano)

Next Steps

1. Community questionnaire should be developed now but go out to the public in January.
2. How best to pursue community awareness and engagement? Ideas:
 - Rec commission can help with outreach.
 - There's a four community newsletter (in March).
 - Businesses are going to do a Wassail Walk on first Sat December. Booth? Post in businesses?
 - Rotary and Lions clubs
 - New Brighton ministerium
 - Historical Society
 - Business District Authority
 - Community facebook pages
 - "Win a community makeover" group would help
 - School digital blasts?
 - Electronic signs
 - Church bulletins/signs
3. Other Logistics
 - a. Community questionnaire preparation and committee review
 - b. Key person interviews

Closing remarks

1. Thanks for already helping by contributing ideas tonight.
2. We think you'll be very proud (as we expect to be) about the step-by-step guide that will help your communities solve the problems you feel are most important to address.
3. Next meeting – maybe January? Maybe in Pulaski? Stay tuned.

Steering Committee members

Robert Lizzi	New Brighton Borough	New Brighton Borough Council
Sharon Kovach	New Brighton Borough	New Brighton Planning Commission
Johnathan Proano	New Brighton Borough	New Brighton Business District Authority
Alyssa DeMarco	New Brighton Borough	Citizen Stakeholder
Thomas J. Albanese	New Brighton Borough	Manager
Bill Pasquale	Daugherty Township	Daugherty Township Board of Supervisors
Steve Balik	Daugherty Township	Daugherty Township Planning Commission
Amanda Albanese	Daugherty Township	Citizen Stakeholder
Erica Douds	Daugherty Township	Citizen Stakeholder
Lisa Peacock	Fallston Borough	Fallston Borough Council
Ted Smakosz	Fallston Borough	Fallston Former Councilman
Mark Wagle	Pulaski Township	Pulaski Township Board of Supervisors
Casey Zachodni	Pulaski Township	Pulaski Township Board of Supervisors