



BOSS 2020 REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
3940 PENN AVENUE
SINKING SPRING, PA 19608
(T) 484-269-4902 (F) 610-678-5802
samloth@comcast.net
www.boss2020.org



SINKING SPRING
BOSS 2020 REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
SSB COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SSB BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
MEETING MINUTES
SEPTEMBER 15, 2016

Call to Order

Charles Coleman (President) called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Present: Charles Coleman (President-D), Brian Hoffa (Council-ED), Mike Hart (Borough Manager), Jim Adams (Berks IDA-ED), Lisa Gantner (Council-P), Ken Pick (Berks Redevelopment Authority), Bob Ludgate, Ludgate Engineering Corporation (LEC) and Sam Loth, Community Development Services (CDS).

Note: Committees: ED-Economic, D-Design, P-Promotion.

Guests: Ginger van Steenvoort (office of Jim Cox, PA House) and the following residents of Sinking Spring Borough + Spring Township: Leon Franken, Jan Roland, John Roland, John Printz, Maria Tuckman, Alan Tuckman, Eric Mischler, Tim Sanger, Sherry Sanger, Sandi Krick, Gary Schultz, Mary Brown, Harvey Brown, Rubin Jasinski, Brian Jasinski, Dominique Caron and Tracy Marrella.

PPL Transmission Line

- Sam Loth requested that the BOSS Committee take up the issue of the PPL Transmission Line first, in order to accommodate the large number of residents who are here to discuss this. The Committee agreed.
- Mr. Loth said that Sinking Spring Borough, the BOSS 2020 Committee, Senator David Argall and House Representative Jim Cox conducted a **conference call on September 14th** to discuss a strategy against the Transmission Line project as it has been presented by PPL Electric Utility.
- *Essentially, PPL states that the utility will construct a high voltage electric line above ground from Spring Township (north) to Sinking Spring Borough (central). The route of the new line will brush against at least four residential neighborhoods while blighting existing and historic farmland, use at least 20% of the existing Village Greens golf course, cross over Penn Avenue and run directly through the middle of the central business district redevelopment zone.*
- The Borough, BOSS, the Senator and the House Representative all strongly oppose this plan because of the following reasons:
 - 1) *The BOSS 2020 Committee filed an "Official Map" revitalization plan which was approved by the Borough Planning Commission, the Borough Council and the Berks County Planning Commission in FY-2009. The Official Map outlines a multi-million dollar public infrastructure plan that will modernize the road system and alleviate significant traffic congestion that is hampering growth in central and western Berks County. The Official Map will alleviate this congestion and create an opportunity to attract \$60 Million dollars in private redevelopment in*

*the underdeveloped central business district of the Borough. **This PPL high voltage electric line will severely impact over seven years of planning and several millions of dollars in fundraising provided by local, County and State agencies which are convinced of the Official Map's merit and ability to deliver significant economic development to the region and create over 800 jobs for Pennsylvanians.***

- 2) *The last remaining farmland within the Borough lies within the route proposed by PPL. The Brown family has contributed to the economic prosperity of the Borough for over one hundred years. The family owns and occupies the farm and operates one of the larger businesses within the Borough, F.M. Brown Feed Mills. **The PPL above ground high voltage transmission line will blemish this beautiful rural land use and lower the farm's value within the community.***
- 3) *The privately owned Village Greens golf course is located just north of the Borough's central business district. It is a pristine natural area known for its beauty. Hundreds of private homes have been developed around the golf course over many years. **This PPL transmission line will render over 20% of the existing golf course useless and will force the business owner to close his business through no fault of his own. It will also make the remaining land less valuable and create more difficulty in finding buyers with redevelopment plans that contain intent to accommodate high voltage transmission lines in their business plans.***
- 4) *Suburban, middle class neighborhoods containing hundreds of privately owned homes exist along the proposed PPL transmission line route. **This above ground PPL transmission line will uproot scores of mature shade trees, ruining the 'rural' view for hundreds of families. It will negatively impact property values on adjacent private homes causing a lasting loss in assessed value and municipal taxes to the Borough and Spring Township. This in turn will place pressure on property taxes for other home owners to make up the losses. This plan inordinately and negatively impacts a concentrated segment of home owners (PPL customers) in order to provide power to other neighborhoods in the service area (primarily commercial corridors). Little, if any, power derived from this transmission line will benefit the PPL customers that will be heavily and negatively impacted by the line.***
- 5) *The Borough's Right of Way (ROW) within the central business district redevelopment zone is essential to the success of the New Town Center redevelopment project envisioned by the BOSS 2020 Revitalization Committee. **The PPL transmission line ROW, if located above ground will render a 100 foot wide swath of prime CBD land useless. Private developers considering a \$60 Million dollar investment in a New Town Center using the paradigms of 'New Urbanism' will find it difficult to justify the investment.***
- 6) *Likewise, a buried PPL transmission line will require a 50 foot wide ROW. **This is only a slight improvement over above ground wires and still renders 15,000 square feet of space a no mans land.***

Conference Call Strategic Report

- Mr. Loth distributed a fact sheet:

1) PPL claims they have investigated four alternate routes for the transmission line without success. **The Borough has asked PPL for copies of the route studies, the cost comparisons for each and for specific reasons why each route has been rejected.**

2) PPL states it has spoken with a potential developer of the golf course who is in favor of the project. **The Borough has asked PPL for the contact information on this developer.**

3) PPL says the proposed route is the most expedient and least expensive. **The Borough wants proof of this claim with fully developed budget comparisons. The Borough also believes that PPL should conduct a "Financial Impact Study" that looks at how the transmission line will affect the Borough's finances in the future. The study should review an above line impact and a below ground impact.**

4) *In the final analysis, the Borough believes that accounting for all of the associated costs and negative impact of the proposed transmission line, the PPL alternate routes will prove to be more expedient and less expensive than the proposal. Therefore, PPL should reconsider its decision and settle on a different route for its transmission line.*

Public Comment on the PPL Transmission Line

- Resident: The transmission line will hurt the community in many ways. What authority does PPL have to build this project?
- **Brian Hoffa: The State allows public utilities to either negotiate easement agreements with property owners or use eminent domain laws to 'take' land for its projected utility needs.**
- Resident: PPL will kill off the golf course and 'take' some of the last existing farmland in the Borough. Can PPL justify the need to do this?
- **Mary Brown: We are the owners of the farm. PPL contacted us and said that other land owners had agreed to easements. When we spoke with those land owners we learned that wasn't true. We will not provide an easement over our farmland to PPL.**
- Resident: This PPL project could ruin property values along its route. What will happen to the Borough's fiscal health?
- **Brian Hoffa: The Borough's costs to operate continue to climb about 2-3% annually. We estimate that by FY-2020 there will be a need to raise property taxes on home owners by 5 mils. This is without the BOSS 2020 Revitalization Plan in effect. The transmission line would exacerbate that budget deficit.**
- Resident: The New Town Center plan seems to be the answer to the Borough's long term fiscal needs. We residents want the plan to succeed because it brings us expanded services and keeps our tax rates in check.
- **Sam Loth: Both Senator Argall and Representative Cox are big supporters of the New Town Center. Other support comes from the Berks County Commissioners, the PA Department of Community & Economic Development and the PA Department of Transportation. PPL claims they need to build the line with easements or eminent domain in order to avoid raising rates on customers. We wonder if the cost of this new transmission line built elsewhere would truly be a burden on PPL's 1.4 Million customers. They don't seem to have any qualms about burdening the 5,000 or so residents in the transmission line's path!**

PPL Open House on September 22, 2016 at Inn at Reading

- The BOSS 2020 Committee will post this information on its website, www.boss2020.org and also place an advertisement in The Reading Eagle prior to the Open House on 09/22 urging people to attend the PPL event.
- Ginger van Steenvoort said that she will send an e-mail blast out to the district constituency and place it on the Representative's web site.
- President Coleman thanked the attendees for their time and interest in the PPL issue. He asked that the BOSS Committee resume its normal business.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

- **Motion by Lisa Gantner** to approve the Meeting Minutes of August 18, 2016. **Second by Jim Adams.** Motioned passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

- President Coleman informed the Committee that he has received a Letter of Resignation from our Treasurer, Dave Meas. He said that Mr. Meas and his family have closed their business, 'Hair on the Avenue' and have placed the properties up for sale. Ultimately, the Meas family plans a move to Arizona.

- President Coleman stated that the Committee will accept Mr. Meas' resignation with regret and a thank you for his excellent service to BOSS 2020 and the community. The Committee agreed by acclamation.
- President Coleman opened the floor to nominations to fill the remaining term of Dave Meas as Treasurer through December 31, 2016.
- **Motion to nominate Lisa Gantner to serve as Treasurer through December 31, 2016 by Jim Adams. Second by Chuck Coleman.** Motion passed unanimously. Sam Loth will arrange for changing the checking account signature cards at Fulton Bank.

BOSS Phase 2 and Phase 3-1 Progress

- Bob Ludgate reported that demolition of five properties at Penn & Columbia Avenues is now underway.
- Mr. Ludgate is working with PennDOT to insure that the Department does install the essential elements of the new intersection for Phase 2 when they reconstruct Penn Avenue in 2017. He is in talks with District 5-0 to allow Phases 2 and 3-1 to be built simultaneously in FY-2018 in order to take advantage of economies of scale because of the two MTF grants that the Borough has been awarded.
- Both Lisa Gantner and Sam Loth have been keeping a photo record of the physical changes to the Borough.

BOSS Phase 3-2 Application

- Sam Loth has submitted a DCED/CFA Multimodal Transportation Fund grant application to construct the remainder of the Columbia Avenue Extension. The Borough may hear results of this Round of Funding in early 2017.
- Should the Borough be awarded funding for Phase 3-2, the Borough will have successfully completed the new extension road from west to east completing the connection. This would allow Phase 4 construction to proceed.

BOSS Phase 4 Progress

- Bob Ludgate said that the negotiations between BOSS 2020, Cape Asset Management and PennDOT to form a P-3 and allow Phase 4 to be built early are proceeding.
- PennDOT Secretary Leslie Richards supports the concept and District 5-0 Executive Mike Rebert is working with Mr. Ludgate to clear the legal and bureaucratic requirements.

BOSS 2020 Facade Improvement Grant Program

- Sam Loth reported that several new property owners have submitted applications for projects. Sam is working with the clients to match contractors and obtain estimates in order to move the program forward.

Old Business

- Jim Adams said that the Official Map revitalization plan has been publicly known for almost a decade. He added that PPL was invited to participate in the Land Use Planning & Transportation Assistance Program (LUPTAP) study in 2010 by the BOSS Committee. Therefore PPL has known about the Borough's redevelopment plans for many years.. He stated that PPL's project amounts to nothing less than a "BIFURCATION OF SINKING SPRING'S CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT".

Adjourn

- The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

NEXT MEETING
Thursday, October 20, 2016 at 7:00 PM
Sinking Spring Borough Hall