



BOSS 2020 REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
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SINKING SPRING
BOSS 2020 REVITALIZATION COMMITTEE
SSB COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SSB BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

MEETING MINUTES
JULY 13, 2017

DRAFT

Call to Order

Charles Coleman (President) called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Present: Charles Coleman (President-D), Bernie Campbell (VP-ED), Lisa Gantner (Treasurer-P), Joe Eways (Coldwell-Banker-ED), Robert Metzgar (Wilson SD-ED), Bob Ludgate (Ludgate Engineering), Sam Loth (Community Development Services) and Ken Pick (Berks Redevelopment Authority).

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

Guests: David Kostival (Reading Eagle).

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Bernie Campbell to approve the Minutes of June 15, 2017. **Second by Lisa Gantner.** Motion Passed.

Treasurer's Report

Lisa Gantner reported that the General Fund balance is \$4,520.00 as of July 12, 2017. Rieck's Printing has been paid its percentage of all advertising revenues for the Restaurant Placemat except one.

Motion by Bernie Campbell to approve the Treasurer's Report for July 2017. **Second by Robert Metzgar.** Motion Passed.

Committee-of-the-Whole

Suburban Berks West Joint Comprehensive Plan

- Chuck Coleman reported that Michael Kautter will address the Joint Committee at their upcoming meeting later in July.
- The Berks County Planning Commission, through the Joint Committee, has asked BOSS 2020 to complete a survey which will update the County Comprehensive Plan to include the Sinking Spring BOSS Committee's work. Sam Loth agreed to follow-up on this task.
- Robert Metzgar will speak with the new Superintendent of the Wilson School District about appointing a new representative to the Joint Committee.

Business & Community Alliance Work Plan

- Brian Hoffa has contacted a short list of present and past volunteers to begin work on two projects:
 - > Tree Tenders Regional Training in September
 - > A Gateway Planning Team initial review
- Sam Loth asked the Committee to designate a date in September to host the regional 'Tree Tenders' training.

Motion by Bernie Campbell to host the Tree Tenders Training on Saturday, September 23, 2017 at the Sinking Spring Borough Hall. **Second by Lisa Gantner.** Motion Passed.

- Sam explained that the Berks County Community Fund is hosting a grant program that derives from the BB&T Bank Foundation. The Fund contains an endowment of approximately \$1.5 Million dollars for "initiatives that will improve the standard of living and economic health of Berks County through business attraction and incubation, industrial growth and the creation of sustainable jobs.
- Sam will contact the BCCF to discuss a) the SSB Gateway Project, b) the planting of a tree at the September 23rd Tree Tenders Training, c) a local facade improvement program and d) a revolving loan fund for remediation of blighted properties.

2017 Borough/BOSS Financial Analysis

- Sam reported that Mike Hart is prepared to distribute an RFP for the Project's Scope of Work to about 15 identified vendors who are competent at delivering a Financial Analysis Tool to the Borough Council and office staff.
- Bob Ludgate said that Mike's research indicates that the Borough would not require a full expense audit. This is one requirement of the PA DCED Early Intervention Program recommended by Albright College's Paul Janssen and which was expressed by DCED's Marita Kelly during her meeting with the Borough on the grant application.

- Mike Hart desires a product that offers forecasting and cost management tools & that develops maintenance schedules. Many of the prerequisites in the Early Intervention Program do not fit well into the Borough's circumstances.
- Sam Loth added that the Borough Council has repeatedly expressed their concern for the lack of clarity with the costs of the Crossroads Revitalization Project. BOSS 2020 hopes that whatever tool is developed through the EIP, that the funding issues surrounding the BOSS project are included and ultimately become clear, concise and easy to understand on behalf of the Borough Council.

2017 BOSS 2020 Revitalization Action Plan

U.S. DOT FAST Lane Grant Application

- Sam Loth reported on the most recent update from the U.S. DOT. An updated FAST Lane Program has been launched by the DOT titled the "Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) Grant Program.
- Sam said that the criteria for INFRA is more demanding than the original FAST Act and that priority will fall to projects that align with national and regional economic vitality goals and leverage non-Federal funding i.e. P-3s.
- \$1.5 Billion dollars is authorized for projects over a 10-year period (\$150 Million dollars per Year). 10% of available funds are set aside for 'small' projects (\$5 Million to \$25 Million). That means that a total of \$15 Million dollars per year will be available for small projects each year for the entire country.
- Sam cited an example of one award from the FAST Grant Program in 2016. \$10,675,000 was awarded to the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey for upgrades to their rail siding loading capacity from ships in port. There were only 17 small FAST grants awarded nation-wide in 2016.
- Because this Program is so competitive with very little money available, Sam is recommending that BOSS 2020 abandon its effort to be considered for this application. Sam stated that the Borough would have to invest too many dollars in Sam's application time with a very limited opportunity to receive an award. The Committee consensus is to agree to shelve this effort.

RATS Committee Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP Acceleration)

- Sam Loth asked about the status of the TIP schedule to begin preliminary engineering on the Phase 4 Penn/Shillington/Mull intersection. Presently, BOSS is scheduled for FY-2018 and is funded with \$448,000 budgeted by PennDOT.
- Bob replied that PennDOT will determine if there is sufficient funding that can be carried over from the 2016 budget to the 2017 budget for the activity to begin this year. If they can do this, the RATS Committee will be informed and can decide to act or not on the acceleration.
- Regarding Phase 4 construction, Bob reported that estimates were recently received with total costs estimated around \$3-4 Million for construction. This is substantially lower than Bob had thought the cost would be.

- Sam asked about the current contract for STV engineering which includes some Phase 4 work. Would this help to convince the RATS Committee that BOSS deserves to be accelerated?
- Bob answered that when STV completes its engineering work, the Borough will be able to 'let' the Columbia Avenue relocation project as a "local" project instead of as a PennDOT project. This is a much simpler process. Bob also added that he may be able to use "Green Light Go" program funding to launch the local 'let'.

PennDOT Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program

- Sam reported that the former Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grants have reopened the application window as of July 10th. Sam asked Jackie Hollenbach to register and sit in on a webinar for the new grant program.
- Project grants will be awarded from \$50,000 to \$1 Million dollars. One use that is allowed for is "Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities". Sam believes an application to this program could provide the funding to build out a "Complete Streets" design along the Columbia Avenue Extension. Presently, the multimodal funding that has been awarded would provide for construction of a standard four or five-lane roadway (one through lane in each direction, one parking lane on each side and one continuous turning lane down the middle). The Complete Streets model also includes bike lanes on both sides, curb extensions at corners and other multimodal amenities including pedestrian safety.

Jackie's Notes from the Webinar

- Grants are 100% construction, local funds for ALL pre-construction activities.
- No additional match required.
- Grant funds are 80% Federal 20% State.
- Requires environmental, utilities, right-of-way, etc. through PennDOT.
- \$55 Million dollar fund. \$6,875,000 allocated to the Reading MPO.
- Register on State website, meet with District and local MPO prior to applying.
- Dates: Pre-application August 25th - Deadline September 22nd - Local MPO submits eligible projects by September 1st - Selections in January 2018.

Sam requires

- A Borough Council Resolution
 - An itemized list of Complete Streets improvements
 - A preliminary grant budget for construction
 - A preliminary budget for ALL local pre-construction
 - An MS4 component to reduce sediment by 10%
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- Sam Loth will research the project to determine the best way forward to accomplish both the MS4 mandate and the Complete Streets upgrades.
 - Sam will communicate with the Borough Manager/Engineer/Council and request approval to begin the grant application process.

- Borough Council can pass a Resolution for the grant application at its August 23rd Workshop Meeting.

Crossroads Revitalization Plan

PennDOT Betterment Project Progress

- Bob Ludgate said that the sidewalks, curbs and storm water inlets in the 4400 Block of Penn Avenue are under construction.
- PennDOT TE Grant money and DCED Keystone Communities grant money are funding the construction.
- Bob is seeking to slow through traffic down by reconfiguring traffic lane widths from 16 feet to 11 feet. This can be accomplished by adding a continuous turning lane down the middle of Penn Avenue.

Phase 2 Construction

- Bob Ludgate said that he will attend the Borough Council Workshop meeting on Wednesday, July 26th where Brian Hoffa is tasked with having Borough Council pass the necessary Motions to acquire the two remaining properties needed to own the entire Right-of-Way. PennDOT requires 100% ownership of the ROW in order to issue the final Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) to begin construction.
- PennDOT has altered its plan to install signalization at the new Penn/Columbia/Cacoosing intersection. Bob is researching the "Green Light Go" funding program to pay for the signals.

Phase 3-1

- Negotiations continue between PennDOT and the Borough to combine Phase 2 construction with the creation of the abbreviated entry to the new Columbia Avenue Extension (Phase 3-1). By so doing, the new entryway will not have to be built for Phase 2 and then rebuilt for Phase 3-1. Instead the entry will be built during Phase 2 and used when Phase 3-1 construction begins in 2019.
- One outcome of the negotiations is that PennDOT has agreed to allow the Borough to 'let' the project as a local road rather than a PennDOT highway. This eliminates many costs associated with State level construction projects and simplifies the paper work as well.

Phase 3-2

- BOSS 2020 has submitted two Multimodal Fund applications; DCED in July 2016 and PennDOT in January 2017. BOSS is requesting \$950,000 in construction funding with a local match commitment of \$350,000. Project construction total = \$1.3 Million dollars.
- Recently Sam Loth engaged Christine Verdier at Senator Argall's office to report the two grant submissions.

Old Business

Round 2 Facade Improvement Grant Program

- Sam reported that Sinking Spring was not chosen to receive Round 2 funding of \$50,000 for the State budget year FY-2016-2017 because requests received from across the Commonwealth totaled \$65 Million dollars and the State pool of funding totaled only \$6.5 Million dollars.

- Beverly Hutzel at DCED said that a new round of funding will become available after July 1, 2017 when the new State Budget becomes law (FY 2017-2018). She encouraged Sinking Spring to reapply for funding in the new round.

Zoning-Code Regulations for New Cell Towers

- Sam believes that there are many zoning and code issues that should be addressed by the Borough. These include the new cell phone tower rules passed by the PA Public Utilities Commission, the locations of satellite television disks on structures, junk strewn side and year yards and more. Sam wants to review these issues with Mike Hart.

New Business

New Town Center Project

- Joe Eways addressed BOSS 2020's primary mandate. He questioned the Committee's focus on lesser projects such as the cell tower regulations. He contends that the single most important issue of the BOSS 2020 Committee should be the New Town Center and the need for the Borough to have a 'stake', meaning ownership of some portion of the land that is privately owned in the CBD redevelopment area.
- His contention is that the Borough needs to acquire one or more parcels of the land that will ultimately be assembled for resale to a Master Developer for the New Town Center construction project.
- Joe stated that no legitimate developer will take the Borough or BOSS 2020 seriously because neither entity owns any of the land in question. If there is no ownership then neither the Borough nor BOSS has any right to discuss land disposition.
- Master Developers won't see 20+ acres of land available for a redevelopment project; they will see many small parcels each with a different owner and no single entity to talk to.
- Joe said that the Borough needs to focus on this project as the single most important economic development effort it will do in order to sustain the economic viability of the Borough itself. a) acquire land and b) create a stake in the development of the CBD.
- Joe suggested that Borough Council needs to understand that the BOSS Transportation Project is what leads to Economic Development and that acquiring some property within the redevelopment zone will give the Borough a stake and more importantly, a voice with developers.
- The Committee discussed Mr. Eways position and agreed that the Borough should consider "Community Initiated Development" as an economic strategy.
- The Committee agrees that the national economy is beginning to move again and that soon, interest rates and land values will start rising.
- Properties can be acquired without paying full value. For example, deferred acquisition is a commonly used tool to acquire a stake in a development.
- Both BOSS and Borough Council should focus on finding funds to secure properties. The Berks Redevelopment Authority can act as the vehicle for acquisition but may not have the funds available.

- Mr. Eways believes that a single entity/company/municipality could acquire properties from the McDonalds Restaurant (east side) to Columbia Avenue (west side) for approximately \$6-7 Million dollars at this time. Using deferred acquisition, this entity might need about \$3 Million dollars to wrest land disposition control.
- BOSS sees three steps to development: 1) Borough Council approval for community initiated development actions, 2) County Commissioner approval to ask for funding and land acquisition through the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) and 3) Marketing activities to Master Developers.
- The Committee tasked Sam Loth with doing essential research and providing a report to BOSS at its August 17th meeting. a) what needs to be done, b) how is it accomplished, c) where are the resources and d) what is the timetable.

Adjourn

There being no further business...**Motion by Bernie Campbell** to adjourn the meeting. **Second by Lisa Gantner**. Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: Thursday, August 17, 2017 @ 7:00 PM
Sinking Spring Borough Hall