



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



BOSS 2020 REVITALIZATION STEERING COMMITTEE
SSB COUNCIL ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
SSB BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ALLIANCE

MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 17, 2016

Call to Order

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

Present: Charles Coleman (President-D), Bernie Campbell (VP-ED), Merlin Weaver (ED), Jim Adams (ED), Jim Hong (D), Lisa Gantner (Borough Council), Bob Metzgar (Wilson SD-ED) and Sam Loth (CDS).

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

Guests: Ken Pick (Berks Redevelopment Authority), Pamela Shupp (Greater Reading Economic Partnership), Joe Eways (Sickafus Representative), Brian Covey (Ritas Water Ice), Chris Saunders (Stakeholder), Ken Peffley (Stakeholder) and Carla & Joshua Bonnett (Residents).

Approval of Minutes

Motion by Bernie Campbell to approve the Meeting Minutes of February 18, 2016. **Second by Jim Adams.** Motion Passed.

Treasurers Report

Dave Meas was absent. Chuck Coleman **tabled** the Treasurers Report until the April 21, 2016 BOSS Committee meeting.

[Committee-of-the-Whole](#)

Revitalization Plan - Phase 2

Penn/Columbia/Cacoosing Avenues Intersection Realignment Project

- Sam Loth reported that there are many rumors circulating within the community regarding the 'acquisition of property' for the Phase 2 construction of approach roads to the planned realigned intersection. Sam requested update reports from Ludgate Engineering, the Borough Council Economic Development Committee and the Berks County Redevelopment Authority in order to publish the information "as accurately as possible" in these minutes.
- **Ludgate Engineering:** Thom Ludgate said that the project's final engineering and design documents are proceeding through PennDOT's review process at this time. Most of the design items have been decided upon; only details remain.
- Thom believes that PennDOT's final permit to proceed to the next step will be issued in 2016 to LEC, well before PennDOT's "Betterment Project" construction along Penn Avenue reaches into the Borough boundaries.

- **SSB Economic Development Committee:** Lisa Gantner said that the Borough has a Line of Credit with a local bank to be drawn upon for the razing of the former Borough Hall. She said the Borough Council will coordinate the removal of the former Borough Hall building with LEC and the Berks County Redevelopment Authority when the optimal conditions are reached.
- **Berks County Redevelopment Authority:** Ken Pick said that there are six (6) properties plus the former Borough Hall required in order to build the approach roads to the realigned intersection. To date four (4) have been acquired and two remain in progress.
- After all six properties are acquired, the Borough, LEC and the Authority will coordinate their resources to secure underground utilities, finalize engineering and ready the properties to be razed.
- The general consensus is that all approvals, permits and other activities that need to be completed before construction are currently on-track in order to meet PennDOT's "Betterment Project" construction schedule.

Mr. Loth thanked each representative for offering up-to-date information.

PennDOT's Betterment Project: Penn Avenue from Womelsdorf to Sinking Spring

- **Ludgate Engineering:** Thom Ludgate said that PennDOT has decided to construct the rebuilding and improvements along Penn Avenue with construction starting in the west end and proceeding eastward from Robeson/Womelsdorf to Sinking Spring.
- The 'letting' of the project (request for bids to construct) occurred on February 25, 2016.
- Once PennDOT construction reaches the western boundary of the Borough, construction will halt until the Pennsylvania American Water Company replaces their old lines with new piping.
- PennDOT has not offered a timeline but it is likely that PennDOT will not construct within the Borough boundaries until 2017.

Mr. Loth again thanked LEC for the report.

BOSS 2020 Market Study

Form a Strategic Partnership with the Greater Reading Economic Partnership (GREP)

- The Boss 2020 Committee is following one major recommendation in the Sinking Spring Market Study of the proposed New Town Center project for the central business district. "Form a strategic relationship with GREP". To that end, the Committee has invited Pamela Shupp an executive with the Partnership, to speak to the Committee on ways to develop such a relationship.
- Pam explained that GREP was formed and is funded with the support of the Berks County Board of Commissioners.
- The main emphasis of GREP is to retain existing businesses and support their continued growth and expansion within the greater Reading area.
- Recruiting new businesses into the greater Reading area is another essential service provided by GREP. One way GREP helps communities with economic development is to identify and support new business activity for older communities with 'anchor buildings'; those are larger buildings within older business districts that can be rehabilitated for new uses that are compatible with each unique downtown.
- Pam congratulated Sinking Spring and the BOSS 2020 Committee for 'going the distance' over several years in order to bring the Borough's revitalization plan forward.
- Pam suggested that there are proven actions that BOSS 2020 and the Borough can take to make the Borough ready to interact with potential developers for the New Town Center project and more:
 - > Designate an initial *Point of Contact* for business and entrepreneurial inquiries.
 - > Develop a friendly and accommodating process for permits, licenses and regulatory controls.
 - > Identify buildings and sites in advance that are mutually desirable for redevelopment.
 - > Prepare a clear & concise document outlining the community vision for development.
 - > Make community demographics and other statistics available to investors and entrepreneurs.
 - > Determine community zones that offer tax abatements and other incentives to developers.
 - > Consider the LERTA and Tax Increment Financing tools to attract developers and investors.

- Pam said that Developers prefer LERTA because taxes on development are deferred incrementally. A LERTA can defer a percentage of taxes over time i.e. 10% per year for 10 years. This allows developers to use these funds for financing purposes.
- Another advantage of LERTA is that School Districts are not bound to participate in the tax deferment while the local municipality and the County can participate.
- A Tax Increment Financing tool does not defer taxes but rather collects taxes on the value of improvements to pay for infrastructure improvements over time. All three collection bodies are required to participate in a TIF.
- Pam pointed out that office/professional businesses look for municipalities that do not collect mercantile and/or gross receipts taxes on business income.
- Joe Eways said that potential developers desire an easy permitting environment.
- Joe added that BOSS and the Borough could arrange for "Famtours" (familiarization tours) that showcase the community's assets.
- Pam also suggested that Blog Posts and other forms of messaging are powerful tools to publicize development opportunities. She said that GREP can offer this service in their marketing activities.
- Jim Adams said that he is willing to report the status of the Sinking Spring revitalization plans to the Quarterly meeting of the County Economic Development Steering Committee. Members of the Committee include the IDA, the Chamber, GREP and other agencies.
- Merlin Weaver suggested that, in addition to a website, BOSS 2020 can broadcast its vision for revitalization via sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Ken Pick said that one challenge facing BOSS is that, at the moment, the Borough and County have nothing to offer developers and that control over properties is not in the hands of BOSS 2020 or the Borough.
- Pam Shupp suggested that the Borough/BOSS/Authority might want to consider the idea of taking 'Options' on properties within the redevelopment zone.
- Joe Eways reminded the Committee that planning for a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district and/or LERTA district should begin soon in order to provide all parties with a better understanding of potential land values and associated tax revenues.
- Sam Loth added that he believes developers could be attracted earlier to the New Town Center project if BOSS could win approval and begin construction on the Phase 3 bypass thoroughfare linking Columbia Avenue on the west to Shillington Road on the east making the central portion available for development sooner than later.
- The Committee thanked Pam Shupp for her presentation and agreed to provide Jim Adams with a quarterly report for the County Economic Development Steering Committee.

Develop an Action Plan with Goals & Objectives to Attract Developers

- Sam Loth presented the Committee with a list of objectives that could be utilized to build a "Developer Attraction Toolbox":
 - > Financing options for construction of infrastructure.
 - > Financing options that developers could use for construction.
 - > Identify traditional and alternative financing providers.
 - > Identify and initiate tax and financing incentives.
 - > Become familiar with Public, Private Partnerships.
 - > Become familiar with Site Selector's Community Assessment checklists.
 - > Develop Economic Impact Analysis, Cost Comparisons & Workforce Analysis.
- Sam asked Committee members to review the report and contact him with their opinions and suggestions. He also distributed a listing of items that could be included in a developer marketing packet i.e. press kit:
 - > NTC Market Study
 - > Claritas Demographic Report
 - > BOSS 2020 Annual Report
 - > Borough Map and Contact Information

Business Community Alliance Work Plan

- Sam Loth reported that BOSS has re-established the boss2020 Domain Name and the www.boss2020.org website address through 1and1 Internet Services.
- Sam suggested that the BOSS 2020 Committee could engage a 'custodian' for the Committee's website and Facebook page. He has identified Kendra Giangiulio that will set up and design the website for a fee of \$100 and thereafter manage postings on the site at \$10 an hour.
- Jim Adams stated that the BOSS Committee would be better served by linking to the Borough's website because most searchers would go to the Borough website first.
- Lisa Gantner agreed and suggested that linking BOSS 2020 with the Borough website would be beneficial. However, she suggested that the Borough's site needs to be seriously upgraded. She asked Sam for the contact information of Ms. Giangiulio. Sam offered the information.
- The Executive Committee determined that linking to the Borough site would be good but that the BOSS Committee still requires its own site because it is a legally separate Federally designated 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

BOSS 2020 Penn Avenue Facade Improvement Grant Program

- *2015 Smaller Projects Completed:*

3402 Hall

3437 Koch

3515 Koch

3864 Koch

- *2015 Larger Projects Completed:*

3461 Updegraff

3705 Liptock

4306 Weber

-
- *2016 Smaller Projects in Development:*

3446 Mauser

4130 Leiby

- *2016 Larger Projects in Development:*

3419-21 Glass

3951-55-57 Dentzer

4052 Walley

4453 Hong

Old Business

Alcon RR Crossing Study & Mountain Home Road Signal Projects

- Bob Ludgate will work on these two projects with Alan Piper, County Transportation Planner. These two projects may receive RATS TIP attention for 2017.

U.S. Senators/Congressman Meetings

- Sam will schedule meetings with local, state and federal representatives.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM.

**Next Meeting: Thursday, April 21, 2016
Borough Council Chambers**