

**Countywide Advisory Team
Meeting #10 Summary**

The tenth meeting of the Countywide Planning Advisory Team (PAT) for *Cultivating Community: A Plan for Union County's Future* was held on Thursday, January 8th, 2009 at the Carriage Corner Restaurant in Mifflinburg.

I. Welcome & Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Shawn McLaughlin of the Union County Planning Commission at 7:00 PM.

II. Update on Planning Area Meetings

Mr. McLaughlin reported that county staff held meetings with each of the multi-municipal planning area advisory committees in late December and early January. Each planning area committee was given a copy of the draft documents, an explanation of each part, and instructions on prioritizing actions as "High", "Medium", and "Low" along with identifying the five most important tasks overall. It is anticipated another round of planning area meetings will be held in late January and early February to collect feedback and to discuss issues and concerns with the groups.

III. Comments on Draft Plan

Mr. McLaughlin noted that comments on the draft plan were due from the PAT by December 30th so the staff and consultant team could review them prior to the PAT meeting. However most of the comments were received within the past few days and some are still arriving. It was noted that a final deadline needed to be imposed for PAT comments which would be Friday, January 9th. Mr. McLaughlin discussed how the comments would be reviewed and compared to those received by the planning area committees and then county staff and the consultants would coordinate on how to best address the comments and make the necessary revisions. The goal is to have a draft plan available for the public in the spring which would coincide with another round of public forums.

Mr. McLaughlin noted that there is an Agriculture and Natural Resources technical appendix that is being finalized by the American Farmland Trust. Mr. Kerns informed the PAT that it was recently decided to add a public participation appendix as well in order to capture the extensive public involvement effort. That way it is all documented and several years from now people can see how the plan was shaped and formed by the public.

Mr. McLaughlin asked PAT members for comments or discussion of the draft documents, particularly major items. Ms. Pearson felt that indoor recreation facilities are needed for families in the Lewisburg and New Berlin areas. She did not think the plan highlighted this need. Mr. Hoskins questioned whether or not the bleak economic situation and recession would necessitate revisiting population projections and employment forecasts made in the plan. Mr. Rouse and Mr. Kerns felt the projections were probably as accurate as can be expected. They are based on historical trend data from periods when there were also fluctuations in the economy.

Mr. Bowman suggested that there should be something in the plan recommending transition zones between municipalities so zoning is compatible rather than having major differences. Mrs. Gray felt that an issue that was really missed in plan was the need for education and training, particularly for local officials and planning commissions. Mr. Fetterman stated that LTAP and

others, such as PSATS, offer training; but is it isn't always convenient. Mr. Auman noted that education and training could perhaps be achieved through partnerships among many groups in order to prevent it from becoming too burdensome on any one entity.

Mr. Woodruff stated his concern with all the responsibilities the plan gives to the Union County Planning Commission given its limited resources. He suggested that more partners are needed if we are to ever achieve what the plan recommends.

Mr. Woodruff also questioned how the plan and its content will be conveyed to ordinary citizens since the document is very long and not easily understandable by residents not familiar with planning. Mr. Kerns responded that it is definitely a challenge trying to balance the development of a legal document that meets all the requirements of the Pennsylvania Planning Code with readability. He said the plan is not something that will generally be consumed or utilized by the average citizen. It typically is used by local government officials, planning staff, state agencies, developers and others to implement the vision of the citizens. He felt the forthcoming executive summary would be what the public would probably be most interested in reading. It would be much more concise and highlight the major aspects of the plan for the lay person.

Ms. Pearson asked why people should care about the plan and felt that training might not be needed on the plan but on how to think. A program could be modeled on the Natural Step Communities process. Mr. Rouse commented that the plan doesn't stop with adoption. It should evolve to changing conditions. Mr. Kerns said annual reviews of the action items should occur and the priorities evaluated continually.

Mr. Fetterman noted a concern with parts of the plan being too specific. He cited the example of the plan recommending a traffic signal being installed at a certain location. He wondered if a municipality could be subjecting itself to increased liability if that traffic signal is not installed and an accident were to occur. He also noted that a Bucknell Engineering professor issued a report on the same intersection that stated it did not warrant signalization. So now what is the municipality to do? Mr. Kerns felt the transportation consultants valued the conditions, both existing and future, and determined that a signal would be justified. They also coordinated with PennDOT regarding state highways. He also stated that plans need to strike a balance between being too general and being too specific and that this type of feedback is needed from the municipal officials.

Mr. Hoskins asked if zoning was being recommended for those currently without it. Mr. Kerns stated that it was. Ms. Pearson felt the transportation element adequately covered the issue of requiring new developments to have pedestrian and/or bicycle accommodation but it seemed to overlook the issue of making retrofits and connections to and between existing developments that are fairly close to town. Mr. Kerns said they would have McMahon Transportation review this.

IV. Prioritization Exercise on Countywide Actions

Mr. Kerns said it was important to get a sense of what the main priorities should be for the countywide actions. Since there was only one person that actually ranked the priorities as per the instructions at the previous PAT meeting it was decided that a prioritization exercise should be conducted. Mr. Kerns explained that the 90 countywide actions were summarized/consolidated into 31 actions on the large sheets of paper at the front of the room. He proceeded to review all of the actions and added the task of education and outreach based on the earlier discussion. Each PAT member was provided five votes and was asked to vote on the actions they felt were the most important in terms of the implementation action items. The actions receiving the most votes were: *Training and Education for local officials, update ordinances and develop model regulations to implement the plan, pursue actions that would limit development in*

designated rural areas, further define a network for non-motorized travel, and evaluate an enhanced transit system for the county.

V. Next Steps

At the conclusion of the prioritization exercise Mr. McLaughlin and Mr. Kerns concluded the meeting by discussing the next steps in the process. First more coordination with the planning area teams and municipal officials will occur throughout the remainder of January and early February. Once all the comments are in the draft will be revised accordingly and a summary will be produced describing the modifications made to address the comments. Work will also continue on finalizing the appendices. The goal is to have a draft plan and executive summary out to the public in the spring. Mr. McLaughlin said that a future meeting of the PAT has not been scheduled and Mr. DelVecchio would be in touch with them if another session was necessary. Several members felt their work was complete and would be satisfied waiting until the plan and public meetings are held.