



Mt. Penn Preserve Partnership (MP3)

Board of Director's Special Meeting

Tuesday, August 22, 2023

Members: –K. Barnhardt (County), J. Moore (Alsace Twp), L. Kelleher (Reading), D. Pottiger (Lower Alsace Twp.), M. Goodman-Hinnershitz (Reading) – virtually

Members absent: B. Petrov (Mt. Penn), T. Goodman (Mt. Penn), J. Oswald (Lower Alsace Twp.), K. Mallatratt (Alsace Twp.), L. Olsen (County)

Others attending: L Kissinger, D. Anspach, L. Lloyd, J. Frank, B. Burkovich, M. Fegely – virtually

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Barnhardt called the meeting to order at 12 pm. He noted that a quorum is present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Barnhardt opened the floor for public comment. No one present indicated their desire to speak and the public comment period was closed.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Barnhardt asked the members to consider the agenda for this meeting. No modifications were offered. The agenda was approved by acclamation.

IV. REPORTS & ACTIONS –

- Report on the guardrail proposal for Skyline Drive
 - Guardrails are proposed to separate the bike/pedestrian lanes from the lanes of traffic. The guardrails will also enclose the overlooks. This will prevent vehicles from approaching the walls and dumping debris into the forest and will also protect the walls from vehicular damage. Alternative parking areas will be provided.
- Motion to approve or reject the proposal

Mr. Anspach screen shared a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed project to protect the bike lanes and the stone walls located on Skyline Drive from McKnight's Gap Rd to the Pagoda.

Mr. Anspach stated that a team of Public Works employes have been researching solutions for the constant dumping and speeding/racing on Skyline, along with the loud partying on the List Rd overlook that continues to cause quality of life problems for residential properties in Reading and Lower Alsace. This overlook is in Lower Alsace and within the Central Berks Police Department's jurisdiction.

Mr. Anspach stated that the group originally looked at installing plexiglass at the overlooks to block the dumping, however, that would only relocate the dumping to other Skyline Dr. locations. The group is now proposing the installation of guardrails along the 2.4 mile length of Skyline Dr. In addition to preventing vehicular traffic from entering the bike lanes and damaging the stone walls, the guardrails will also prevent vehicles from entering the overlook areas. This approach will accomplish the following:

- Reduce or eliminate Illegal dumping – by blocking vehicles ability to get close to the walls and increasing the difficulty of moving large items over the rails
- Reduce speeding/ illegal racing on Skyline Drive by visually narrowing the traffic lanes, adding speed tables and elevated crosswalks
- Reduce municipal liabilities via vehicular accidents causing damage to the walls and using the walls as a barrier
- Increase safety of cyclists, hikers and sightseers
- Create a “destination” feeling for visitors

Mr. Anspach noted that the guardrails will protect the stone walls from vehicular damage, turning them into an aesthetic feature rather than a barrier to prevent vehicles from plummeting down the mountain, which will reduce repair costs.

Mr. Anspach stated that the plan includes creating 10-12 car parking lots across from the outlooks, with elevated crosswalks, water bottle filling stations, bike repair stations and composting comfort stations. He stated that the outlook areas will be outfitted with picnic furniture. He added that the speed tables are removeable for sanctioned events.

Mr. Anspach stated that the City is considering manual and electronic gating to close Skyline Dr. to vehicular traffic.

Mr. Anspach stated that the estimate for the entire project is \$1.7M as listed below:

- Guardrails and two parking areas - \$1.3 Million
- Gates at List Road and Tank Road (aka Shearer Rd) - \$150,000
- Comfort Station (2)-pre-fab buildings w/ 2 composting toilets each, solar powered exhaust fans - \$200,000
- Elevated crosswalks/removable speed tables (21' wide, removable, qty. 2) - \$10,000
- Removal of debris at current dump sites - \$50,000

Mr. Anspach stated that the City will be applying for multimodal grant funding that has a 30% local match. The grant period opens on Sept. 1st and closes on Nov. 30th. The City is hoping that the MP3 will be the springboard to encourage financial participation from the County, Alsace and Lower Alsace Twps. He requested letters of support from the MP3, the County, and Alsace and Lower Alsace Twps.

Mr. Moore and Mr. Pottiger noted that they cannot commit to financial participation without approval from the Township supervisors. Mr. Moore stated that he will provide a letter supporting the project. Mr. Pottiger stated that he will submit a draft letter to the Supervisors for their approval.

Ms. Kelleher stated that she supports the proposed project due to the numerous benefits.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz agreed, adding that these improvements will make the area more “park-like”. She suggested utilizing the type of gating installed at National Parks.

Mr. Pottiger noted his support for the protection of the stone walls and eliminating the need to repair them as structural barriers.

Mr. Anspach was asked to distribute the PowerPoint presentation for reuse at the County and Township meetings.

Ms. Kelleher moved, seconded by Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz, to approve the proposed project for Skyline Drive. The motion was approved unanimously.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 27th at 6 pm at the Lower Alsace Township Building.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 12:35 pm on motion of Ms. Kelleher and Mr. Moore, respectively.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary

Action Items:

1. Lester & Larry - Update from Stewardship Plan Work Group at the July meeting
2. Linda – follow-up with Sustainability Mgr re EV Stations
3. Linda – check on Mt Penn area road paving schedule
4. City – Traffic Study on the closure of Skyline Dr.