



MP3 COG Board  
Wednesday, March 26, 2025  
6:00 PM  
Alsace Twp Municipal Building

**Members:** –L. Olsen (County), L. Kelleher (Reading), K. Barnhardt (County), J. Baez, Jr. (Reading), S. Dierolf (Alsace Twp rep Manager), K. Bradley (Alsace rep elected off); D. Pottiger (Lower Alsace); R. Maurer (Mt Penn), M Kindlick (Mt. Penn) – in person

**Members absent:** A. Sellers (Lower Alsace),

**Others attending** – L. Faulk and K. Lerch in person

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Barnhardt's arrival was delayed and Mr. Baez called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Due to technical difficulties, there was no virtual option.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Baez opened the floor for public comment and advised those attending of the public speaking rules.

**Art Hahn, of Hill Road**, spoke in opposition to the deer management program used by the City and County through the USDA. He questioned the cost of the program and its effectiveness. He expressed the belief that there is no problem with the existing deer population and the program is a complete waste of his tax dollars. He stated that his requests for information about the program cost and the number of deer eliminated have been ignored.

**Doug Bauer, no address provided**, questioned the need for the deer management program and echoed the remarks made by Mr. Hahn.

Ms. Kelleher explained that the deer management program is not managed or paid for by the MP3 noting that the program is run under the City and County through the USDA. She stated that the County program started due to the recommendation made in the Forest and Trail Plan by Natural Lands for Antietam due to the severe lack of understory in the forest areas. As the City's preserve property adjoins Antietam, the City opted in approximately 4 years ago. She added that Natural Lands also included the recommendation for a deer management plan in the City's Forest and Trail Plan for the same reason.

**Mike Stuber, of Spuhler Drive**, also echoed the remarks by Mr. Hahn regarding the deer management program. He also reported damage to the A-Line Trail located on Mt. Penn. *The A-Line Trail was renamed as the Skyline Trail.*

*Note: The City Arborist and a BAMBA Board member walked the Skyline Trail on Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup> and found no damage other than the normal rutting caused by users during thaw periods. A few years ago, BAMBA retained a contractor to remove the trail modifications that were illegally made by some rogue group/individual. Those repairs are still in place.*

Mr. Barnhardt arrived.

Mr. Hahn began complaining about the deer management program and its lack of transparency along with several other issues.

Ms. Kelleher stated that she was provided the following report on the effectiveness of the deer management program. The report includes Mt. Penn and Antietam.

- For the 2024-25 hunting season, 27 antlerless deer and 7 antlered deer were harvested. Hunters logged a total of 1,190.75 hours hunting the property.
- For the 2023-24 hunting season, 34 antlerless deer and 5 antlered deer were harvested on the property. Hunters logged a total of 1,233.5 hours hunting the property.

Mr. Hahn inquired about the start of the gating of Skyline and why this was delayed for so long.

Mr. Baez stated that the Skyline gate operation will begin on March 31<sup>st</sup>. The project was delayed when the contractor found that the poles installed to hold the camera system did not stand up to the intense winds on Skyline Dr. The new poles stand up to the intense winds were recently installed and the cameras are ready to go live.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES & AGENDA**

Mr. Baez noted the need to consider the minutes from the January meeting and the agenda for this meeting.

**There was no objection to the contents of the meeting minutes or the agenda and they were approved by acclimation after a motion by Mr. Barnhardt and a second by Mr. Olsen.**

#### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Mr. Olsen, Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report - the MP3 bank account has a balance of \$55,912., noting that the only deposit was for \$2,000 for the City's dues payment and the only expense was the sponsorship of the New Years Eve fireworks at \$250. He stated that the Berks County Community Foundation account has a balance of \$9,976.66. He noted the receipt of the Lower Alsace 2025 dues. He also noted the need to ratify the \$250 sponsorship for the New Year's Eve fireworks event and authorize the submission of the Reading Music Foundation grant application for \$4,500 for the 2025 musical events.

**The report was approved by acclimation.**

Mr. Olsen stated that a request was made for the MP3 to join the PACOG for \$200.

Ms. Kelleher explained that the PACOG was formerly managed by the Boroughs Association. It stopped operating during COVID. The program held all in-person meetings in western PA, which

made it impossible to participate. The PA DCED began a new PACOG last fall with hybrid meetings and Ms. Kelleher stated that she has been attending the meetings virtually and attending the webinars. She stated that the PACOG is staffed by the DCED and they are working to connect and educate their members. Ms. Kelleher noted that they provided support when she had to make the latest modification to the MP3 COG Agreement.

Ms. Kelleher explained that COG membership can include non-elected officials as long as those officials reside in the area that they are appointed to represent; for example, Ms. Bradley is a resident of Alsace Township and Mr. Olsen is a resident of Berks County so they are eligible to be on the COG board.

**Mr. Barnhardt moved, seconded by Mr. Olsen, to approve the membership fee for the PACOG. The motion was approved unanimously.**

**PRESENTATION – Blake Hurst on Vision for Skyline Drive**

Ms. Kelleher stated that she learned yesterday afternoon that Mr. Hurst required AV equipment and she did not want to place that responsibility on Mr. Dierolf or Alsace Township at the last minute. She inquired if the board would agree to holding the May meeting at Reading City Hall Council Chambers as it is outfitted with the required equipment. All present agreed.

**MP3 COG REPORTS AND ACTION ITEMS**

a. Kevin Lerch re Pagoda Foundation

Mr. Lerch introduced himself noting that he is currently a member of the Pagoda Foundation, Pagoda Skyline and he serves on the Muhlenberg Board of Supervisors. He stated that an influx of new Pagoda Foundation membership is beginning to think about new purposes for the Pagoda when it reopens. He stated that from this point forward Foundation representation will attend the MP3 meetings so that their board can stay in sync with the activities of the MP3.

b. Review Amendment to COG Agreement re membership

Ms. Kelleher stated that the agreement was revised to include Mt. Penn.

Mr. Barnhardt explained that the new agreement allows the governing body to appoint community members if the secretary/administrator or elected officials decide they no longer wish to participate on the MP3 board.

**Mr. Barnhardt moved, seconded by Mr. Baez, to approve the modifications to the agreement and forward the new draft for approval by the five governing bodies. The motion was unanimously approved.**

c. Approve Resolution to adopt the Natural Lands Trail Study and Forest Stewardship Plan and encourage City Council to do the same.

**Mr. Maurer moved, seconded by Mr. Kindlick, to approve the plan and to encourage City Council to do the same.**

d. Closing Skyline to vehicular traffic & Guiderail Project update

Ms. Kelleher stated that she attended the stakeholders meeting today about the start of the gating of Skyline Drive.

Ms. Kelleher stated that gates are located at List Rd and Skyline Dr and Duryea Dr and Shearer Rd. There are 11 poles each holding 5 security cameras across Skyline Dr. The gates are automatically programmed to close and open in accordance with the Park Code – 7 pm during the fall and winter and 9 pm during the spring and summer. There is multiple signage in place across Skyline Drive to inform visitors about the closure times. The Police Department can override the system when special events are scheduled. The City’s Desk Sergeant has live access to the video. The Police and the City contractor are currently working with Central Berks to provide them with live access to video feed.

The City’s Desk Sergeant is the primary user with the ability to operate the pan/tilt feature on the cameras with that feature. The system can be operated with phone numbers assigned to each gate. Staff members from the City, County and Central Berks were added so they have access. Those who get trapped by the gates will need to call the City Desk Sergeant to be released. There are times when an officer will be dispatched to address the situation.

Mr. Dierolf suggested that the City consider donating a portion of the fines issued to those who violate laws on Skyline Drive to the MP3, if the violation is upheld by the MDJ.

Mr. Baez stated that he will speak with the City about this suggestion.

e. Report on Events

There was no report.

f. Establish 2025 meeting locations for July 23, Sept 25, Dec 3

The MP3 will follow this schedule:

- May 28<sup>th</sup> – Reading City Hall Council Chambers
- July 23<sup>rd</sup> Mt. Penn
- September 25<sup>th</sup> Lower Alsace
- December 3<sup>rd</sup> Alsace

**COMMITTEE REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS – submission in written form only**

- Finance & Capital - none
- Promotions & Marketing - none
- Public Safety & Public Services - none
- Environmental & Land Use Committees – none

**WRITTEN REPORTS FROM PRESERVE STAKEHOLDERS**

None received.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one present indicated their desire to comment and the public comment period was closed.

**The next MP3 meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at the Reading City Hall Council Chambers.**

**The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:35 pm on motion of Mr. Barnhardt and Mr. Olsen.**

*Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher, Secretary*

**Action Items:**

1. Ms. Kelleher to send MP3 Agreement to member municipal managers