

Morgan County Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 25, 2011

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members present: Carl Cowgill, Jack Soronen, Mary Ellen Largent, Jim Hoyt, Scott Swaim, Brenda Hutchinson, Wayne Omps, Susan Parker, Amy Lane

Members absent: Thomas Stinebaugh

Others present: Alma E. Gorse

Meeting opened at 7:00 p.m.

II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman Jack Soronen opened the floor for nominations for Planning Commission President.

On a Mary Ellen Largent/Jim Hoyt motion, Jack Soronen was nominated to serve as President of the Morgan Planning Commission for 2011. Motion carried.

Chairman Jack Soronen opened the floor for nominations for Planning Commission Vice President.

On a Mary Ellen Largent/Amy Lane motion, Scott Swaim was nominated to serve as Vice President of the Morgan County Planning Commission for 2011. Motion carried.

Mr. Soronen welcomed County Commissioner Brenda Hutchinson to the board. She has replaced retired County Commissioner Thomas Swaim.

III. MEETING MINUTES

On a Mary Ellen Largent/Amy Lane motion, the Morgan County Planning Commission unanimously approved the meeting minutes from December 7, 2010.

IV. PRESENTATION FROM COUNTY WATERSHED GROUPS

A. Sleepy Creek Watershed Association

Gale Foulds, representing the Sleepy Creek Watershed Association, provided the members a map of the watershed and did an overview of the projects the association has done as well as current projects. Discussion points are listed below.

- Association has been active about ten years
- To date there are approximately 165 members of the group
- Primary goal is to take care of Sleepy Creek
- April 9th, 2011 a stream clean up day is scheduled, location has not been scheduled yet
- The group does water monitoring in 6-8 locations along the stream
- Have done various riparian buffer plantings, stream bank restoration and have planted approximately 1500 trees in various locations
- They have provided several workshops that are open to the public relating to topics such as Stream Tier System, invasive plants and gas/oil well fracking with WVDEP
- They have provided brochures to all landowners located within the watershed relating to various topics such as septic system care, stormwater management, fertilizers and lawn care
- The group does annual harperella counts (harperella is an endangered flower)
- There is a stream gage located on Eckerd Bridge that volunteers check weekly to monitor the water level of the stream
- The group is involved in a 3/19 program for impaired streams
 - Grant monies totally \$487,586 from EPA and State to focus on high amounts of fecal coliform in stream due to septic system runoff/failing systems within the watershed
 - Provides financial assistance to property owners with septic system pumping (up to \$125.00) and have pumped 62 systems to date
 - Provides financial assistance to replace failing systems within watershed (up to \$7,200.00, owner must pay \$300.00) and have replaced 28 systems to date
 - Assisted with the installation of a compost toilet system through this grant program
 - This grant ends September, 2011
- Urban tree planting project for Cacapon South Subdivision where group planted 500+ trees within the development
- \$20,000 grant provided for Mountain View Solar to install pervious pavers for parking surface up to one acre to be completed by May/June, 2011

President Jack Soronen asked Ms. Foulds what concerns the watershed group has that the Planning Commission could possibly assist with. The group is concerned about stormwater runoff and retention mechanisms and would like to see the county promote best management practices such as rain gardens, use of swales and other various low impact development practices.

B. Warm Springs Run Watershed Association

Kate Lehman, President of the Warm Springs Run Watershed Association, provided the Commission an update on what the group is working on. Discussion points are listed below.

- Relatively new organization – operating about two years now
- Warm Springs Run is ranked as an impaired stream by WVDEP
- Stated that stream is a benefit to tourism
- The baseline condition of the run – At intersection of Route 13 and Route 522 the stream is in good condition (going south), the further north the more impaired the stream becomes
- High levels of fecal coliform were detected in town and north of town – the Cacapon Institute will do further testing
- Did restoration of riparian buffer by planting trees on county property located on Broadway Street and along Route 522, south of Route 13, and designated these areas as “no mow zones”
- Does community education through newspaper articles
- Recently completed a watershed assessment
- Obtaining grant funds to produce brochures to send to all property owners in watershed to promote “good stewards of the run”
- Identify hot spots for future grant opportunities
- The water shed is considered an urban watershed due to total impervious area being 17% (impervious area over 10% is considered urban)
- Group does participate in Make It Shine – clean up day
- Watershed area has problem with invasive plants within the watershed such as purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed
- Obtaining grant funds to plant native trees and plants and to hire workers to perform the tasks
- Obtain grant funds to install rain gardens and various plantings next to run and county parking lot north of the courthouse

Ms. Lehman would like to appear before the Planning Commission to review the watershed assessment and work with the group to help make the run healthy.

C. Friends of the Cacapon River

Ron Wilson, President of the Friends of the Cacapon River, provided the Commission an update on the associations work. Discussion points are listed below.

- Organization started in the 1970’s in Hardy/Hampshire counties – started in Morgan County in the late 1980’s
- Approximately 300 members, mostly weekend residents

- The river gets cleaner as it travels to the Potomac River and is generally a healthy river
- The major threats are the development activities in Hampshire County, farming and chicken plants
- Group does provide brochures for new property owners along the river
- Active with restoring endangered harperella flower
- Participates and organizes Make It Shine clean up day
- Works with school programs and the Audubon Society on various projects
- Currently working with a teacher in Paw Paw to assist in monitoring the aquatic insect life in the river
- Currently there are only two access point to the river (open to public) and both are below the dam; would like to see additional access points
- Cacapon Institute performing regular monitoring on the river
- Concerned about the reconstruction of Fisher’s Bridge along Route 9 west
 - Working on having a monument erected at the old bridge site
 - Working with adjacent landowners to possibly donate land near new bridge to designate as park area
 - Working with WV Division of Highways to provide access point at Fisher’s Bridge
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Mr. Wilson had suggested that the Planning Commission might possibly assist with obtaining additional access points for public use, specifically in Largent and off of Rockford Road. He stated that there needs to be better access to the river for public recreational use. There has also been some concern about the condition of the dam for it is slowly deteriorating.

Mr. Wilson also announced that their annual meeting will be held on February 19, 2011, 1:00pm at the Great Cacapon Head Start School. A representative from the Cacapon Institute is the scheduled speaker.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Discussion regarding the drafting of by-laws and the possible formation of a subcommittee

Planning Commission President Jack Soronen stated that currently, the Commission does not have by-laws in place. West Virginia Code does depict specific criteria relating to membership and meeting obligations. Mr. Soronen stated that most boards do have specific by-laws in place and recommends that the Planning Commission do the same. He recommended that a subcommittee be formed to work with staff on creating a draft for review by the group.

It was recommended that copies of neighboring counties by-laws be supplied to the Commission as a whole to review and that a subcommittee isn’t necessary due to a slow

schedule of new business. It was then recommended that staff prepare a draft document that would incorporate language from neighboring counties by-laws and have the group review at the next meeting.

Staff will prepare a draft set of by-laws for the group to review.

B. Model Stormwater Management Ordinance
Staff Update

Region IX Planning and Development Council had obtained funding to hire a consultant to assist with the drafting of a model stormwater ordinance for the state of West Virginia. An advisory committee was formed that consisted of professionals from the three panhandle counties. The committee has met monthly since May 2010. West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection has been an active member of the committee to promote stormwater practices that will assist with meeting the Chesapeake Bay mandates issued by EPA. Staff reported that the model ordinance is close to completion. There will be one more meeting next month and at that time the ordinance should be completed. It will then be distributed to all of the participants of the committee. Staff anticipates that the model ordinance will be available to the members of the Planning Commission by March, 2011.

C. Morgan County Rural Water Committee
Preparation of Final Report

President Jack Soronen, who also is Chairman of the Morgan County Rural Water Committee, updated the Commission regarding the activity of this committee. The committee completed its assignment given by the County Commission and is now preparing a final report. This report will consist of accomplishments and a listing of additional issues that need to be pursued. Mr. Soronen will also recommend to the County Commission that a new water committee group be established to continue the work on the outstanding issues in the report.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.