Best Practices

For Development Review and Permitting

Centre Regional Planning Agency

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SUMMARY

I.

The six Centre Region municipalities currently regulate development through numerous boards, commissions, and departments, all with the authority to permit new projects in the region. The permitting process can vary from one municipality to another. This Guide strives to assist municipal and regional officials with the permit application and review process by offering best practices to more efficiently and effectively review and act upon permits for new development. The Guide contains a menu of best practice options that can be selected from and customized at the local or regional level.

Pennsylvania has a long tradition of municipal regulation of development at the local level. The best practices in this Guide are not intended to erode that tradition, but to illustrate ways that municipalities can serve residents better while advancing region-wide goals and improving local governance of land use within individual municipalities.

The best practices in this Guide are organized around three themes:

- Improving communication with permit applicants
- Standardizing the permit application and process
- Use of resources to improve permitting performance

Each best practice lists the benefits and challenges, and reviews how to implement the best practice and put it into action. The best practices seek to improve predictability, efficiency, timeliness, and equality in local land use regulation.

The Best Practices Guide provides municipal leaders with an assortment of tools, all aimed at making permitting more predictable, consistent, and efficient without compromising local jurisdiction or endangering the standard of review.

Local authority for planning and zoning has long been accepted as the best way for residents of a community to define and maintain their essential values and identity.

INTRODUCTION

II.

Continued prosperity in the Centre Region requires the development of jobs, housing, infrastructure, and the support services that sustain the region. At the same time, maintaining quality of life in the region through a diversity of urban and rural landscapes, quality neighborhoods, protection of natural resources, protection of groundwater, and other attributes contribute to the attractiveness of the Centre Region for families and businesses. The task of balancing these competing interests essentially falls to municipal governing bodies and the various volunteer committees of citizens from the individual municipalities that navigate a broad array of state, county, and municipal regulations.

The intent of this best practices guide is not to erode municipal control of the regulatory process. It is to recognize that having transparent, timely, efficient, and predictable development review and permitting processes serves a valid public purpose in the Centre Region. Clear, consistent processes serve two goals. First, they guide applicants through the maze of plan reviews, permits, local practices, zoning standards, environmental protection, and procedures, while reinforcing regional and municipal goals. Secondly, they equip planning commissions, other volunteer committees, and governing bodies with a clear understanding of their roles and expectations in reviewing a request which can lead to a more efficient review process. . Clear, consistent processes encourage development and promote economic opportunity while administering plans and ordinances that promote municipal and regional goals.

Something as simple as having clear, consistent, and integrated forms and procedures easily accessible on the municipal webpage can, in the long run, save municipal costs, promote understanding for neighbors and advocates, and allow applicants to focus on substantive matters rather than on figuring out cumbersome processes or procedures. Processes such as pre-application conferences that allow an applicant to approach the municipality early in the plan review process can similarly provide clarity about the proposal and identify issues before completing substantial design of a project.

This best practices guide contains a menu of options that municipalities in the Centre Region can choose to implement. Municipalities can complete a number of best practices administratively with existing resources. Others may require approval from the governing body. Each municipality should choose best practices that satisfy the resources available. As always, the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA) is available to provide technical support to the municipalities that participate in the CRPA's Local Planning Program.

PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

III.

Many boards, commissions, governing bodies and staff members are involved in the permitting process. Active collaboration and communication among municipal officials, permit applicants, consultants, and other stakeholders is vital to efficient permitting that maintains the goals and aspirations of the community. Municipalities can prepare and adopt straightforward and clear institutional mechanisms to help to strengthen efficient communication and establish a culture of collaboration that will serve municipalities, developers, and neighbors.

The following Best Practices, described in more detail on the following pages, can be used to improve communication between stakeholders about the development review and permitting process:

- Single point of contact
- User's guide to local permitting
- Concurrent applications
- Pre-application meetings
- Project technical review team
- Regularly scheduled inter-departmental meetings
- Proximity of professional staff
- Reviews for projects that cross municipal boundaries

Dealing with complexity is an inefficient and unnecessary waste of time, attention, and mental energy. There is never any justification for things being complex when they could be simple.

-Edward de Bono

Single Point of Contact

If staffing levels allow, municipalities should designate one person or department within a municipality as a single-point of contact to work with applicants regarding land development and/or subdivision submittals. Typically, this would be an individual from either the engineering or zoning department. Similarly, each project should have a single point of contact throughout the review and approval process. An example of this would be the zoning officer receiving an application for a land development plan, coordinating its review by other individuals and agencies, ensuring the plan is placed on appropriate agendas, and communicating outstanding issues with the applicant. Further consideration should be given to making the department that accepts development applications the one stop shop for all other municipal approvals with regard to development (i.e., zoning permits, driveway permits, etc.). The duties of such a position within the department would generally include:

- Responsibility for intake of applications, including a completeness review of the application.
- Coordinating the review of the land development/subdivision application among the different reviewers, including reviews done by third party consultants, such as traffic, and reviews done by outside agencies such as the Alpha Fire Company and Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA).
- Tracking the project through the review process, including clearly communicating to the applicant which meetings they are scheduled for and what the applicant needs to provide for such meetings.

Benefits

- A single point of contact improves clarity and productivity for both the applicant and the regulators and guides the applicant to the appropriate boards and agencies for comments and approvals.
- The single point of contact can help ensure that the review is done in the most efficient manner by checking that all documentation necessary for a speedy review is present upon application and ensuring that both the applicant and reviewers are meeting the necessary deadlines to keep the review on track.

Challenges

- Based upon staffing levels, cross-training may be necessary to ensure there is always someone present to accept submissions for application.

A single point of contact can provide applicants with all of the information they need and guide them through the land development and subdivision process.

- Tracking land development/subdivision applications will require an individual to understand any necessary deadlines for submitting material in order to provide reviewers with ample time to review the land development/subdivision submission.

- Overcoming resistance to procedural changes both from applicants and from regulators.

Implementation

This best practice would not require an ordinance change; it is something that can be implemented through municipal policy change.

User's Guide to Local Permitting

A User's Guide can be an applicant's sole source reference document, providing all of the information needed for submitting plans, including contact information, meeting dates, deadlines, etc.

It is recommended that each municipality create a brief reference guide to be provided to applicants to help them navigate through the land development/ subdivision plan review process. The document should contain all applicable information with regard to the land development/subdivision process, including who reviews the application with contact information (including outside agencies) and which boards and commissions make decisions and/or recommendations. The guidebook should include step-by-step directions for the application review process, as well as any applicable forms and fees.

Benefits

- Clearly explains what activities require permits and lists the permits issued by each municipal permit granting authority.
- Describes each municipal department, agency, authority, board, and commission involved in the land development/subdivision process.
- Provides meeting times and schedules.
- Lists contact information for all relevant persons and/or agencies.
- Should be placed online with links and/or directions on how to obtain the appropriate information.

Challenges

- The guide must be reviewed at least annually to be kept up to date.
- The guide must be as clear and concise as possible without omitting too much information.

Implementation

There are two possible paths for implementation:

1. Each municipality develops its own guidebook
2. Development of a regional "model" guidebook which each municipality tailors to its own needs. This would provide a guidebook that looks the same across the region but contains pertinent local information.

Concurrent Applications

For development projects which require permits from more than one board or agency, the option to submit concurrent applications can save review time and encourage greater collaboration among municipal officials and regulators. There are numerous outside agencies or third party consultants that also review and/or approve land development/subdivisions. In some instances, this is worked into the municipal review, and for others it is a separate review. In any case, these reviews should happen concurrently where possible. Outside agencies may already have, or could develop, specific policies on how concurrent reviews are addressed and any related limitations to their review. Reviews that can happen concurrently with a land development/subdivision application include:

- **Water** – Any development application which will include a hookup to a public water system should have its lateral and/or main line extensions reviewed at the same time the applicant's project is going through the land development/subdivision review process. Local water authorities in the Centre Region include: College Township Water Authority, State College Borough Water Authority, and Upper Halfmoon Water Company.

- **Sewer** – Most developments will also require sewer service, and will therefore need any sewer laterals, proposed main lines, or septic systems reviewed by the appropriate authority. In the Centre Region, review of public sewer service is done by the University Area Joint Authority (UAJA) or the State College Sewer Authority. Review of Planning Modules for septic systems is done by the PA Department of Environmental Protection.

- **Public Transit** – Larger developments which will impact transit service are also reviewed by the local transit authority. This process typically coincides with the municipal land development/subdivision plan review process. The Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA) provides transit service to the Centre Region, and the local municipality is responsible for getting the appropriate documentation to the authority for review.

- **Fire Protection** – All land development/subdivision applications are also reviewed by the Fire Director for conformance with fire protection standards. Similar to the review by the transit authority, it is the responsibility of the municipality to submit documentation to the Fire Director for review so that comments and changes can be made prior to approval of a land development/subdivision application.

Plan review often involves more than one agency or review board. Sequential reviews are usually not necessary, and therefore, reviewing plan applications concurrently saves both the municipality and the applicant time.

Given the complexity of the land development and subdivision processes, allowing applications to be processed concurrently among departments and outside agencies will lead to a more efficient review process.

- **Transportation** – Larger land development/subdivision applications will also require a review by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the municipality's transportation consultant. This can include the completion of a Transportation Impact Study, which the applicant would complete, but PennDOT and the municipality would review. The review of this aspect of an application can be time consuming, and both the applicant and the municipality need to be aware of the timing of this review and its impact on the municipal review schedule.

- **Stormwater** – Depending upon the amount of impervious coverage proposed in a development, the preparation of a stormwater management plan as part of the submission for land development/ subdivision may be required. The stormwater management plan is reviewed by the municipality's consulting engineer and must be reviewed concurrently with and prior to the approval of a land development/ subdivision plan.

- **Building/CRCA** – The Centre Region Code Agency (CRCA) reviews plans for compliance with the building code and ADA Access Regulations. Although building permits are obtained after the approval of a land development/ subdivision plan, the application for building permits can be submitted at the same time the development/subdivision plan is submitted to the municipality. The purpose for conducting this review concurrently is to limit the amount of time needed to obtain a building permit after the approval of a land development/subdivision plan. Since the Code Agency reviews the entire site for safety and access issues as well, concurrent review eliminates or at least minimizes the need to change land development/subdivision plans after they have already been approved.

- **Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA)** – In instances of large "planned" developments, the Centre Regional Planning Agency (CRPA) also reviews land development/subdivision plans. This should be done prior to municipal approval.

- **Centre County Conservation District** – Any project that disturbs the natural cover of the soil is regulated by the Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Program. This can include clearing, grading, road building, etc. The Conservation District administers this program on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

In terms of processing applications concurrently, the responsibility for submitting necessary applications to the appropriate agencies must be clear to the applicant and the municipality. Copies of reviews by outside boards and agencies should be provided to the municipality prior to plan approval.

Benefits

- Shortens the timeline from initial plan submission to certificate of occupancy for a building.
- May eliminate or at least minimize conflicting review comments.

Challenges

- Coordinating the review comments from all the different agencies and boards to ensure that everyone is kept "in the loop" as to what comments are being made may be difficult.
- The single point of contact person or entity as noted previously would be required to track that these reviews and approvals as they are completed.

Implementation

Municipalities may have to establish clear timelines as to who conducts each review and when. Tools, such as plan review and permitting software may be helpful in scheduling and establishing concurrent review processes among reviewing individuals and agencies as well as tracking the progress of concurrent reviews. This will then have to be conveyed to both the applicant and the reviewer.

Pre-Application Meetings

Prior to submitting a formal application to the municipality, the developer should be encouraged to arrange a pre-application meeting with municipal staff and other applicable agencies responsible for reviewing and/or approving any part or permit related to the project. This provides an opportunity to explain the review and approval process to the developer and to discuss the documentation required to submit a completed application. Developers can be provided with checklists and timelines as well as with a list of minimum standards that applications must contain in order to be reviewed. A pre-application meeting also allows for the informal discussion of a project and can bring to light any potential issues with the proposal.

A pre-application meeting should occur well in advance of any Board or Commission meeting at which the project will be first reviewed. An important part of any pre-application meeting should be the presentation of a sketch plan or conceptual plan for review by all those attending. In Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) explains and provides direction regarding the purpose and review of sketch plans. Municipal staff may offer informal suggestions regarding the sketch plan; however, the municipality is not bound by any such suggestions offered.

In addition to a pre-application meeting, the developer may also wish to discuss a sketch plan during a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting, or possibly during a public hearing or neighborhood meeting, depending on the scope and nature of the project.

In addition to the applicant/developer and municipal staff, in the Centre Region, the pre-application meeting could include representatives from each of the following:

- Centre Region Code Administration
- Centre Regional Planning Agency
- Centre County Conservation District
- Centre Area Transportation Authority (CATA)
- State College Borough Water Authority (SCBWA)
- University Area Joint Authority (UAJA)
- Alpha Fire Company
- Pennsylvania Department of Transportation
- Third Party Consultants (a fee would likely apply in this case)

A key benefit to having a pre-application meeting is that it provides a forum for informal review to discuss a proposal and the associated requirements well in advance of the submission of an application for formal consideration by the governing body.

Benefits

- A key benefit to having a pre-application meeting is that it provides a forum for informal review to discuss a proposal and the associated requirements well in advance of the submission of an application. The process can save time and money for both the developer and municipality.

- A working relationship between the developer and municipal staff is established.

- For any problems or obstacles that may arise, municipal staff and other parties can offer suggestions and possible solutions to overcoming them.

Challenges

- Due to the number of agencies involved in the review process, it is necessary for each reviewing agency to commit to be present for a pre-application meeting.

- If a variety of agencies/reviewers are present at a pre-application meeting, an individual should be designated to document the discussion, comments, and suggestions. Otherwise, the content of important matters discussed may be lost in the absence of a well-organized process.

- If a sketch plan is presented, the issues discussed will be relevant only to the information provided at that time. Any change to the plan not discussed during the pre-application meeting may render previous comments and suggestions irrelevant.

- Staff and other attendees need to be clear that their comments are not legally binding when issued during a pre-application meeting.

Implementation

- The process of offering and conducting pre-application meetings is a simple matter of coordinating with the various individuals involved in the planning and review process: the parties associated with the developer, municipal staff, and third party reviewers.

- The pre-application meeting process should be formally adopted and incorporated into the municipal code as a means of informing developers of this option.

Project Technical Review Team

Upon the submission of a completed application, the municipality may choose to conduct a coordinated review of the application during a technical review meeting. This process differs from the pre-application meeting in that, at this stage, an application has been formally submitted for consideration of approval.

A project technical review team should consist of municipal staff and representatives from other agencies that are reviewing the project, if available. Typically, the applicant should not be present during the technical review.

In addition to providing a forum for a coordinated review, the comments, suggestions, and questions that arise from each of the reviewing parties can be consolidated into a single review letter/report to be provided to the applicant. This review letter or report can be emailed to the applicant once completed. In addition to the individuals noted above, a technical review team could consist of representatives from the agencies listed under the recommendations for Pre-application Meetings.

A meeting, if needed, should be held with the applicant to review the comments in the coordinated review report.

A technical plan review will typically consist of at least some of the following, and may include other topics:

- Water and Sewer services
- Traffic and access permitting
- Traffic signalization
- NPDES approvals
- Environmental issues: wetlands
- Transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities
- Erosion and sedimentation control
- Fire protection
- Code requirements
- Area, bulk, and density requirements
- Landscaping, lighting, open space
- Parking
- Trash and recycling requirements

In addition to providing a forum for a coordinated review, the comments, suggestions, and questions that arise from each of the reviewing parties can be consolidated into a single review letter to be provided to the applicant.

Benefits

- Provides a clear understanding of the issues concerning each of the reviewing parties. Can remove confusion between agencies and avoid the loss of time and money associated with conflicts.

- Can reduce overall review time for the applicant by establishing a regular, consistent process for the distribution of comments by the various agencies.

Challenges

- Various timelines may exist throughout the different agencies with regard to certain approvals relevant to a project. When multiple timelines exist, it could be difficult to achieve a consistent review schedule without significant administrative and/or procedural changes in the agencies involved in the process. Municipalities can include review schedules on permitting checklists and flowcharts to allow applicants to better understand when to expect reviews by.

- It is simply impractical to attempt to have all relevant parties involved in the review process and to issue comment on a consistent schedule. For example, in the Centre Region, not only are plans reviewed by many of the agencies listed above (see Pre-application Meetings), but state agencies such as the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT) have separate review schedules that simply may not be conducive to this process.

- There could be significant logistical challenges to getting the same personnel to attend a regularly scheduled meeting. Many agencies have a single individual designated to conduct plan reviews or related approval reviews. When a representative of an agency with approval authority cannot be present, there could be issues or questions that remain unanswered.

Implementation

Arranging for regular technical review team meetings would require, at a minimum:

- Scheduling a specific monthly or biweekly meeting date during which the meeting would be held on a regular basis. Applicants could also be made aware of when the review team would be meeting and when to expect comments by.

- Creating a process for forming a group of volunteers to represent the agencies noted above.

- Designating a staff member to be responsible for coordinating and reminding individuals of the monthly meeting, creating agendas, and providing support documentation to assist in the review process. Setting a standard meeting time weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly can help avoid the need to accommodate the schedules of all individuals involved.

- Creating a process to consolidate review comments into a single document or to distribute comments in a consistent fashion.

Interdepartmental Meetings

Interdepartmental meetings can lead to better organization and coordination between or within departments and agencies regarding plan and permit review processes, timelines, and reporting.

Interdepartmental meetings provide the opportunity for the sharing of information and updates between departments within a municipality. All municipal departments may have input in the planning process, and a regularly scheduled meeting would help each department understand the processes specific to the other departments. This meeting is not intended for specific plan review, but is intended to provide updates on current practices and any anticipated changes in those practices. In the Centre Region, where multiple departments are located in close proximity to one another, this process may already exist informally. Because plan review often involves various departments, a meeting with each of the following departments and individuals could be beneficial:

- Municipal Manager
- Public Works
- Municipal Engineer
- Zoning
- Planning
- Police
- Fire Department (Alpha, Port Matilda, or Boalsburg Fire Company)
- Public Health

In the Centre Region, the Centre Region Council of Governments provides a variety of services to the local municipalities, as do a number of other agencies that are not located on-site in a municipal facility. Interdepartmental meetings could also include representatives from these agencies. Alternatively, an interagency meeting process could be established in a similar manner recommended for the local municipalities.

Issues to be discussed during these meetings might include:

- New regulations
- Changes in policy or procedure
- New development projects
- Permit fees, review fees

Benefits

- Provides a forum for regular updates concerning each of the departments or agencies present.

- Can lead to better organization and coordination between or within departments and agencies regarding plan and permit review processes, timelines, and reporting.

- Allows for direct communication between the individuals responsible for their respective review and/or approval processes.

Challenges

- There could be significant logistical challenges to getting the same personnel to attend a regularly scheduled meeting. Many agencies have a single individual designated to conduct plan reviews or related approval reviews. It requires significant effort on behalf of the individual/agency/ department coordinating the meetings.

Implementation

Establishing a process for interdepartmental and/or interagency meetings involves a large-scale coordination effort with all local and or regional agencies involved in the plan review or permitting process.

- A municipality may institute its own regularly scheduled inter-departmental meetings as a simple matter of scheduling a regular monthly (or other schedule) meeting, requiring at least one member of each department to be present.

- Having interagency meetings scheduled on a regular basis at a set time helps to avoid scheduling conflicts. If a regularly scheduled interagency meeting is established, this should be coordinated by a single agency or municipality.

- The meeting place will need to be of sufficient size to accommodate those attending.

- An individual should be designated to record minutes of the meeting.

Proximity of Professional Staff

Physical proximity of municipal and regional staff is not always possible due to the geographic locations of individual buildings. At the municipal level, most staff is located in close physical proximity; however, there are also municipal engineers on contract, project inspectors, and others involved in the review process that may have offices in other locations, making them less available for in-person joint reviews and discussions. While a lack of physical proximity can inhibit the ability to conduct simultaneous reviews of plans, technology can be used to bridge this gap and allow for easier interaction among staff. The use of internet resources, including but not limited to email, shared document editing, and multi-user document viewing, as well as teleconferencing, would allow for simultaneous review of plans and better interagency cooperation.

The use of technology can allow staff to collaborate even if unable to meet in person.

Benefits

- Encourages informal staff discussion.
- Creates opportunities for staff of different agencies to communicate.
- Allows developers and the public to have easier access to staff for meetings, questions, etc.
- Allows for quicker resolution of issues that are jointly shared by different agencies.

Challenges

- Physical proximity of all reviewing entities is not possible.
- While internet communication could help further interagency cooperation, the developer would still need to contact multiple individuals to obtain answers to questions unless a single point of contact was assigned the responsibility of communicating with the applicant.

Implementation

- Digital copies of plans could be received with all applications and then distributed to all reviewers so that simultaneous review could take place. If needed, teleconferencing is a method of allowing all reviewers to discuss a plan simultaneously.

- Municipalities could assign one individual to be the “project coordinator” responsible for collecting and forwarding comments from all reviewers. The project coordinator could also initiate a teleconference so that plans could be discussed by all reviewers simultaneously as needed.

- Plan reviewers could hold meetings on a regular basis, either in person or via teleconference, to allow all reviewers to discuss potential issues with the plans. This would allow everyone involved to be aware of general concerns that should be considered when making comments.

PRACTICES FOR STANDARDIZING THE PROCESS

IV.

Predictability and consistency of the permitting process within a municipality advances the goal of more efficient development review and permitting. Permit applicants should know what to expect from the municipal boards, commission and staff they interact with through the process. This includes submittal requirements, plan documents, public meeting schedules, and review timeframes.

One of the most common frustrations voiced by private-sector participants interviewed by the CRPA was preparing similar information six different ways. For example, the forms used for, and information required by municipalities could be coordinated and standardized so that the same information is required for similar processes in different municipalities. For the most part, information required to apply for a variance could be consistent regionally.

This best practice promotes efficient permitting because it employs a standard across municipal lines. Municipalities have a great deal of autonomy, and boards and commissions exercise varying degrees of discretion. Many participants however, felt that the entire permitting system could have consistent forms, processes, and standards of care to improve predictability and efficiency while maintaining individual authority in the municipality.

The following best practices, described in more detail on the following pages, can be used to standardize the local permitting process:

- Permitting checklists and flow charts
- Encourage the use of third party consultants
- Predictable fees

Permitting Checklists and Flow Charts

As part of the planning or permitting process, providing a checklist to the applicant can provide valuable information which can help both the applicant and the municipality. A checklist should include, but may not be limited to, a timeline for the review and approval process, clear submittal requirements, information on fees, and information pertaining to other agencies from which approvals may be required. The checklist should provide detail on all relevant processes in a concise and easily understandable format. In addition to a checklist, it is recommended that a flowchart(s) along with a general timeline be created to assist the applicant.

The links below contain recommendations on the minimum content for a checklist pertaining to subdivision or land development applications in the Centre Region. A sample checklist, flow chart, and contact information sheet are also included.

- Checklist: Municipal application requirements
- Flowchart: Municipal application requirements – A flowchart should be prepared to provide a visual representation of the timelines, agencies, and processes noted in the checklist.
- Contact Information: Outside agencies

Benefits

- Provides a clear understanding of application requirements and timelines.
- Informs the applicant of other agencies that may have approval authority related to the project.

Challenges

- The applicant must be aware that information contained in checklists and flowcharts does not constitute the full legal requirements of the plan approval process. A disclaimer should be added as appropriate.
- Some processes can be difficult to explain in the context of a flowchart.

Implementation

Providing checklists and other information is an administrative function that can be implemented by department managers as a matter of policy.

A checklist should include, but may not be limited to, a timeline for the review and approval process, clear submittal requirements, information on fees, and information pertaining to other agencies from which approvals may be required.

Encourage the Use of Third Party Consultants

Contracting with a consultant can provide municipalities with additional expertise for land development/subdivision plan review. This is especially important for communities with limited professional staff. Municipalities can provide applicants with a list of acceptable third party consultants to choose from, giving applicants more control over their development costs. The use of a particular consultant by more than one municipality can provide applicants with reviews that are generally consistent across the region.

Benefits

- Expands staff capacity and expertise.
- Allows for specialized review of certain issues such as stormwater or transportation impacts.
- Can provide for a timely review.

Challenges

- When consultants are part of the review process, a municipality must have a procedure in place (by policy or through contract with the consultant) that outlines when the consultant receives the materials for review and when completion of the review is required.
- Communities must provide for assessment of fees in a timely fashion so that the developer isn't hit with one large fee assessed at the end of a project.
- Assessment and tracking of fees and consultants may require staff time, presumably that of the single-point of contact.
- Coordination of consultant and staff reviews will be necessary to minimize overlapping or contradictory review comments. Inter-departmental meetings as noted earlier could aid in this coordination if they also include any third party consultants.

Implementation

Most municipalities have at least some experience using third party consultants such as transportation engineers to review Traffic Impact Studies. Municipalities should consider providing a single review document containing all review comments by all reviewers. In addition, after review comments are sent out, the applicant, municipal staff, and all other reviewers should meet to discuss the comments so that everyone understands the expected resolution.

The use of third-party consultants can add specialized expertise and increases a municipality's capacity to handle multiple or complex land development/ subdivision plans.

Predictable Fees

In order to aid applicants/developers in determining the cost of compliance with local permitting and land use regulations, fees for reviews and permits should be clear and easy to understand. Adopting fees by resolution allows for changes to be made with less procedural requirement than fees codified directly into municipal regulations. To the extent possible, all known fees should be detailed in a fee schedule. External agency fees should be referenced in a separate document if information is available. Where possible, municipalities can provide multiple options of consultants/firms that can conduct inspections, along with their fees. The fee schedule should be placed on the municipal website for quick access and printing.

The information below outlines typical fees that apply when a subdivision or land development plan is submitted to a municipality for review and approval. Depending on the nature and extent of the project, some fees may not apply or additional fees may be in effect (see Sample Fee Schedule). Typical fees include:

In order to aid applicants in determining the cost of compliance with local permitting and land use regulations, fees for reviews and permits should be clear and easy to understand.

Municipal Fees

- Subdivision Plan Application Fees
- Land Development Plan Application Fees
- Staff Review Fees
  - Engineering
  - Zoning
  - Planning
  - Storm Water
- Consultant Review Fees
  - Engineering
  - Traffic
  - Planning
- Zoning Fees
  - Zoning Permit
  - Zoning Hearing
    - Variance, rezoning request, etc.
- Sewage Planning
  - Sewage Enforcement Officer
  - Sewage Permits
- Other fees established by legal agreement

Other Fees

- University Area Joint Authority or State College Sewer Authority
  - Tap fee if public sewer service
- State College Borough Water Authority
  - If public water service
- PA Department of Transportation
  - Highway Occupancy Permit
- PA Department of Environmental Protection
  - NPDES Permit
  - Sewage Planning Module
- County Conservation District
  - Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan
- County Planning Office (plans forwarded to the County per PA Municipalities Planning Code)
  - Subdivision and Land Development Plan Application Fees
- Centre Region Code Agency
  - Building Permit
  - Inspection Fees
  - Plan Review Fees

Benefits

- A fee schedule provides clear information to inform and aid applicants regarding the required costs and total potential costs associated with a proposed project.
- Information regarding other agencies and their fees will help reduce confusion and any surprise factor associated with external fees.
- A clear and understandable fee schedule increases the transparency of government functions.

Challenges

- Developing a fee schedule requires research into the various processes associated with plan and permit reviews in order to determine fees that are not arbitrary.
- It may be difficult to compile detailed information regarding external agency fees.

- Staff should be able to explain the purpose of any fees to interested parties.

Implementation

According to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (PA MPC), review fees shall be based upon a schedule established by ordinance or resolution.

- If a fee schedule is established by resolution, such resolution may be revised as needed by the governing body.

- A fee schedule established by ordinance can only be revised through a multi-step process requiring review by various agencies before being approved by the governing body.

- A fee schedule should be established concurrently with any new ordinance or permitting process, or as soon as possible after enactment of such regulations.

- A fee schedule should be made readily available in both print and electronic formats.

PRACTICES FOR IMPROVING THE PROCESS

V.

Adequate staffing and resources are integral to efficient development review and permitting. Unfortunately, municipalities in the region are experiencing budgetary constraints that affect many public services, and planning and regulatory agencies are often adversely affected.

These shortages can also contribute to the lack of training for board or commission members and staff. Municipal officials may have inadequate knowledge and lack the necessary training to fully perform their duties and roles. Municipal officials, including appointed citizens representing the municipality on a board or commission, must have the resources to capably and efficiently perform their duties. They should also have a sufficient understanding of regulatory job functions to ensure that local permitting protects the public interest.

Advancements in technology available today are not out of reach in many municipalities nor too sophisticated to be useful in municipal offices. A municipal website is an effective communication tool that is relatively inexpensive to maintain and projects a positive image of the community.

Municipalities should continue to improve the quality of their websites as a portal to municipal bylaws, regulations, schedules, and application forms. Commercial electronic permit tracking systems in the region will be purchased and are available for municipal officials to utilize. Adopting electronic filing of permit applications would benefit communities by reducing the risk of filing and administrative error or oversight, as well as facilitating electronic transmission of permit applications with more transparency, accuracy, and efficiency among municipal boards, commissions, and interested citizens.

The following best practices, described in more detail on the following pages can be used to improve the local permitting process:

- Multi-tiered application and review process
- Multi-municipal reviews
- Projects of Economic Significance
- Professional development and training
- Maximizing use of municipal and regional websites
- Electronic filing, tracking, and commenting

Multi-Tiered Application and Review Process

A multi-tiered plan review process will eliminate the need for public review of "minor" projects which have little or no impacts on a municipality, thereby allowing planning commissions and governing bodies to concentrate on items that truly impact a municipality.

The provision for different levels of land development/subdivision plan review could be implemented to provide an expedited application and review process for proposals that involve minor building expansions, subdivisions, or other minimal site changes. For those plans which would be considered "minor," the review and approval process could be handled entirely by staff, leaving out the need to involve planning commissions and governing bodies. Municipalities already do this for single-family home construction, in which case, plans are reviewed and approved primarily by the municipal zoning officer. By using only staff to review "minor" projects, the amount of time a review takes could be reduced, not to mention the savings in no longer needing multiple plan copies and supporting documents or having to attend public meetings.

Plan review tiers may include:

- **Residential site plan** – one single-family home. Reviewed by zoning officer.
- **Minor plan review** – a subdivision of a small number of lots with no new public infrastructure involved, a building expansion no greater than a percentage of the existing building, or development of a residential building of less than "X" number of units. Reviewed by zoning officer, planner, and possibly engineer.
- **Standard Land Development/Subdivision plan** – projects that do not meet the qualifications for a minor plan review or do not meet the requirements for site plan review. These would be subject to the typical full-blown review process.

For further efficiencies in the land development process, the idea of a multi-tiered plan review process could be implemented region-wide so that the plan review tiers are uniform across municipal boundaries. This would create greater clarity among applicants who work in multiple municipalities, in that a minor plan in one municipality is the same as that in another municipality.

Benefits

- Projects which are truly "minor" in nature, having minimal impacts if any on the municipality or adjoining property owners, can be reviewed and approved quicker than if required to go to public meetings. Minor plans could still be sent to the Planning Commission or governing body for informative purposes if deemed appropriate by staff.
- A multi-tiered plan review system can reduce the workload of planning commissions and governing bodies.

- With reduced workloads, planning commissions and governing bodies can concentrate on land development/subdivision plans or other matters that will truly have an impact on a municipality and its residents.

Challenges

- Municipalities would need to amend their subdivision and land development ordinance in order to initiate a multi-tiered land development/subdivision review process. The thresholds as to which plan review tier a subdivision or land development falls into may be difficult to determine. A one size fits all approach may not necessarily fit all plans, so staff may also need the ability to send a plan through the full-blown review process, even if it meets the classification of a minor plan.

- If a plan is considered "minor," there may be pressure on staff by the applicant to review such a land development/subdivision plan quickly. Checklists and applications should remind the applicant of the amount of time the municipality has to make a decision on a request.

Implementation

Municipal staff could review previous land development/subdivision applications to determine the best point at which to consider a plan truly a "minor" plan. Using this information, planning commissions and governing bodies can define what a "minor" plan is and what plans they are comfortable with staff approving.

Multi-Municipal Reviews

Some development projects will be proposed on property that lies within more than one jurisdiction. When such instances occur, it is important for a municipality to establish a policy on how to proceed with its review process and how to coordinate the approval with the neighboring jurisdiction.

There are several issues to consider in determining the extent of each jurisdiction's review of plans that fall into this category and the policy(s) that each will establish with regard to the same. The level of review might be determined by:

- **How much of the project is located in a particular jurisdiction.**

  An assessment of where physical structures and facilities are located might be helpful.

- **The impacts that the project will have in each jurisdiction.**

  Impacts on public infrastructure, including public water and sewer capacity, transportation systems and municipal services could play a significant role in considering review and approval.

- **Whether one jurisdiction is willing to relinquish its approval to the other if only a small portion of a project will be located in its jurisdiction and/or impacts will be minimal.**

  If the vast majority of a proposed project lies within one jurisdiction and/or it will mostly impact one jurisdiction, the review and approval process could be simplified if the other would be willing to relinquish its approval authority.

For any proposal where there will be more than one jurisdiction approving the plan, the following recommendations are intended to aid in the review process:

- Arrange for a pre-review meeting with all participating municipalities, the developer, and any other agencies involved in the review.

- Coordinate the review of all plans and required information.

- To the extent possible, propose a common review schedule for each municipality to adhere to.

- Collect all plan review comments and organize all comments into once correspondence for distribution to the developer in accordance with a review schedule.

- Any approval by any one municipality should include the condition that the plan must also be approved by the other municipality(s).

- The municipalities should remain in close communication regarding the status of the project in their respective jurisdictions.

- Any non-public meetings should include a representative(s) of each municipality so that the developer and all parties are receiving the same input at the same time.

If a municipality has determined that it will relinquish its approval authority for a plan, that municipality should draft a letter notifying the other jurisdiction(s). Any such municipality should still consider participating in any pre-application meetings and review meetings, and offer comments as applicable.

Projects of Economic Significance

There may at times be the potential for a project in scope and nature which, if approved, could bring a distinct economic benefit not only to the municipality where it will be located, but also to the Centre Region as a whole. When such opportunities exist that bring with them the promise of the creation of jobs and additional products or services that could significantly enhance the local economy, a concerted and coordinated effort involving various reviewing and approving agencies could improve the chances that the company will establish their facility here. This section provides some initial recommendations as to how local municipalities and other agencies might work together in facilitating an expedited review of applications related to these types of projects. In addition, recommendations in this guide pertaining to concurrent applications and external agency reviews will also likely be relevant to these types of applications.

Following initial inquiry from a developer or company representative regarding potential development sites, the host municipality should:

- Gather information from the individual as it pertains to their intended use and other related details that will aid in determining whether or not the proposal is consistent with the zoning of any available land.
- Provide the resources to the developer that will adequately inform them of local opportunities in the form of vacant land, vacant buildings.
- Facilitate a pre-application meeting involving as many agencies as possible that will have some role in approving or reviewing the project.
- For those processes that are conducted at a state or even federal level, encourage a collaborative effort and request that such agencies be willing to expedite their reviews to the extent possible. See also the section pertaining to Concurrent Applications.
- Include the Chamber of Business and Industry of Centre County and any local redevelopment authorities, other agencies with economic development interest, in any discussions. There should be at least one agency that could help inform about financial programs and incentives.
- Suggest a tour of regionally available sites, authorities such as water and sewer or other facilities that may play a role in providing services to the project. Local officials could be a part of this.
- Suggest additional monthly meetings of the Planning Commission and Board/ Council as required. Additional meetings may or may not help to expedite the approval process depending on the status of external agency reviews/approvals.

- Present a proposal to the developer that outlines a schedule of cooperation between and amongst parties similar to a project management schedule if the developer moves forward with submitting a plan.

- Create a policy to define parameters to determine what types of projects that this review and approval process will apply to. The parameters could be quantitative or the steps could be implemented on a case by case basis.

- Establish lead contacts for the developer and the municipality to help coordinate the various aspects of this process.

Benefits

- Providing assistance to a potential developer will not only aid them in acquiring the information and resources they need to make a decision, but may also help establish good rapport with company officials.

- If a company does choose to locate its facility locally, numerous advantages would be realized in the form of job creation and economic stimulus to the region.

- An established policy regarding such matters may increase the opportunities for attracting companies to the Centre Region.

Challenges

- At initial inquiry, the developer or their representative may not have enough information to help the municipality assist them. The municipal representative may need to ask a number of questions in order to establish an understanding of the project.

- Although there may be locally available sites that fit the proposal, ultimately, the site must be acquired by the developer before the project can proceed. The municipality cannot influence factors such as cost of the land or the willingness of the current owner to sell the land if it is not already on the market.

- In general, the larger the project, the more agencies there will be involved in its review and approval. Even when there is a well-established policy to expedite these projects, the rate of approval may be hindered on the basis of the number of agencies involved and their respective procedures.

Implementation

An expedited review process can be implemented as a matter of policy at the local level. An alternative would be to create a regional policy for general consistency in procedure, but also to create a working relationship between municipalities in an endeavor to bring economic prosperity to the region without partiality as to where a company might locate within the region.

Professional Development and Training

Education and training for regulatory board members and staff provide benefits in clarity, competence, and defensible decisions. Planning commissions, zoning boards, and other municipal decision-making boards should be well versed in their purpose, authority, and role in the development review process.

Education and training of regulatory board members and staff should be offered on an ongoing basis to keep individuals informed of their purpose, authority, and role, and provide those individuals better insight on how their tasks can be accomplished in a timely and professional manner. Training can be provided through a variety of methods, including subscriptions to periodicals, regular training sessions provided by the municipality, access to written resources that clearly define purposes and objectives, and formal training seminars and workshops. Regional and county agencies could offer training sessions or host outside training opportunities to help facilitate professional training and development of municipal regulatory boards and staff.

Ongoing training of regulatory board members will help improve objectivity and consistency in decision-making.

Benefits

- Training improves consistency and objectivity of rulings by municipal boards. It also increases their understanding of board authority, legal knowledge of zoning ordinances, and land use concepts.
- Procedural knowledge of conducting a public meeting and administering a regulatory program is likely to improve, as will institutional knowledge of the regulatory role, jurisdiction, and enforcement mechanisms of municipal commissions and boards.
- Individuals serving on boards and commissions will have an understanding of the principles of zoning, land use, and permitting process. This is beneficial for elected officials that have served previously on such boards.

Challenges

- High turnover on boards and commissions erodes the community benefits of training.
- Training takes a commitment of time and money.
- A high level of training may be considered too onerous for volunteer boards and commissions and could deter individuals from volunteering.

Training conducted by municipal or regional staff is a cost effective method of providing ongoing education for less cost.

Implementation

- Municipal staff can provide basic and ongoing training to boards and commissions during work sessions, or place training time at the end of meeting agendas. Training can be done on an ongoing basis in small quantities rather than requiring a large time commitment from officials.
- Basic handbooks of instructions can be created for Board and Commission members to act as a resource regarding responsibilities, conduct, and expectations.
- Municipalities can make the training resources available to staff, such as pamphlets, magazines, and webinars, available to Board and Commission members.
- Where possible, municipalities can budget for training materials or conferences that can be optional for officials.

Maximizing Use of Municipal and Regional Websites

Use of the internet is an increasingly common way to conduct business and communicate with residents, businesses, and applicants. Accessibility to permitting and development information on municipal and regional webpages is a cost effective and practical tool. Limited capital and human resources, however, have constrained widespread implementation. The use of universal web applications for general information, education and training, administrative forms, and development application submittal and review will help regulators, administrators, project owners, professionals, and applicants. Municipal websites should provide a variety of resources that allow developers and the public access to basic information 24-hours a day.

Municipal and regional webpages can be maximized by serving as online information repositories that assist developers in obtaining information about how to submit a permit application, the requirements for submittals, meeting times and agendas, etc. Websites can also allow applicants to submit permits online and track the progress of a permit once submitted for review. By maximizing a municipal or regional website to allow such interaction, demands on staff time are reduced, and developers are provided with better access to information and greater clarity on the permitting process.

Municipal and regional websites can act as 24-hour information centers, allowing the public to access forms and information regarding development related processes and services.

Benefits

- Websites provide access to municipal services and information outside of regular business hours and reduce the staff time devoted to interacting with developers that contact the municipality in person, by telephone, or via e-mail.
- A website may act as a virtual “one-stop shop” where a user may gain access to a multitude of documents and forms from many departments without having to physically walk from one department or agency to another. Forms can also be set up so that they can be completed and submitted electronically.
- Municipal staff may use the website as a tool to post agendas, announcements, and decisions, as well as to direct users to guides, regulations, forms or documents. Documents and forms are often available for download at no cost to the user.
- Information on a website can act as a guide in and of itself to explain the permitting process and allow the user to conduct research prior to engaging planning staff and initiating a permit process.

Optimized municipal and regional websites can provide complete information regarding permitting processes and allow the public to track their project's review status.

Challenges

- Municipalities may not have sufficient access to the technical assistance necessary for creating, updating, and posting information on the internet. Providing regular updates to the website also requires a commitment of staff resources.

- The forms used by municipalities may have to be recreated in digital format in order to maximize the website's potential.

Implementation

- Municipalities can place application forms and checklists online so that they can be printed out or submitted electronically. Links to municipal webpages can be placed on the Centre Regional Planning Agency webpage to direct applicants to municipal development information.

- Permit process timelines and checklists can be hosted online to provide users with a better understanding of the process to obtain a permit.

- A "frequently asked questions" webpage about the permit process can act as a round the clock resource for permit applicants.

Electronic Filing, Tracking, and Commenting

Electronic permit tracking systems have the potential to streamline the permitting process from application through project completion. An effective tracking system will allow for better management of the overall permitting process, from providing ongoing status reports to identifying potential problems early in the permitting process. In addition to filing and tracking, municipalities can utilize electronic commenting in order to quickly and easily communicate with applicants regarding the status and potential concerns with submitted plans. Electronically submitted comments can be simultaneously viewed by other reviewers and sent to applicants, engineers, and project managers when completed. Electronic filing, tracking, and commenting can be done using existing office software; however, multiple programs may be needed to perform all functions. Software packages are available that are specifically designed to allow municipalities to administer their permit processes and conduct these functions.

Electronic permit tracking systems can greatly improve the efficiency of the permitting process and help reduce overhead costs over the long-term.

Benefits

- Reduces staff time spent on administrative functions such as copying and filing.
- Cuts back on waste and administrative overhead costs long-term.
- Can provide more transparency and accuracy to the permitting process.
- Allows less room for administrative error given automatic fields and assigned numerical values.
- Allows simultaneous dissemination of electronic files to multiple parties, including other permit granting authorities, and provides remote access.
- May permit automatically generated reports showing statistical information for recent permits.

Challenges

- Commercially produced filing software is often expensive and cost prohibitive for smaller communities.
- Electronic permit systems must be continually managed, including continual updates and uniform usage from staff.
- Backup systems to store data must be utilized, as all software is susceptible to corruption and failure.

Electronic permitting software can help improve communication amongst plan reviewers and allow for the generating of comment reports for public use.

- Locally developed systems, such as those through Office Suite software, have more limited applicability and may not be as efficient as commercial programs.

Implementation

- Where possible, all persons conducting plan reviews should be given access to and training for the software package being utilized for electronic filing. This ensures accurate record keeping and allows the software to be used as designed.

- Municipalities that are unable to afford software or design their own through database programs can still receive electronic copies of plans to allow for electronic distribution to reviewers. Comments can be received from reviewers via e-mail, allowing the municipalities to more easily communicate reviewer comments to the applicant.

State, Federal, and Other External Reviews

In addition to reviews by the municipality, proposed projects and developments are often reviewed by State, Federal, and other external agencies, which may or may not have their own review deadlines. While significant improvements can be made in making municipal reviews more efficient and effective, municipalities are often delayed in granting final approval due to outstanding reviews by external agencies. Such delays can be frustrating for both municipalities and applicants. While these potential delays are often outside of the control of municipal reviewers, steps can be taken to help ensure that delays are minimized. In the event that a development proposal requires an external review, the following steps should be taken:

- Inform the applicant of external reviews that will be required as soon as possible. This can be done at pre-application meetings or at the time the application is filed. Information about external reviews can also be included on municipal websites and in application checklists.

- Inform the applicant of potential delays. If an external reviewer typically takes 90 days to respond to requests, make this information known as soon as possible.

- Be clear with the applicant about their responsibilities related to obtaining external reviews. Delays often occur because of the misunderstanding that the municipality is responsible to obtain outside reviews.

- If an external reviewer has indicated that there will be a delay in reviewing the request, applicants should be informed immediately. Applicants are not always contacted directly by the reviewer with this information.

Benefits

- Applicants are clear on the external reviews that are required and the potential delays that could occur.

Challenges

- Potential delays cannot always be anticipated. External agencies may encounter additional issues in their review that were not anticipated.

Municipalities can help make applicants aware of outside reviews, their requirements to obtain them, and the potential delays that they may cause.

Implementation

- Forms, checklists, and flowcharts should indicate what external reviews will be required and potential timeframes for those reviews. Such documents should clearly indicate the responsibilities of the applicants in obtaining external reviews.

- Links to outside agencies should be provided on municipal websites so that requirements and applications can be easily obtained.

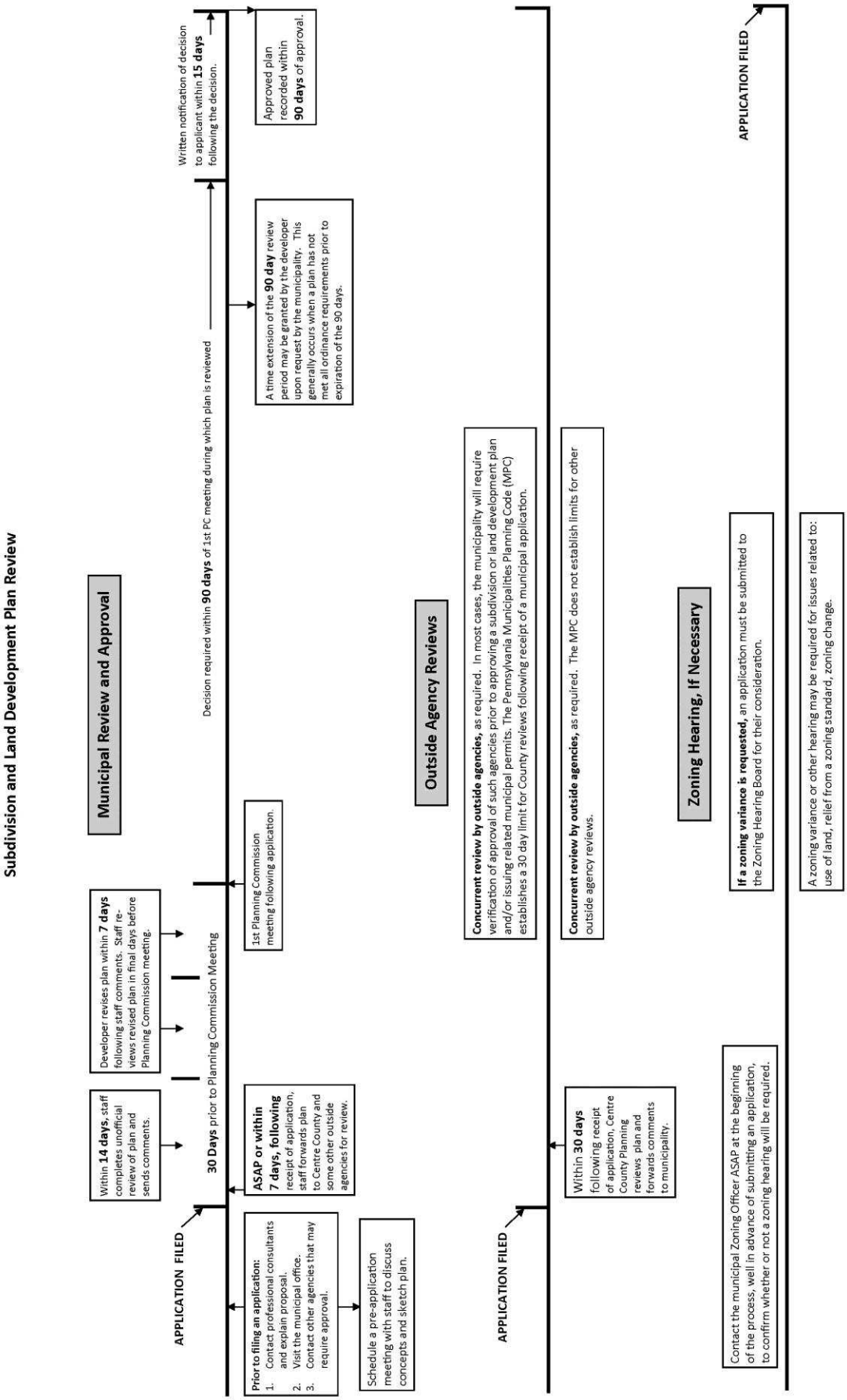
APPENDIX A
Sample Municipal Application Requirements Checklist

Timeline	Process or Review	Action	Documents and Fees
Initial action prior to submitting any sketch plan or preliminary plan	Information gathering	Applicant contacts engineering, surveying and/or planning professionals. Applicant contacts the municipality(s) within which the project site is located.	Property deeds, existing plans, covenants or deed restrictions, rough sketch of proposed plan
60 days prior to the **first** Planning Commission meeting at which the applicant's proposal will first be reviewed	Applicant shares ideas with municipal staff and third party reviewers and/or agencies.	Pre-application meeting	Sketch plan
	Applicant contacts all outside agencies that may also have approval authority or require permit approval.	Action or approval is controlled by the agency.	See information sheet for agency contacts.
30 days prior to the **first** Planning Commission meeting at which the applicant's proposal will first be reviewed	Formal plan review process begins upon receipt of a completed application.	Preliminary plan is submitted to the municipality.	1. Copies of Preliminary plan a. __ Print copies b. __ Electronic copies 2. __ Copies of supporting documents a. Project narrative b. Stormwater management c. E & S control plan d. Sewage planning 3. Plan review fee 4. See information sheet for other fees
ASAP following receipt of a completed application (or within 7 days following)	County and other outside agencies receive and review plans.	Municipal staff forwards plan to County and other outside agencies.	
14 days following receipt of a complete application	Staff completes initial review of plan prior to sending comments.	Municipal staff sends written comments.	
7 days following receipt of municipal staff comments	Staff comments are addressed, and plan is revised accordingly.	Applicant submits a revised plan to the municipality.	1. __ Copies of revised plan. 2. __ Copies of any revised supporting documents
7 days prior to Planning Commission meeting	Municipal staff reviews revised plan.	Staff prepares a report and recommendation to the Planning Commission.	
Beginning of 90 day municipal review period	Planning Commission meeting occurs.	Planning Commission reviews plan and may take action to recommend approval.	
Within 90 days[1] following receipt of a completed application	Board of Supervisors reviews the plan.	Board of Supervisors acts to approve or deny the plan.	
Within 15 days following decision by Board	Applicant is informed of decision.	Decision shall be communicated in writing to applicant.	
Within 90 days following approval of the plan	Plan is recorded at the County Courthouse.	Applicant is responsible for taking the approved plan to the County Courthouse for recording.	

[1] This time period can be extended if the applicant grants a time extension to the municipality upon their request. (If the applicant has not met all ordinance requirements, the plan will be denied unless an extension is granted.)

The information above is not a full list of municipal requirements but is provided as a guide to assist applicants.

APPENDIX B
Sample Municipal Application Requirements Flowchart



APPENDIX C
Sample Contact Information Sheet for Outside Agencies

Agency	Address and Telephone Number	Reviews, Permits and Fees
Alpha Fire Company	400 West Beaver Avenue State College, PA 16801 814-237-5359	• Review of subdivision and land development plans • No additional fee for review
Centre Area Transportation Authority	2081 N. Whitehall Road State College, PA 16801 814-238-2282	• Review of subdivision and land development plans • No additional fee for review
Centre Region Code Administration	Centre Region Council of Governments 2643 Gateway Drive State College, PA 16801 814-231-3056	• Building permits, building inspections • See fee schedule
Centre Region Refuse and Recycling Program	Centre Region Council of Governments 2643 Gateway Drive State College, PA 16801 814-231-7198 Website: crcog.net/refuse	• Trash and recycling requirements
Centre Regional Planning Agency	Centre Region Council of Governments 2643 Gateway Drive State College, PA 16801 814-231-3050	• Review of subdivision and land development plans • No additional fee for review
PA Department of Environmental Protection	Moshannon District Office 186 Enterprise Drive Phillipsburg, PA 16866 814-342-8200	• NPDES permits, sewage module/ planning approval, wetland crossing, etc.
PA Department of Transportation	Penn DOT Engineering District 2-0 1924 Daisy Street PO Box 342 Clearfield, PA 16830 814-765-0400	• Highway occupancy permits, traffic study reviews, traffic signal reviews, etc.
State College Borough Water Authority	1201 West Branch Road State College, PA 16801 814-238-6766	• Public water supply
University Area Joint Authority	1576 Spring Valley Road State College, PA 16801 814-238-5361	• Public sewer supply

APPENDIX D
Sample Fee Schedule

(Municipality Name) Fee Schedule

Subdivision and Land Development Plan Fees		
Item	**Fee**	
Subdivision and Land Development Plan Review		
Subdivision Plan Application	Preliminary Plan	Final Plan
1. Add-on Lots or Lot Consolidation Only	(Fee can be established with a base fee, plus additional fee per lot; or using a base fee for each separate range shown to the left.)	
2. 1 – 2 Lots		
3. 3 - 10		
4. 11 – 20		
5. 21 or more		
Land Development Plan Application	Preliminary Plan	Final Plan
1. Less than 1 acre of earth disturbance	(Fee can be established using amount of earth disturbance, square feet of new building space, or square feet of new impervious surface.)	
2. 1 to 5 acres		
3. >5 to 10 acres		
4. >10 acres		
Revision to Previously Approved Plan	(Usually a flat fee determined on the extent of the revision.)	
1. Minor Revision		
2. Major Revision		
Previously Submitted Plan if Withdrawn	(Option for plans that were withdrawn for various reasons prior to an actual decision having been rendered. If plans are resubmitted, these fees apply.)	
1. Minor Revision		
2. Major Revision		
Staff and Other Reviewer Fees	(Staff may consist of engineers and others who perform reviews that might otherwise be performed by consultants, if not directly employed by a municipality.) *The PA MPC authorizes a municipality to charge fees for 3rd party reviewers.	
1. Township Staff		
2. Engineer*		
3. Planner*		
4. Solicitor*		
Zoning Review		
Zoning Hearings or Zoning Requests	(These processes may be administered by the Zoning Hearing Board or the governing body, depending on the nature of the request.)	
1. Variance		
2. Special Exception		
3. Curative Amendment		
4. Appeals		
a. From Zoning Officer Determination		
5. Challenge to Validity of Ordinance		
Zoning Permits	(Fees may be charged as a flat fee or based on the size of the structure.)	
1. Use Permit		
a. New Use		
b. Change of Use		
c. Temporary Use		
2. Occupancy Permit		

This sample is limited to illustrating subdivision/land development and zoning fees in a schedule format. A variety of other fees will likely also be in effect and should be included in any fee schedule.

EXISTING MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

For Improving Communication

Single Point of Contact

Is there one employee or department in charge of receiving and processing applications?

User's Guide to Local Permitting

Is there a guide or other document that explains permitting and approval processes?

Concurrent Applications

Is there a process that allows for multiple approvals/reviews to occur simultaneously?

Pre-Application Meetings

Are pre-application meetings encouraged and referenced in the regulations?

Project Technical Review Team

Are regular meetings held that bring together multiple reviewing agencies?

EXISTING MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

For Improving Communication (Continued)

Interdepartmental Meetings

Are regular meeting held that bring together internal departments?

Proximity of Professional Staff

Are municipal departments located closely together to allow for efficient communications?

For Standardizing the Process

Permitting Checklists and Flow Charts

Are checklists and flow charts used to illustrate review and approval processes?

Use of Third Party Consultants

Are outside consultants employed during the review?

Predictable Fees

Is a fee schedule established either in a regulation or by resolution?

EXISTING MUNICIPAL BEST PRACTICES

For Improving the Process

Multi-Tiered Application and Review Process

Is there a review process in place for different sized projects or based on the specific type of project?

Professional Development and Training

Does the municipality offer training and development courses for its officials?

Maximizing Use of Municipal and Regional Websites

Is information posted on available websites for public access?

Electronic Filing, Tracking and Commenting

Is there a process in place for permit and plan applications to be submitted on-line or via email? And for further review regarding the status?

Other Processes

APPENDIX F
Model Development Guide

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The following guidebook is to provide residents and land developers with a document to introduce them to and guide them through the process of developing land in ___*(insert municipality)*___. Generally, developing land within the municipality will require conformance with established land development regulations such as zoning. Appendix A lists the regulations that are generally applicable when it comes to developing property. In addition, this guide will aid in identifying the process needed to receive municipal approval for developing property.

Typically the erection of any structure, addition thereto, or the use of land for anything other than its natural state may require municipal approval of some sort. This guidebook is not intended to cover every situation that occurs, but rather to provide guidance on common land development activities. If your project does not fall into one of the categories of development activities described herein, applicants should consult _____ in the _____ Department for guidance. The general sequence of approvals is as follows:

Single-family Residential Homes

- *Residential Site Plan*
- *Zoning Permit*
- *Building Permit*
- *Inspections related to zoning and building permits upon completion of construction*

All other projects

- *Land Development/Subdivision Plan submission*
- *Review & recommendation by Planning Commission*
- *Review & approval by governing body*
- *Zoning Permit*
- *Building Permit*
- *Inspections related to plan approvals upon completion of construction*

SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

Construction of a single-family home or the addition thereto requires review by the municipality for conformance with municipal zoning laws. Below is a brief explanation of the requirements for receiving the necessary approvals for the construction or modification of a single-family home.

The first step in receiving the necessary municipal approvals when it comes to construction activities involving a single-family home is submitting an application with the zoning department. In many instances, a residential site plan will also need to be submitted. Specifically, a residential site plan is needed anytime an applicant proposes the following:
(insert municipal residential site plan requirements here)

The content of a residential site plan is generally prepared by a licensed design professional such as a surveyor, engineer, architect, or like professional. The site plan must be drawn to scale, and include items such as location of the proposed building or addition, location of driveways, the grading of the site, required setbacks, property boundaries, and elevations and cross section of the structure.

In cases of new construction, the applicant will also need to provide proof that the new single-family home will have both water and sewer service. For water service contact *(insert water authority)* at *(insert phone #)*, and for sewer service contact *(insert sewer authority)* at *(insert phone #)*. These two entities will provide written communication which will serve as proof of water and/or sewer services for the purposes of obtaining the necessary approvals. For construction on properties outside of the sewer service area, the applicant will need to obtain approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for sewerage needs other than that provided by a central sewer system (i.e. on-site septic systems). Forms and documentation related to this will be reviewed by the municipal Sewage Enforcement Officer, *(insert name of SEO)*,who can be reached at *(insert phone #)* and will be able to provide instructions on obtaining the necessary procedures for such an approval.

The municipal zoning officer, *(insert zoning officer name)*, who can be reached at *(insert phone #)*, in addition to any other appropriate municipal staff will review all application material submitted to the municipal zoning office for consistency with all applicable regulations. See Appendix A for applicable regulations. A review of the application and residential site plan generally takes 30 days, and the applicant will receive a zoning permit for construction upon approval from the zoning officer.

The final step prior to beginning building or adding onto a single-family structure will be to apply and receive a building permit. Most construction activities will require the applicant to file an application for a building permit. All structures are regulated by the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code and the International Building Codes. In the Centre Region, the building permit and zoning permit utilize the same application. The Centre Region Code

Agency, which can be reached at __*(insert phone #)*__, will review each application, perform inspections and issue the building permit. Occupancy of the structure cannot occur until the Code Agency has issued a certificate of occupancy, which will also require the municipal zoning officer to sign off on the building and zoning permit application.

LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SUBDIVISIONS

Most other construction activity, other than that of one single-family home, will be defined as a land development, and therefore will be reviewed following the municipal land development review processes. Also, if an applicant is interested in adjusting property lines or creating new parcels, a subdivision plan will have to be filed. The following section will discuss these two types of plans as well as instances where sketch plans and minor plans may be considered.

Land Development & Subdivision Plans

In instances where a landowner proposes the development of two or more residential buildings on one lot, or a nonresidential structure(s) on one or more lot(s), a land development plan will be required to be submitted to the municipality. In addition, the subdivision of a lot into two or more lots will require the submission of a subdivision plan. Typically, the process for either type of plan is similar, and in some cases a land development may also include a subdivision. In either case, such developments can be broken into preliminary and final plans if they are to be phased over a period of time; otherwise, if the development is to be completed at one time, then a combined preliminary/final plan can be submitted and reviewed. The municipality suggests that at a minimum, an applicant speak with municipal staff regarding any development proposal. Depending on the size and scale of the development proposal, a sketch plan may be appropriate. See sketch plan below.

The applicant will be required to submit an application to the __*(insert office/department handling submissions)*__ which will include ___ sets of plans initially, to be reviewed by municipal staff. A listing of staff reviewing a plan can be found below on page ___. Typical land development and/or subdivision plan submission includes a project narrative and a plan set drawn to scale by a licensed design professional, showing existing conditions and proposed development. A stormwater management plan will be required to be included with the submission for those projects disturbing ___ square feet or more of land area. A Transportation Impact Study may also be required for those projects meeting the following conditions: ___*(insert municipal conditions for TIS)*_____. The stormwater management plan and TIS will only require ___ sets to be submitted when required.

Upon review by municipal staff, comments regarding the plans will be sent to the applicant. The applicant will then be required to submit ___ sets of revised plans to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. A land development and/or subdivision plan is first reviewed by the Planning Commission, which will make a recommendation to the governing body of a municipality on whether to approve a plan. Upon recommendation from staff and the Planning Commission, the governing body will then make its final determination on the plan. Depending

on the scale of the plan, municipal staff doing the review may include the municipal planner, engineer, and zoning officer. In some instances, a more detailed review may be done by a stormwater engineer and/or traffic engineer, who may be in-house staff or third-party consultants. Municipal staff and reviewing bodies involved in the review of plans are listed below on page ___. Their contact information and roles in the review process are included.

The municipality has 90 days to review and issue an approval/denial on a land development or subdivision plan. The 90 days begins the first day that the municipal planning commission reviews the plan. If outstanding issues remain at the end of the 90 days, the developer is permitted to ask for a time extension to work such issues out. For those issues which haven't been resolved and are relatively minor, the plan may be approved conditionally on those issues being resolved. A copy of the plan submission requirements and review schedule is contained in Appendix B.

Those plans which received a combination preliminary/final approval can begin the process of having the plans recorded and obtaining the necessary permits as noted below. Otherwise, a final plan will have to be submitted for a phase(s) of that shown on the approved preliminary plan. The preliminary approval will only grant permission to begin construction of public improvements such as streets and sidewalks. The governing body, upon review by municipal staff, will offer approval or denial of the final plan. Once approval is received by the applicant for a final plan, the developer must then have the plan recorded at the Centre County Recorder of Deeds within 90 days of receiving approval from the governing body.

Approval and recording of the final plan does not authorize construction activity (other than public improvements shown on an approved preliminary plan). The applicant will need to obtain a zoning and building permit from the municipal zoning office and Centre Region Code Agency, respectively, for any plan which involves the construction of a structure. The applicant will also have to provide proof that the land development and/or subdivision will be able to be served with water and sewer. For water service contact *(insert water authority)* at *(insert phone #)*, and for sewer service contact *(insert sewer authority)* at *(insert phone #)*. For construction on properties outside of the sewer service area, the applicant will have to obtain approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for sewerage needs other than that provided by a central sewer system (i.e. on-site septic systems). Forms and documentation related to this will be reviewed by both the municipal Sewage Enforcement Officer, *(insert name of SEO)*, who can be reached at *(insert phone #)*, and who will be able to provide instructions on obtaining the necessary procedures for such an approval.

Prior to utilizing any portion of a land development, or selling lots in the case of a subdivision, the municipal zoning officer, Code officer, and/or township engineer will have to be contacted for final inspection of construction. In the case of improvements which have not been completed at the time an applicant is looking to receive occupancy of their project or begin selling lots, the applicant will be required to post any corporate bond or other form of financial security acceptable to the municipality, guaranteeing that any incomplete improvements will

be completed. Once all items shown on an approved preliminary and/or final plan and all items related to building construction (as required by the Code agency) are completed, or the aforementioned security is provided, occupancy of the development or selling of lots can commence.

Minor Plan

Some land development and/or subdivision plans may be reviewed and approved by municipal staff only. This is known as a minor land development/subdivision plan and can be done under the following conditions: _____*(insert municipal minor plan conditions here)*_____.

Approval for a minor plan will be received within ___ days, given that the municipality has received a complete submission. Once approval is received by the applicant for a minor plan, the developer can then file a zoning permit application as noted in the preceding section.

Sketch Plan

A sketch plan is an informal step in the land development/subdivision review process in which the developer presents a development proposal to municipal staff, the planning commission, and/or the governing body. Sketch plans oftentimes don't include much detail. Their purpose is for an applicant to be able to present a development idea with enough detail in the plan that the applicant can receive the desired amount of feedback prior to a formal submission of a land development/subdivision plan. This will allow the municipality to provide input on the project design, and the developer may learn of factors that may affect the design or layout that could avoid costly mistakes in the preparation of a land development/subdivision plan.

Other Permits

It should also be noted that depending on the scale and nature of a development proposal, a review by agencies outside of the municipality may be necessary. In some instances, the Centre County Conservation District or Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection may review stormwater management plans. Development projects which access a state road will also be required to be reviewed by Pennsylvania Department of Transportation for approval of a highway occupancy permit and/or traffic impact study. It is suggested that an applicant contact the municipality to determine the appropriate agencies that will need to review any plan in addition to the municipality.

REVIEWING BODIES

Numerous people will end up reviewing plans submitted to the Township prior to approving a plan. Their role is to review a plan for its satisfaction of technical requirements of ordinances as well as its consistency with future plans and policies established by a municipality. The following is a list and description of those responsible for reviewing plans.

Planning Commission

The municipal Planning Commission in its plan review capacity makes recommendations to the *Board of Supervisors/Council*. Only preliminary land development or subdivisions plans are viewed by the Planning Commission (this would also include those plans being reviewed as both a preliminary and final plan) as well as tentative Planned Residential Development plans. The Planning Commission consists of ___ members, who are appointed to the commission by the *Board of Supervisors/Council*. The Planning Commission meets on the ___st and ___rd _____ of each month, at which time they will hear and review development proposals. Application for review of a land development and/or subdivision plan should be made in accordance with the schedule found in Appendix B.

Governing Body

The *Board of Supervisors/Council* will make the final decision on any land development and/or subdivision plan. They will either deny or approve with/without conditions any land development and/or subdivision plan based in part upon recommendations from the Planning Commission and/or municipal staff. In addition to reviewing the preliminary plans recommended for action by the Planning Commission, the *Board of Supervisors/Council* also reviews and decides on final plans for consistency with already approved preliminary plans. The *Board of Supervisors/Council* meets on the __st and __rd _____ of each month at _____PM.

Municipal Staff

The following is a list of reviewing staff and their contact information, as well as any third-party consultants who may be used:

- ZONING OFFICER: Makes most decisions with regard to aspects of the zoning ordinance. Reviews residential site plans, land development plans and subdivision plans. Also reviews and issues permits for changes of use, small building additions, accessory structures, etc.

Insert contact info

- ENGINEER: Reviews site plans, land development plans, and subdivision plans for conformance with municipal stormwater regulations, street, and driveway access standards.

Insert contact info

- PLANNER: Reviews land development and subdivision plans for conformance with municipal zoning, subdivision, and land development regulations as well as consistency with any future plans of the municipality and/or Centre Region Comprehensive Plan.

Insert contact info

- FIRE DIRECTOR: Reviews land development and subdivision plans for conformance with the regional fire protection ordinance and addresses any potential problems with the needs of emergency responders in relationship to the development proposal:

Insert contact info

- TRANSIT PLANNER: Reviews land development and subdivision plans for potential modifications or additions to transit service in relation to the development proposals as well as accessibility needs for those not traveling by automobile.

Insert contact info

- TRAFFIC ENGINEER: Provides the municipality with a review of the Transportation Impact Study (TIS) prepared by the applicant to ensure that all measures are taken to limit impacts to the transportation system.

Insert contact info

- CODE OFFICER: Any plans which include buildings will be reviewed by the Centre Region Code Agency for conformance with the applicable building code(s).

Insert contact info

APPENDIX A: Applicable Regulations

(Insert a list of regulations that would apply to construction activity in the municipality, such as zoning, subdivision, land development, and where these regulations can be found)

APPENDIX B: Application and submission requirements

(Insert municipal land development/subdivision application documents and submission checklists)

APPENDIX C: Meeting schedule

(Insert a meeting schedule for the planning commission and governing body)

APPENDIX D: Fee Schedule

APPENDIX G
Responses to Reviewer Comments

In the process of drafting a Best Practices Guide for Development Review and Permitting, a preliminary draft was supplied to municipalities, elected officials, and development and construction industry representatives with a request that comments on the draft document be provided. In reviewing the comments, CRPA Staff implemented many of the proposed changes suggested by reviewers. This appendix outlines the changes that were made to the document based upon comments received. If the comment was positive in nature, stated a fact rather than a suggestion, or reflected that a particular practice was already being done by a municipality, no changes were made to the Guide and such comments are not outlined below. Responses to comments are listed below, organized by reviewer.

John Sepp, President of PennTerra Engineering

- Added State College Borough to sewer bullet of Concurrent Review. (Page 6)
- A comment was provided that stated that as a developer, you were required to take plans to the Centre Region Fire Director for several recent submissions to Ferguson Township. No changes to the document were made since municipalities typically forward plans they receive to the appropriate fire director for comment and that this situation seems to be unique to the municipality involved. (Page 6)
- Added Planning Modules to sewer bullet of Concurrent Review. (Page 6)
- Added Code review of ADA regulations to building bullet of Concurrent Review. (Page 7)
- Added a bulleted section about erosion and sedimentation reviews to Concurrent Review. (Page 7)
- Pre-Application Meetings section was modified so that such meetings are recommended but not required. (Pages 8-9)
- A comment was provided in the Project Technical Review Team section about how reviewers should specify when something is a professional suggestion versus a code requirement. Since the issue is more related to actual reviews and not a review process, this comment was not addressed in the guide. (Page 10)
- Modified the fourth paragraph of the Project Technical Review Team section. This sentence now clarifies that a meeting should be held, if needed, with applicants to discuss the results of a coordinated project review. (Page 10)
- Added some additional language that clarifies that review schedules and timelines can be provided on flowcharts and applications to the first bullet of challenges section

related to the Project Technical Review Team. Also added similar language to the flowcharts and checklists best practice section. (Page 12)

- Added language to the Third Party Consultants section that states that municipalities can allow applicants to choose from more than 1 possible consultant. (Page 18)
- Added language to the Predictable Fees section that states that municipalities can provide a list of more than one outside person or firm that can conduct inspections in the municipality, along with their fees. (Page 19)
- Comment was added to Websites section to add that PDF applications can be filled out and submitted electronically. (Page 26)

State College Borough (Carl Hess and Anne Messner)

- Minor text edits/grammar were incorporated.
- Modified the last sentence of the summary. (Page 1)
- The comment regarding the source for the sidebar text in the Summary section was not addressed since the sidebar text was added to summarize the section but is not a quote. (Page 1)
- In response to the comment about what permitting the Best Practices Guide is addressing, the guide can be applied to any permitting or development review process as determined by each municipality. Some sections may or may not apply for certain application types. (Page 1)
- Rewrote the last sentence of the second paragraph of the Introduction to reflect the benefits of the process. Made several other minor edits to this paragraph. (Page 2)
- Added "Reviews for projects that cross municipal boundaries" to the list of Practices for Improving Communication. A separate section that covers this topic will be added to the guide. (Page 3)
- Added a few sentences to the first paragraph of the Single Point of Contact section to clarify that a single point of contact could be assigned both for the pre-application and post-application processes. The intent is that more than one person could serve as a single point of contact but that the point of contact would not change during the time an application is processed. (Page 4)
- Added State College Borough to sewer bullet of Concurrent Review. (Page 6)

- The term “larger development”, in regards to public transit reviews, was not defined in the guide. This term was stated generally since municipalities are able to decide what projects they would like to have reviewed by public transit officials, unless the municipality has an ordinance that defines a size threshold. (Page 6)
- Added transportation impact study language to the transportation bullet of Concurrent Review. (Page 6)
- The stormwater bullet of Concurrent Review was modified to take out specific criteria since the requirements for a stormwater review may vary by municipality. (Page 6)
- The first sentence of the paragraph below the bullet list for Concurrent Review was modified for clarity. (Page 7)
- Sidebar statement was modified slightly for word order. (Page 7)
- Permitting software is now mentioned in the implementation section of Concurrent Review. (Page 7)
- Changed the first sentence, second paragraph of Pre-Application Meetings section to now state “any Board or Commission” as opposed to Planning Commission. (Page 8)
- Included CRPA and PennDOT on the list of potential representatives. (Page 8)
- Removed a portion of the last sentence from the first bullet, benefits section, of Pre-Application Meetings so that it no longer mentions governing body consideration. (Page 8)
- Removed “by the governing body” from the last sentence, first paragraph of Project Technical Review Team. (Page 10)
- Eliminated the suggestion that PC or governing body representatives be at the Technical Review Meeting. (Page 10)
- Changed the second bullet of the implementation section of Project Technical Review so that board/commission members are no longer listed. (Page 11)
- Added public health to the bullet list of departments in Interdepartmental Meetings. (Page 12)
- Added stormwater management and State College Sewer Authority to list of municipal fees. (Page 18)

- Made minor revisions to the Predictable Fees section to clarify that each municipality would have their own fee schedule and that the guide is not recommending the standardization of fees throughout the region. (Page 20)

- Added that the Centre Region or Centre County could host training opportunities for local municipalities to the Professional Development and Training section. (Page 26)

- Added "Sample" to Appendix A and B. (Pages 30-31)

Todd Shea, Harris Township Zoning Officer

- Added a sentence to the first paragraph of the Summary to clarify the purpose of the guide was to provide a menu of practices that municipalities could select from. (Page 1)

- Pre-Application Meetings section was modified so that such meetings are recommended but not required. (Pages 8-9)

- The last sentence of the implementation section of the Multi-Tiered Review section was amended for clarity as suggested. (Page 24)

- Added "Sample" to Appendix A and B. (Pages 30-31)

Doug Erickson, Patton Township Manager

- Pre-Application Meetings section was modified so that such meetings are recommended but not required. (Pages 8-9)

- Two additional sections were created addressing applications for projects that are located in more than one municipality as well the review as significant projects that will have a significant economic impact in the Region.

- Staff has prepared a sample application, in response to the process titled "Standardizing the Process", that could be used in all municipalities throughout the region. This section is primarily referring to forms and basic requirements for applications that could be standardized, where possible, throughout the Region.

Susan Steele, Halfmoon Township Manager

- CRPA Staff will prepare a draft sample User's Guide to Local Permitting, which is identified as a best practice. Staff will attach this sample guide as an appendix. (Page 5)

- Pre-Application Meetings section was modified so that such meetings are recommended but not required. (Pages 8-9)

- The comment regarding municipal zoning officers collaborating to create a Regional Development Manual (as mentioned on Page 5) was not addressed since CRPA Staff is in the process of drafting a sample Local Permitting Guide. The Local Permitting Guide will be included in the Best Practices Guide and can be modified as needed by each municipality.

John Franek, College Township Zoning Officer

- The comment regarding CRPA providing links to municipal development pages was addressed in the implementation portion of the Maximizing Municipal Webpages section. (Comment on Page 2, addressed on Page 27)

- Staff will prepare a sample User's Guide to Local Permitting, which is a best practice. Staff will attach this sample guide as an appendix. (Page 5)

- A sentence was added to the first paragraph of the Concurrent Review section to state that outside agencies may already have or could establish clear policies on how they will conduct a concurrent review along with any limitations. (Page 6)

- Added Code review of ADA regulations to Building bullet of Concurrent Review. (Page 7)

- Removed Centre County Office of Planning and Community Development from bullet list. (Page 8)

- Added a suggestion to the third bullet of the implementation section, Project Technical Review Team that suggests having meetings held at a regular time on a set basis could avoid problems of accommodating schedules. (Page 11)

- Bullet two of the implementation section of interdepartmental meetings was modified to include the suggestion that regularly scheduled meetings help avoid scheduling conflicts. (Page 12)

- Teleconferencing was added to bullet one of the implementation section of the Proximity of Professional Staff section as a suggested method of allowing staff to discuss a plan in the event all staff are not located in the same office. (Page 14)

- CRPA can place links to municipal development pages which can contain municipal fee schedules. (This suggestion was on Page 18 but was addressed on Page 27).

- A sentence was added to bullet one of the benefits section of the Multi-Tiered Review Section. This sentence clarifies that a minor plan could still be viewed for informative purposes by the Planning Commission or governing body if deemed necessary by Staff. (Page 22)

- The second bullet listed under challenges in the Multi-Tiered Review Process was modified to add that checklists and applications should remind applicants of the amount of time a municipality has to make a decision on a request, even if the plan is considered minor.

Pam Adams, Centre Region COG Refuse and Recycling Coordinator

- Added Trash and recycling requirements to the bulleted list of issues in the Technical Review Team section. (Page 10)

- Added Refuse and Recycling Program to Appendix C. (Page 32)

Jeff Luck, Patton Township Supervisor and TLU Committee Chair

- A section entitled State, Federal, and other External Agencies was drafted and added to the section on Improving the Process. The section outlines methods of ensuring that applicants are made aware of outside review requirements, potential delays, and their responsibility in obtaining such reviews.

Tom Songer II, Torron Group

- A comment was provided that stated that people who are not registered Professional Engineers (PE) should not be reviewing or commenting on plans designed and sealed by a PE. CRPA agrees that a review of technical engineering requirements should be conducted by an engineer. Reviews of plans for other ordinance and regulation related issues will still be conducted by non-engineers.

- The first paragraph of the Pre-Application Meetings section was modified to include a sentence regarding developers being provided with minimum standards that applications must meet in order for plans to be reviewed. CRPA agrees that plan reviews should be as comprehensive as possible; however, if something is overlooked in one review, such a mistake cannot preclude existing ordinances in subsequent reviews. (Page 8)

- A comment was provided that states that municipal fees should reflect actual Staff costs. This comment was not addressed in the text of the guide since municipalities are permitted to set their own fees as stated in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

- A sentence was added to the second paragraph of the Project Technical Review Team section that states that review reports should be emailed to the applicant. (Page 10)

- A comment was provided regarding developers being made aware of meetings that their item will be discussed at. CRPA staff agrees that applicants should be made aware of all public meetings where their project or application is being discussed and possibly acted upon. The section that addresses municipalities having a single point of contact states that staff should advise applicants of all meetings their project will be discussed at and any information the applicant should provide for those meetings. (Page 4)

- A comment was provided that recommends that municipalities not require surety until the applicant requests an occupancy permit. Financial security, or surety, is addressed by the Pennsylvania MPC and requires that municipalities obtain financial security for specific improvements before final subdivision and land development plans are approved and recorded.

- A comment was provided that states municipalities should notify all property owners that will be affected by proposed ordinance changes. Notification of property owners in the case of ordinance changes is outlined in the Pennsylvania MPC and municipalities are required to follow the standards outlined. In the event of an amendment to an ordinance that affects an entire zoning district or the entire municipality; personal notification is not required for all property owners but can be accomplished by publishing ordinances and meeting dates in a newspaper of general circulation.

- A comment was provided that stated that development in the Centre Region would be greatly simplified if there was a uniform land development and zoning ordinance. As was stated, this idea has been discussed in the past but has not been supported. Numerous ordinances throughout the Centre Region, however, have been initially drafted by the CRPA and then modified and adopted in the Region's municipalities. Examples of ordinances that were written regionally and applied locally include those that address Riparian Buffers, Ridge Overlay Districts, and Regional Fire Protection Standards. Joint Zoning Agreements also exist between College and Patton Townships.