Minutes of Board Meeting
October 8, 2026
Perry County Economic Development Authority
Perry County Business and Tourism Center
New Bloomfield, PA

Attendees: Rich Pluta, Scott Fritz, Martha Roberts, Ed Barben, Frank Campbell
Virtual participants: Scott Dunkelberger
Staff: Taira Little, Jasmine Colbert
Absent:
Resigned:
Excused:
Visitor: Brenda Watson, Kyleigh Graybill

Public Comment: None

Call to order at 8:30 AM

Secretary's Report:
Martha Roberts presented the minutes of PCEDA's meeting on September 10, 2026, which had been distributed to all board members in advance of today's meeting. There was a motion to approve the secretary's report by Ed Barben, and Rich Pluta seconded the motion.
The motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

Treasurer's Report:
Ed Barben presented the treasure's report. Normal overhead and payroll expenses for the month. There was a motion to approve the treasurer's report by Frank Campbell, and Scott Fritz seconded the motion.
The motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

Chair Report:
- Members of the Executive Committee met with Kyleigh Graybill to discuss her interest in joining the board. There was a motion made by Rich Pluta to recommend Kyleigh for appointment to the Board of Directors, pending approval by the County Commissioners. The motion was seconded by Ed Barben.
- Potential candidates for the board of directors were discussed. Meetings to speak with candidates have been scheduled for October 19 and 23, 2026. Scott Fritz asked for a Zoom option for those unable to attend in person.
- Fair Project: The committee met to review and discuss changes to the plans of the new building. Discussion was had on holding a fundraising event. Taira Little will be providing the committee with a Master List of prospective donors.
- The board will be meeting with the Executive Board of the Perry County Chamber of Commerce on October 14, 2026.

Staff Report: Taira Little presented the staff report which is attached to these minutes.

Taira presented the Grant Reimbursement Requests from Feather and Fern Wildscapes for the Huckleberry plantings; Livic Civil for Fairgrounds Engineering; Mike McNaughton, Stoops Barbershop, The Total Look Boutique, and Grove Financial & Associates/Chaz Sheaffer for Façade Grant Reimbursement; King's Fitness and Newport Borough for Community Walkways Grant Reimbursement. She stated all necessary and required documents had been supplied for reimbursement. There was a motion to approve the reimbursement by Rich Pluta, and Ed Barben seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by a voice vote without dissent.

Main Street Coordinator Report: Jasmine Colbert presented the Main Street report which is attached to these minutes.

Old Business:
Nothing at this time.

New Business:
Ed Barben stated the need to hire a part-time staff member to assist with upcoming projects and duties. Scott Fritz asked if this could be a position for an intern to acquire real work experience and mentioned Central Penn College seeks positions like this for their students. Rich Pluta also recommended reaching out to the Career Counselors at the local school districts. More discussion will be had later.

Motion to adjourn was made by Ed Barben, and Scott Fritz seconded the motion, and the motion carried. It was approved without dissent at 10:27 AM.

Electronic Voting 10.23.26

Taira Little requested an electronic vote to review and approve the invoice from Janeen Hershey/Paint Away in the amount of $6,174.00. This will then be submitted to DCED for reimbursement with DCED 5.

Voted for:
Scott Fritz
Frank Campbell
Ed Barben
Rich Pluta
Kyleigh Graybill
Scott Dunkelberger

Voted against:

October 2026 PCEDA Office Administrator Report

FOR REVIEW & VOTING

Feather and Fern Wildscapes – Huckleberry Plantings for $1,610.08

Livic Civil – Fairgrounds Engineering for $1,255

Mike McNaughton – Façade Reimbursement for $3,567

Stoops Barbershop – Façade Reimbursement for $937.50

The Total Look Boutique – Façade Reimbursement for $5,000

Grove Financial & Associates/Chaz Sheaffer – Façade Reimbursement for $5,000

King's Fitness – Sidewalk Reimbursement for $20,000 (paid from Grant DCED6)

Newport Borough – Sidewalk Reimbursement for $24,000 (paid from Grant DCED6)

GRANTS

Reimbursement requests were sent to DCED and awaiting approval for:

DCED 3 (81872) the reimbursement of **$19,078.61** submitted on 5/14/26.

DCED 5 (87931) the reimbursement of **$4,840.00** was submitted on 5/5/26.

New Grants:

DCED 10 in the amount of $150,000 has been awarded and a new Money Market account will need to be created. The grant will focus on Pedestrian Wayfinding, Commercial Activation, and Administrative Costs.

Community Walkways:

Funds have been earmarked and projects have begun.

Façade:

Funds have been earmarked and projects have begun.

Wayfinding:

County App – app is live in Apple and Google Play. Please download the app, use it, and provide feedback. We are still making adjustments before marketing to the community and visitors.

ENGAGE/PREP:

I have completed two ENGAGE calls to date and have one scheduled for October.

EDUCATION/WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The schools are working with the Assistant Chief Clerk to schedule a day to tour the county government offices in April.

The annual career fair has been slated for Wednesday, April 7, 2027.

UPMC is also be working with the schools for a PeCo Career Day for students in 10th, 11th, and 12th grades.

Harrisburg University is working with the schools for Forensics and Video Game Creation for Perry County.

I attended the YES! event at Newport Middle School on October 1st and worked with the students on business plans.

Junior Achievement is seeking volunteers for it's YES! Program which focuses on economic development for:

October 27 – West Perry Middle School

February 26 – Susquenita Middle School

CEDS

Next meeting is virtual and is scheduled for October 14th.

MISCELLANEOUS

Perry County Chamber of Commerce executive board and PCEDA executive board meeting scheduled for Wednesday, October 14th at 5 PM.

Health Insurance Open Enrollment November 1 – December 15.

Main Street Coordinator Updates – October 2026

Prepared by: Jasmine Colbert

Summary

September activity focused on public art coordination, wayfinding preparation, ambassador engagement, and ongoing borough support.

- Public art work included mural rescheduling due to an artist health emergency, continued Blain mural support, securing image permissions, preparing social content, and advancing next steps for the Marysville mural following zoning approval. A walkabout was held with Newport stakeholders for the proposed Creative District.
- Wayfinding efforts progressed through scheduling and hosting pedestrian and trail stakeholder meetings with the consultant, preparing for and coordinating town visits, sharing information with borough partners, and sending notices for stakeholder sessions.
- Ambassador engagement included newsletter development and finalization, 1:1 meetings with Landisburg and Blain and scheduling attempt with Duncannon, expanded survey outreach to Greenwood School District and Marysville Borough, and sharing new grant opportunities with ambassadors. Additional borough support included façade outreach to Newport businesses, contractor coordination for 9 W Main Street improvements, public space funding promotion, community walkway guidance, and resource sharing across multiple municipalities.

Operational and partnership work remained steady throughout the month. Website updates continued, along with filing event photos, reviewing TCRPC social and planning commission materials, and completing routine administrative tasks such as timesheets, mileage submission, and finalizing the board report. Collaboration advanced through meetings with Allegheny Ridge Corporation, Picture Perry sessions on economic development and natural resources, Rotary engagement to share Main Street initiatives, and housing discussions with Penn Housing Alliance. Additional efforts included promoting the CREDC Small Business Academy, sharing heritage and canal information with ARC, collecting Halloween dates from boroughs for a coordinated post, reviewing borough minutes, and supporting business improvement program needs.

Program & Project Updates

TS	Initiative/Project	Status	Milestones Achieved	Upcoming Goals/Actions
1	Public Art Installation-**Blain, Marysville, Millerstown**	In Progress	New Bloomfield plantings and plaque installed. Marysville mural zoning approved. Blain mural painting began 9/30.	Begin art trail marketing project; include plan for adding lagging installations. Restart Millerstown public art discussions.
2	Event Support	Due 5/31/2027	Encouraging those with a planned project to apply for a second time.	Consider covering basic power washing/cleaning efforts for dirty towns.
2	Façade Improvements	Due 11/30/2026	Identifying remaining interest.	Share survey prior to reimbursements. Board members can assist by actively recommending the program.

1	Wayfinding	Due 12/20/2026	Held 9/21-22 stakeholder meetings and 9/29 town visits. See attached summary.	Await recommendations from MERJE and continue to coordinate the process while facilitating early steps for the next phase of plan implementation.
1	Public Spaces Funding	Due 5/31/2027	Promoted the program on PCEDA website, social and Main Street newsletter.	Connect funding to projects and advocate for the program.
2	Newport Creative District	Planning	Held walkabout on 9/29. Compiled list of assets and district parcel inventory.	Work with Newport to identify priority projects for creative and commercial activation, and identify advisory team members.

Community Engagement, Outreach & Social – Perception survey has 256 responses—aiming for 275. Shared with Marysville, Millerstown and Liverpool Borough to boost responses from their areas.

Website engagement - High-interest resource pages included **Municipalities & Contact Information (110 views)**, **Grant Support (91 views)**, **Perry County Hometowns (63 views)**, and **Available Properties (51 views)**. Economic development content also saw meaningful use, with **39 views** on the **Economic Development** page.

Month	Year	Hits/Events	Page Views	Active Users
Jun	2026	8,063	2,743	2,056
Jul	2026	23,793	8,042	7,227
Aug	2026	8,258	2,792	1,896
Sep	2026	3,820	1,194	797

Facebook followers – 1,340 (up 88) Instagram followers – 512 (up 1)

Ambassador Engagement & Main Street Happenings

- Compiled Halloween festivities for 2026 collaborative post.
- Shared Very Perry Holidays countywide business promotion opportunity.
- Shared registration information for PA Downtown Center's upcoming Main Street meeting.
- Included engaged ambassadors in wayfinding planning.

Coordinator Training & Networking

- 9/22/2026 – attended **Thriving Foodscapes** webinar offered through Gil Penalosa.
- 10/6/2026 – meeting with **DCED** staff.
- 10/6/2026 - **STARTING with CHILDREN: Transforming Cities** webinar offered through Gil Penalosa.
- 10/7/2026 – **PDC Main Street Manager's Meeting** – Pottsville, PA. Good for board members and ambassadors to attend. Will share details once available.
- 10/8/2026 – **PennDOT Municipal Resources Introduction to Active Transportation Drop-In** webinar
- 11/5/2026 - **DCNR 2026 Grant Workshop - C2P2 - Community Conservation Partnerships Program Statewide Annual Grant Workshop** webinar

Challenges & Opportunities

- **Building Condition at 9 W Main Street – Request for Board Awareness -** With the recent removal of the street trees on the square, the exterior condition of 9 W Main Street—PCEDA's leased office—has become significantly more visible. The façade now stands out as one of the most deteriorated structures on the square, which is increasingly noticeable to partners, visitors, and program participants.

  Because PCEDA leads countywide efforts in Main Street revitalization, façade improvement, and public-space enhancement, the condition of our own building directly affects how our work is perceived. The current state of the property undermines the standards we encourage in our boroughs and weakens our ability to model best practices.

  I am asking the Board to be aware of this issue and consider how PCEDA might strengthen its approach to engaging the property owner regarding needed exterior improvements.





- **Main Street Façade Grant – Remaining Funds** - PCEDA currently has approximately $38,900 in Main Street Façade Grant funds that must be awarded and used by the end of 2026. These dollars are restricted to the Main Street footprint and cannot be carried forward. If they are not deployed, they will be lost.
  I am asking Board members to actively share this opportunity with any businesses, property owners, or commercial partners they know within the Main Street footprint. Even small projects—signage, lighting, accessibility upgrades, façade repairs, exterior improvements—are eligible and can be completed within the required timeline.
- **W-9 Collection** – Should this be added to our processes?

Pedestrian & Trail Wayfinding Site Visits

September 29, 2026

On September 29, Perry County Hometowns, MERJE Design, and local representatives conducted site visits in Newport, Liverpool, Blain, and Duncannon as part of the Pedestrian & Trail Wayfinding planning process. The visits followed stakeholder meetings held the previous week and were intended to give the consultants an opportunity to see each community in person, understand how pedestrians move through the downtown areas, identify potential wayfinding locations, and better understand the distinct needs and character of each town.

The visits remained on schedule throughout the day and provided MERJE with an opportunity to photograph conditions, discuss parking and pedestrian arrival points, identify potential kiosk and sign locations, and establish relationships with local representatives for future follow-up.

Newport

The day began at 10:00 a.m. in Newport. MERJE representatives John, Jack, and Link were joined by Newport representatives Frank Campbell and Sam Horvath, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts representative Sarah Merritt, and Perry County Hometowns.

The Newport visit also incorporated considerations related to the community's ongoing Creative District planning. The group began in the downtown square by discussing important community assets, destinations, and points of interest.

The walking route proceeded from the square along South Second Street to Veterans Memorial Park, then through the railroad and post office area to Walnut Street. The group continued along Walnut Street to Fourth Street, returned to Market Street, and followed Market Street back toward the square.

Throughout the walk, the group discussed:

- The downtown commercial core and future Creative District considerations
- Veterans Memorial Park
- Potential river access and how it could connect to downtown
- Museums, public art, grocery store, fairgrounds, and other community destinations
- Existing and potential parking locations
- Possible kiosk locations

- Locations where visitors park their vehicles and transition into pedestrians
- How future wayfinding could help visitors understand the relationship among Newport's various destinations

MERJE took extensive photographs and discussed the scale and potential function of kiosks. The consultants emphasized that identifying locations where people transition from motorists to pedestrians is an important part of their planning process.

They also acknowledged that each of the four communities has different conditions and needs, and that the eventual recommendations will need to respond to those individual circumstances rather than applying the exact same solution to every town.

Liverpool

The group arrived in Liverpool at approximately 11:30 a.m. and met at Cornet Park with Liverpool Main Street representatives Steve and Connie Hoffman.

The walking route began at Cornet Park and continued toward the Lew Ritter Ball Field and Race Street area before returning toward the park and Front Street. The group then walked along Front Street to the Facktory, circled the block, and returned to Cornet Park.

Discussion focused on:

- Cornet Park and its relationship to the downtown
- Lew Ritter Ball Field
- The community pool and recreational destinations
- Front Street as the primary downtown corridor
- The Facktory
- Historic sites and existing markers
- Shopping and dining areas
- Parking locations commonly used by visitors
- Connections between recreation areas and the downtown

The group paused at the green space near the post office and existing mural. This area was identified as a potentially strong location for a kiosk or other orientation feature because of its location within the downtown and its relationship to existing public space and community assets.

Following the Liverpool visit, the group had lunch at Shine Coffee. The lunch provided an opportunity to discuss Newport and Liverpool, observations from the morning visits, and the next stages of the project. Discussion also included the importance of developing clear specifications at the conclusion of the planning process so that future fabrication estimates and implementation can be pursued as seamlessly as possible.

Blain

The afternoon visit began in Blain at approximately 1:45 p.m. The group met at the new fire station property with Blain Main Street representatives Leonard Wise and Rick Smiley.

The fire station site was of particular interest because of its location near the town core and three-way intersection. Demolition and site work associated with the new fire station are in progress.

Because of the distances between some of Blain's identified assets, Leonard provided transportation for the group. The tour traveled along Main Street toward Lions Park and the historic Newport and Shermans Valley Railroad Blain Depot. The group also viewed the remains of railroad infrastructure in the area, including distinctive bridge arches, and discussed how these historic features could potentially relate to future walking routes and interpretation.

The group discussed:

- Main Street and the community core
- The new fire station and its potential role as an orientation point—site plans will be helpful
- Lions Park
- The historic Blain railroad depot
- Historic railroad infrastructure
- Potential future walking trails and walking loops
- Connections between the community's historic and recreational assets
- Blain Picnic Grounds
- The relationship between destinations within the borough and nearby recreation areas
- The relationship between nearby Big Spring State Park, Fowlers Hollow State Park and the Tuscarora Forest

The group traveled to the Blain Picnic Grounds to understand its proximity and relationship to town. The site will host the community's Heritage Days event in the coming weeks. The tour then returned along Main Street, with additional community highlights identified along the way, and concluded near the Blain Senior Center.

Duncannon

The final visit began in Duncannon at approximately 3:15 p.m. Participants included Mayor Ricky Knepp, Duncannon Main Street member Michael Wolfersberger, Duncannon Appalachian Trail Community representative Jeff Martz, Clarks Ferry Tavern representative Linda Fahnestock, and Perry County Hometowns.

Mayor Knepp provided a map identifying key points of interest throughout the borough, which was particularly helpful in orienting the consultants and discussing how the different destinations relate to one another.

The discussion emphasized:

- The Appalachian Trail and its path through Duncannon
- Hawk Rock and connections between outdoor recreation and downtown
- Potential river access
- Noye Park and other recreation areas
- Clarks Ferry Tavern
- Parking locations
- Community gathering areas
- Food, lodging, ice cream, and other services used by hikers and visitors
- Major community events and where attendees typically park and gather
- Pedestrian conditions at the entrances and exits of town
- Locations where pedestrian crossings are currently challenging and where improvements are being pursued

The group walked from the square toward Noye Park, noting parking areas and other important destinations along the way. From there, the tour continued along High Street, which carries the Appalachian Trail through the borough, to Ann Street. The group followed Ann Street toward the Ann Street river access point and returned to the square.

Particular attention was given to understanding how Appalachian Trail hikers move through Duncannon and how wayfinding could better connect them with downtown businesses, services, parks, lodging, community destinations, and future river access.

Overall Observations and Next Steps

The four site visits were completed according to the planned schedule and provided MERJE with a broad range of community conditions to evaluate. Although the visits were intentionally brief, the consultants were able to see the primary areas discussed during the earlier stakeholder meetings, take extensive photographs, better understand pedestrian routes and parking patterns, and identify locations that may warrant additional consideration.

One recurring point of discussion was the importance of identifying where visitors park and become pedestrians. These transition points may play an important role in determining future kiosk, map, and directional sign locations.

The visits also reinforced that each town will require a somewhat different wayfinding approach. Newport has a more concentrated downtown with cultural, recreational, and future Creative District considerations; Liverpool presents opportunities to connect its recreational assets and Front Street; Blain has a smaller-scale Main Street environment with historic and recreational connections; and Duncannon has a particularly strong relationship between the Appalachian Trail, outdoor recreation, downtown services, and community destinations.

MERJE will now use the stakeholder input, field observations, photographs, existing branding information, and destination information gathered during the process to continue development of the pedestrian and trail wayfinding recommendations. Future work will include development of sign concepts, placement recommendations, specifications, and other information needed to help Perry County Hometowns and the participating communities seek fabrication estimates and advance implementation in future project phases.