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August 18, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clearfield County Future in Residents' Hands

Clearfield, PA. August 18, 2005 – The Clearfield County Planning office has become the center of a storm of activity in recent weeks. Thanks to a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the County has begun the daunting task of updating the County's aging Comprehensive Plan.

A comprehensive plan is more than just a written document disclosing past and present trends. It helps a community prepare for the future by outlining a strategic, long-term vision. The plan identifies goals, objectives, policies, and recommendations for growth and development for that community.

The Clearfield County Comprehensive Plan will make recommendations in the areas of land use, transportation, economic development, parks and open space, historical and cultural resources, and housing. Many other important issues will be considered.

According to Clearfield County Planning Director Jodi Brennan, the comprehensive planning process will include months of public meetings, statistical studies, and thorough analysis. "Everyone should participate and let their local and county elected officials know what they want for their community," says Mrs. Brennan.

Recent news headlines like "Residents oppose municipal waste landfill proposal" or "Opposition group opposes rezoning for discount retailer" highlight issues that can affect quality of life in a community. They also show that residents want control over what happens in their communities.

Contentious issues like these often get residents talking about what they want to preserve about their way of life and how they envision the future of their community. Unfortunately, many of these issues are dealt with after the fact. Some communities, however, choose to be proactive and adopt a comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan is not a law or regulation. Instead, it is meant to serve as a guide for decision makers. Ideally, the plan will be one of the primary tools used by the county to support decisions regarding land use, development, and the provision of social services.

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Having a county comprehensive plan is important. Pennsylvania agencies consider comprehensive plans and other documents when reviewing applications for funding or permits. Without a clear plan, infrastructure or other improvements in the county could be at a disadvantage for future funding.

The Comprehensive Plan is being overseen by a twenty-person steering committee made up of members of the community. Steering committee members represent various county agencies, local municipalities, area businesses and non-profit institutions. The Steering Committee will meet regularly to review elements of the plan.

Over the next ten months, the County Planning Department and members of the Steering Committee will hold a series of roundtable discussions with "key stakeholders." Key stakeholders include representatives from county and local agencies, municipal authorities, businesses, non-profit organizations and other interest groups. More than 135 stakeholders have been identified and invited to participate in seven focus group roundtables. Participants will discuss the County's strengths and weaknesses. They will also identify opportunities for improvement.

The Planning Department will also mail out a survey to randomly selected County residents. This survey will ask about people's ideas, values and attitudes towards various issues affecting Clearfield County. Mrs. Brennan hopes that residents will be receptive to the survey. She adds, "We can't afford to send surveys to everyone, so if you get one, please take the time to respond. It's your chance to voice your opinions on issues that matter to you."

At each stage in the process, the Planning Department will hold public meetings to gain citizen input and ideas. Residents are strongly encouraged to attend. The new County Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a plan of action that can affect every resident's way of life. Therefore, it is in everyone's best interest to participate in the process.

Work on the Clearfield County Comprehensive Plan will be completed by June 2006. Otherwise, state funding for the project may escape the County's grasp: the County has received a Land Use Planning and Technical Assistance grant from DCED to carry out the project. Grant funds have already been used to hire an intern to assist the Planning Department in this ambitious project.

For more information about the Clearfield County Comprehensive Plan or to find how you can get involved, call 765-5149.

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