

Community Advisory Committee's Kick-off Meeting Minutes

CAC Kick-off Meeting

Virtual

July 29, 2026

6:00–7:00pm EST

Tuscarawas County Community Capacity Building ▪ Job #8496.00

Attendees

Marla Akridge | TCEDE, Executive Director

Abby Stainfield | KZF Design, Planning Director, Project Manager

Makenzie Stewart | KZF Design, Lead Planner

Bruce Metzger | Village of Strasburg, Mayor

Joel Day | City of New Philadelphia, Mayor

Doug Plyler | Village of Baltic, Mayor

Walt Wilson | Village of Sugarcreek, Mayor

Jim Knisley | City of New Philadelphia, Business Owner, NPACT Member

Debbie Knisley | City of New Philadelphia, Business Owner, NPACT Member

Tim Sidel | City of New Philadelphia, Business Owner, NPACT Member, Heritage Home Association Member

Matt Hurst | City of New Philadelphia, NPACT Secretary

Wendy Zucal | Village of Dennison, Executive Director of the Denison Railroad Depot Museum

Erika Metzger | City of New Philadelphia, Downtown Standards and Review Board and NPACT Member

Joshua Mathias | City of New Philadelphia, Code Administrator, Head of Planning and Zoning Department, NPACT Board of Trustees Member

Jessica Haney | City of New Philadelphia, Business Owner

Kevin Kaser | Village of Sugarcreek, Administrator

Meeting Summary:

What makes your community unique, what are you most excited for at the end of this planning process, or what is your favorite spot in your community:

- Strasburg Village is getting a new community center, police station, and library close to the school
- Baltic Village has a neat spot called East Main Kitchen that is most well known in the area
- Sugarcreek Village
 - Amish community
 - Cuckoo clock
 - Large businesses like Providia
 - Belton Brick companies
 - Marketing
 - Downtown
 - Train went away 20 years ago which caused the downtown area to struggle
- Dennison Village
 - Halfway between Columbus
 - Lots of railroad, World War I and II history
 - Restoration projects

- Experienced a lot of business/job loss 20-40 years ago and in the process of rebuilding
- Very interested in placemaking efforts surrounding history
- City of New Philadelphia
 - Desires for a marketing plan for the downtown businesses
 - More planning activities are needed overall in the city
 - Alley Cat's Marketplace
 - Fresh to Market
 - Lacey's Performing Arts Dance Center
 - Creation of more businesses and interests in the downtown area
 - Around the Corner Frames
 - Tusk Arts Fine Art Gallery – 32 Fine Artists that exhibit works there

Project Introduction, Approach and Timeline

- Funding
 - Appalachia Regional Commissions Grant
 - Local match from EDFA
 - EPA grant
 - More money to be applied for in December/January (up to \$3 million)
- What is the Project?
 - Roadmaps for 11 communities
 - Each one will identify the strengths and challenges that are unique to the community
 - Confirm local priorities, unified goals, vision, and how the community should progress
 - Will be used as an overall tool for the County
 - Lead to investment
- Project Approach
 - Will be keeping the County regional level in mind while also giving tailored priorities, recommendations, and an implementation strategy
 - We will keep coming back to the CAC's throughout the process in between engagement from the rest of the community to verify if this project is on the correct path and if things were heard correctly
 - In addition to CAC's, there will also be a project website for online engagement
 - Every community will have their own separate page for specific recommendations and feedback
 - The website will also provide project updates, information, surveys, mapping exercises
 - Each community is important in the County and when one grows and thrives, the rest of the County does
- Project Timeline
 - Three phases – six tasks
 - Phase 1 – Learning, listening, taking everything in.
 - Phase 2 – Planning. Assessment from what was heard. Interpret that information and create some preliminary recommendations. Check in to evaluate if what was done was in line with what the community wants.
 - Phase 3 – Complete the roadmaps. At the end of this year, beginning of the next, the listening phase will gradually transition into the understanding phase where the goals and themes that rose to the top will then be used to create a product and tool for the community.

CAC's

- Roles & Responsibilities
 - 2 roles – Advisors and Ambassadors
 - Advisor – Share your knowledge of the community and county, be a sounding board for all project ideas, recommendations

- Ambassador – Reach out to the community, sharing updates, keeping people in the loop, raise awareness about what is going on
- Time commitment to a series of visioning sessions, public open house which is optional but would be great to attend
- CAC Visioning Sessions
 - One hour long
 - Instead of a formal presentation meeting, this will be conversation-based where the CAC members lead
 - Conversation will cover a broad topic range. Things that revolve around the community mostly (what is working, what is not, the opportunities in the community, etc.)
 - Meeting summary online and a follow up survey after
 - These conversations will be important to have before going to the public so they can be fine tuned and more direct

What's Next? Discussion and Questions

- Next Steps
 - Send out the recording
 - Possible survey to gather initial thoughts
 - Schedule time for visioning sessions
 - Launch public website
- Questions and Discussion
 - How many people from the community should be in the Community Advisory Committee and who?
 - A mix of leadership, business owners, residents, and age ranges (could even be kids in the school district)
 - Would be great if the people chosen know a lot of community members and have the ability to organize people
 - Usually around 8-12 people per CAC
 - How many communities have you tried this with and what were the results?
 - Multiple and all different types of plans. The approach that this project consists of has been successful but truly relies on community input. The more engaged the community, the better the tailoring and product will be. This plan should be for the community made by the community.
 - Many of the small villages have never done something like this before and may require some extra attention since they have been in reactionary mode and never had any direct, long-range planning done
 - Already built a lot of momentum with some individual business owners so this a great time to build off of that
 - Topics that are important: downtown revitalization, parking, attracting more businesses, making residents happier, and driving the economy
 - A downtown arts district for the underutilized space
 - Who to reach out to?
 - How do we bring this to fruition for our community and get more people downtown?
 - A desire to make New Philadelphia an artist space so they don't have to go to a big city to get that kind of environment
 - There has been a lot of effort for the downtown of New Philadelphia already with dedicated people driving the effort. What is needed is a unification for all that is going on and a spread to the rest of the County to serve as a compass.
 - Some of the smaller villages might have been under the impression they needed a project already in mind to be a part of this process.

- Sometimes the process is forming together different thoughts that are already there and making something of it. That can be the job of KZF, to listen and learn and best find a solution, or list of solutions, for each community instead of being defined before starting.
- Because of more funding, the project is able to be expanded into 3 catalytic projects which will serve as an extra push for certain projects that come from the reports that will help get funding and see the vision.