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## Council unveils plan to attract tourists



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Boyertown Borough Council unveiled a conceptual plan Monday night that could transform a large vacant lot on South Washington Street into a tourist destination.

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Nathaniel Guest, representing the Colebrookdale Railroad Preservation Trust, presented a conceptual plan to develop a passenger railroad station and 80-space parking lot in a parklike setting on a borough-owned lot one block off East Philadelphia Avenue.

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The plan is just a piece of the county's goal of turning the 8.6-mile Colebrookdale Spur freight rail line into a passenger railroad and tourist destination.

The county purchased the 140-year-old-line between Boyertown and Pottstown in 2009.

The Berks County Redevelopment Authority, the BerksMont Business Association and Pottstown provided funding for the implementation study and concept plan.

Although the development of the train station could take years, Guest said a goal is to have light passenger service operating on the railroad by the end of this year.

The proposed train station would be located along the railroad tracks near the location of the original station that once existed at the site.

Guest said the train station and parking lot would be beneficial to the economic development of the borough.

He also explained that green areas with grass and trees would make the lot an inviting space for both residents and visitors.

Jared Isaacs, the owner of a building that fronts on East Philadelphia Avenue, raised issues of safety as the plan calls for freight trucks to be brought into the site directly behind his building.

The county wants the railroad to have a dual function of passenger and freight.

"In my opinion it's a bad design when truck traffic is put so close to a building," Isaacs said.

Council said the plan is only a concept at this point.

The county commissioners will make the next call as to whether plans for the operation of the railroad will go forward.

In other business, council authorized the drafting of a proposed ordinance that will give council the authority to establish handicapped parking spaces for commercial purposes.

Solicitor Christopher Hartman said the borough currently only has the authority to designate handicapped spaces for residential uses.

The proposed ordinance is a result of the owner of State Theatre on Reading Avenue requesting two handicapped spaces on West Fifth Street.

Council members support the idea, but acknowledged the spaces may negatively impact neighbors.

Council said it wants to wait for a copy of the draft ordinance to determine the days and hours the handicapped spaces would be in effect.

Council also authorized the draft of an ordinance that would require any proceeds realized from the harvesting of timber to remain in a special account to be used only for the maintenance of the forests surrounding the borough.

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The borough has allowed the harvesting of timber from 296 acres over the past decade.

Council is currently considering allowing the harvesting of an additional 100 acres.

- By David A. Kostival

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