



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

LIESEL DREISBACH
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STEPHEN REPASCH
Vice Chair

JOHN DIACOGIANNIS
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, August 31 at 7:00pm

LVPC Conference Room

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Minutes

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission met for its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Thursday, August 31, 2017 at 7:00pm in the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's conference room located at 961 Marcon Boulevard, Suite 310, Allentown, PA.

Ms. Dreisbach chaired the meeting.

Ms. Willis took roll call.

Members in attendance:

Lehigh County

Percy Dougherty, Steve Glickman, Julio Guridy, Kent Herman, Ed Hozza, Rick Molchany, Christina Morgan, David Kimmerly, Owen O'Neil, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch, Kevin Schmidt, Christine Weaver, Donna Wright

Northampton County

Gordon Campbell, Gene Clater, Liesel Dreisbach, Bob Lammi, Tom Nolan, Pam Pearson

Members absent: Karen Duerholz, Brad Osborne, Sara Pandl, Julie Thomases, John Diacogiannis, Charles Elliott, George Gemmel, Darlene Heller, Tim Herrlinger, Kevin Lott, David O'Connell, Hayden Phillips, Michael Reph, Tina Roseberry

Staff present: Becky Bradley, Erin Willis, Geoff Reese, Amanda Raudenbush, John von Kerczek, Jill Seitz, Tracy Oscavich, Matt Assad, Mike Donchez

Public present: Lou Gombocz, Jr., WFMZ

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR: none

MINUTES

After a brief review, the minutes of the July 2017 meeting were moved for approval by Mr. Dougherty. Ms. Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried with Mr. Clater and Mr. Guridy abstaining.

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Dreisbach introduced new Commission member Julio Guridy from the City of Allentown and new staff member Matt Assad, Managing Editor.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Transportation Committee

Mr. Rebert presented an overview on the Route 22-400 \$62 million construction project. Construction started on this project back in August 2015. He spoke about replacing the Route 22 over the Lehigh River Bridge, which cannot be cut in half and still function – it has to stay intact – so the plan is to build half of the bridge at one section, then put the traffic on the new section and then build the second half. The beams are down and some parts of the deck are poured. This bridge is on schedule to open to east bound traffic by late October and the west bound traffic will be shifted over by the end of this year. The west bound portion of the Bridge is projected to be complete by August 2019. The overall widening project will be from Route 378 to 15th street and will begin in 2020.

Comprehensive Planning Committee

Glendon Borough – Stormwater Review – Glendon Business Center

Mr. Reese talked about providing an updated stormwater review for the Glendon Business Center. Since the Borough of Glendon does not have a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, the LVPC administers the county ordinance for proposals. This project was previously reviewed back in 2007 but since the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for stormwater management expired, it must be reviewed again for an updated permit. The business center needs to be able to manage the two-year stormwater run-off volume and has updated the design for that run-off. The Commission voted to grant conditional approval of the application subject to the Commission being provided a copy of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit Acknowledgement from the Northampton County Conservation District, a final paper copy of the Post Construction Stormwater Management Plan set and Post Construction Stormwater Management Analysis revised through August 28, 2017 and that all Commission costs associated the review of the application are paid in full. Mr. Clater recommending adding wording regarding the approval – the Commission voted to grant conditional approval subject to the following conditions. Ms. Wright made a motion to accept the staff comments along with the recommended additional wording. Mr. Lammi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance/Plan Reviews

Ms. Wright referred the commission to the summary sheet for an overview of the staff comments on other proposed actions requiring LVPC review. Ms. Wright made a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Clater seconded the motion. The motion passed with Mr. Hozza abstaining #7 – the Zoning Map Amendment for Whitehall Township.

Catasauqua Municipal Complex Grand Opening Blast – September 16, 12pm-5pm

Ms. Bradley mentioned that the LVPC is always looking for opportunities to take the chalkboard CUBE out to collect information from communities that then key into the update of the Comprehensive Plan and Ms. Weaver, Council member of the Borough of Catasauqua, asked to have the CUBE at their Grand Opening Blast On September 16th. Staff will be there to engage with the community and be a part of this celebration. Ms. Weaver noted that this project was a long time in the making and they are very excited for the grand opening. Some of the new structures were created with existing material from a historic building that was taken down. A portion of the Iron Works site is also being sold for mixed use redevelopment.

Environment Committee

Project Review – Summary Sheet

Mr. Repasch refers the commission to the summary sheet where the Lehigh County Authority submitted preliminary capital plans for four projects. In the Allentown Division, there are two water projects including filter upgrades and intake upgrades. There is also a sewer project for Indenture Report Improvements which is an annual report identifying improvements including general repairs, and security, structural, pipe protection and electrical upgrades. The LVPC comment for the Allentown Division projects is, improvements that will result in more efficient, safe and reliable sewer and water service are consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. In the Suburban Division, there is a sewer project for the Park Pump Station's Sister Station. This sister station will be adjacent to the current pump station. The Act 537 sewage facilities plan has been on hold and not completed as a prerequisite to the project and the capacity for future growth should only be provided for areas recommended for urban development so this project cannot be determined as consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Repasch made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Lammi seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Morgan abstaining.

OLD BUSINESS

Lehigh Valley Government Academy @ LVPC Office – 5:30pm-9:00pm

The upcoming LVGA courses are Community Planning being held on Tuesday, September 12th, 19th, and 26th. Zoning will be held on Wednesday, October 4th, 11th, and 18th. Subdivision + Land Development will be held on Wednesday, November 1st, 8th, and 15th.

NEW BUSINESS

Pennsylvania State Planning Board Recommendations on Infrastructure, Efficient Government + Community Revitalization

Ms. Bradley talked about how in 2016, Governor Wolf asked the PA State Planning Board to look at three topics – Infrastructure, Efficient Government and Community Revitalization. The Governor's Advisory Board on Community Development looked at putting together some basic information that could be shared as well. Regarding infrastructure, Pennsylvania has a well-developed regional transportation planning program mandated by the federal and state laws. There are no requirements for water facilities for municipal or regional planning. The State Planning Board came back with a belief statement stating as demographics, the economy, and lifestyle preferences are again changing and changing dramatically – that regional planning and coordination of infrastructure investments are key to smarter spending of tighter state and local government budgets and key to capturing the economic growth opportunities of today and tomorrow. With efficient government, Pennsylvania has a fragmented local government system. There are 2,560 municipalities and 67 counties and overlaying these governments are 500 school districts and over 2,400 local authorities. Pennsylvania ranks third among states in the number of local government units. There has been a long running debate on whether the number of municipalities and local governments is a liability or an asset. It was collectively recognized as both. It's a liability from the sense that Pennsylvania as a whole has lost population and is in a slow growth market and communities are taking businesses away from neighboring communities. It's also an asset because it allows people to be closer to their governments and offers more choice and creativity because it forces you to be leaner. From a regional perspective, places like the Lehigh Valley have benefited and been inhibited by the fragmentation. There appears to be no decisive national research indicating fragmented local governments are lagging in population and economic growth, or consolidated regional governments are making greater impact on economic competitiveness. The belief statement shows fiscal distress growing across all classes of municipalities in Pennsylvania, so it makes sense

to provide more opportunities for intergovernmental cooperation and multi-municipal, regional delivery of municipal services. For community revitalization, there has been a lot of shifts from urban communities to suburban communities that were formally rural areas. This means a lot of infrastructure was built and there has been investment in a lot of things including sports facilities and employment clusters. The cities are hubs for government buildings, hospitals, colleges and those facilities often do not pay property tax. Expenses have not declined so there has to be a way to help these communities cope with increased expenses. The belief statement says the pattern of decline left many core and inner ring communities in fiscal distress and with large numbers of blighted and abandoned properties and high poverty. Conditions have hurt competitiveness to retain residents and businesses and constrained the ability of communities to restructure and regrow their economies and help themselves out of their dilemma.

Recommendations on the State Policy objective is to establish state goals and strategic principles. The goals and principles are to reward regional infrastructure planning, efforts to reduce government fragmentation, share services, cooperate across municipalities, and target state investments to revitalize struggling communities. Another recommendation is to institutionalize state goals and strategic investment principles across state agency funding programs. The funds should be awarded on the basis of county or regional plan. Also to establish a state interagency team to implement state goals and investment principles and promote greater coordination between state agencies. Recommendations on the Planning objective is to provide technical and financial assistance for planning. This is very important not only to all our local municipalities but the state as a whole. Right now there is one state planner based in Pittsburgh, who is responsible for the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This recommends dedicating more staff to planning that would ultimately provide training and grants to regional entities and communities. We also need to help local governments eliminate blight. Technical and financial assistance should be used to promote use of the many tools available to eliminate blight and enforce codes. The policy recommendations also include helping local governments undertake economic development in a coordinated and strategic way. Recommendations of the Efficiency Improvements objective is to promote regional delivery of municipal services. Legislation is needed to provide more legal opportunities for voluntary intergovernmental cooperation and regional delivery of municipal services. Another recommendation is to promote regional service delivery in four areas – MS4/stormwater management via county/municipal partnerships, e-government with shared use of digital storage, applications, websites, etc., blight elimination with service from regional land banks and shared enforcement code and public works with multi-municipal departments or compacts. Recommendations of the Fiscal Improvements objective is to reform local government pensions and Act 111 collective bargaining. Also, fiscal objectives include providing local governments with a broader menu of tax options could include an increased local services tax, payroll tax, a county-option local sales tax and earned income taxes for counties. Lastly, to modernize real estate tax assessment and collection.

CORRESPONDENCE

Whose Business is the Arts Invitation from the Lehigh Valley Arts Council

Ms. Bradley mentioned the Lehigh Valley Arts Council is getting together their Return on the Arts document which will be released on Friday, September 8th at DeSales University. A number of the LVPC staff will be helping facilitate table discussions and the information gathered will also help with the Regional Comprehensive Plan. Everyone is invited to attend.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

State Water Plan Update

Ms. Bradley stated that out of the Governor's Advisory Board on Community Development, Ms. Bradley and Mr. Reese recommended the State Water Plan be updated.

There is a Delaware River Regional Working Group that Ms. Bradley and Mr. Reese are expected to be a part of and will be participating in those discussions. There is no official start time yet but will let everyone know when this information is available.

Walk/BikeLV Plan Kick-Off

Ms. Bradley mentioned the kick-off for the first ever bike and pedestrian master plan for the Lehigh Valley with RFPs going out for consulting services this fall. The contract will be awarded shortly thereafter so the group can come together and start preparing this important plan.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Kick-Off

Ms. Bradley talked about the kick-off to the two-county Hazard Mitigation Plan. An outline is currently being developed. The plan will be completed by September 2018.

PlanSWL Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Bradley noted that all the communities involved in the Southwestern Lehigh Comprehensive Plan will be having a joint multi-municipal public hearing on September 25th at the Lower Macungie Community Center beginning at 6:30pm.

Staff Request for Community Bike Works and the Muscular Dystrophy Association

Ms. Bradley mention that Mr. Rider volunteered to be “arrested” on behalf of the LVPC to help support research for the Muscular Dystrophy Association on October 25th. Community Bike Works is hosting a Spin-a-Thon on September 23rd. The LVPC will have two teams competing. Ms. Bradley asked the Commission to donate what they can to these two great organizations to help reach the goal of \$1,000.

EVENTS + INFORMATION

Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) @ LVPC Office

The upcoming Local Technical Assistance Program classes are Traffic Sign Basics on September 28 from 8am-12pm, Stormwater Facility Operation + Maintenance on October 6 from 8am-12pm and Roadside Vegetation Control on December 12 from 8am-3pm – all at LVPC.

BuildLV Event

There is a BuildLV event coming up with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce on September 27 at 7:30am at ArtsQuest.

4th Annual Lehigh Valley Awards Gala

Save the date for the 4th Annual Lehigh Valley Awards Gala being held on October 17th at DeSales University.

Future Forces Event

The Future Forces Event will be held on December 6th at Lehigh University.

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ADJOURN

Mr. Molchany made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Weaver seconded that motion. Ms. Dreisbach adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by,
Erin Willis, Executive Secretary for
Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director