

# Memo



961 MARCON BOULEVARD, SUITE 310  
ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 18109  
(610) 264-4544

*December 17, 2015*

## **MINUTES**

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission met for their regularly scheduled meeting on Thursday, December 17, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 961 Marcon Boulevard, Suite 310, Allentown, PA.

Mr. Kent Herman chaired the meeting.

### ***Members in attendance:***

#### **Lehigh County**

Norman Blatt  
Shannon Calluori  
Percy Dougherty  
Steven Glickman  
Armand Greco  
Kent Herman  
Edward Hozza  
Richard Molchany  
Christina Morgan  
Kathy Rader  
Stephen Repasch  
Kevin Schmidt  
Julie Thomases  
Donna Wright

#### **Northampton County**

Gordon Campbell  
Eugene Clater  
John Diacogiannis  
Liesel Dreisbach  
Charles Elliott  
George F. Gemmel  
Darlene Heller  
Robert Lammi  
Thomas J. Nolan  
Pam Pearson  
Lynn Prior  
Michael Reph  
Tina Roseberry  
Lori Sywensky

***Members absent:*** Karen Duerholz, Sara Pandl, Lisa Scheller, Christen Borso, Kevin Lott, Hayden Phillips and Elinor Warner.

***Staff present:*** Becky Bradley, Geoff Reese, George Kinney, Tracy Oscavich, Bruce Rider, Bill Deegan, Eric McAfee, Ngozi Obi, David Manhardt, Ben Holland, Mike Donchez, Sue Rockwell, Teresa Mackey, Gabe Hurtado, Alice Lipe and Kathleen Sauerzopf.

**Public Present:** Matt Assad, The Morning Call

## **MINUTES**

After a brief review, the minutes of the November 19, 2015 meeting were moved for approval by Mr. Greco. Ms. Pearson seconded the motion. The motion carried with Ms. Wright and Mr. Hozza abstaining.

## **REPORT OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

### *Election of Officers for 2016*

Mr. Dougherty said the Committee nominated Ms. Dreisbach for Chair, Mr. Repasch for Vice-Chair and Mr. Diacogiannis for Treasurer for 2016. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to accept the nominations for officers. Mr. Glickman seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

## **SPECIAL REPORT**

### *Commissioner Recognition*

Mr. Herman said two Commission members will be leaving the Commission: Ms. Scheller and Ms. Sywensky. Ms. Scheller, who couldn't attend tonight, was a very important participant and Lehigh County Commissioner. Mr. Herman said Ms. Sywensky has worked at Northampton County for nine years. She is moving on to become the Executive Director at Turning Point. He thanked her for her service and presented her with a gift. Ms. Dreisbach presented a gift to Mr. Herman for his service as Chairman.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### *Comprehensive Planning Committee*

#### *Model Ordinance Updates*

Mr. McAfee said each Commission member has seven model ordinances at his/her place. Most of the ordinances were created in the past but needed some updating. The most extensive update was for Inclusionary Zoning. The ordinances were updated for unity of look and consistency among the documents. Ms. Wright made a motion to accept the model ordinance updates. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### *Housing Market Report*

Ms. Obi said in front of you is our most recent Housing Market Report. The report discusses housing sales in the Lehigh Valley over a five-year period from 2010 through 2014. Ms. Obi provided an overview of the report. The report includes county sales, municipal sales, school districts and housing sales types—attached, detached, condominiums, multifamily (2-4 units only) and mobile homes on owner lots. New construction sales have also been included. We define new construction as being built and sold in the same year. She said our data sources

were the Geographic Information System (GIS) and Assessment Departments of Lehigh and Northampton counties.

Ms. Obi said over the five-year period, all the sales were aggregated—57% of the sales occurred in Lehigh County, and 43% of the sales occurred in Northampton County. We ran the median price on all of those sales. Lehigh County was \$165,000 and Northampton County was \$189,000. When you combine those transactions, there is about \$5 billion floating around the Lehigh Valley over that five-year period. When the total housing sales in the Lehigh Valley were broken out annually, there were a total of 25,652 sales over this five-year period. The housing sales in 2010 were higher than 2011, rose drastically from 2011 to 2013, with a slight dip in 2014. Single family detached is still the most popular type of housing sale in the Lehigh Valley, followed by single family attached, condominiums and other types that we combined (mobile homes and multi-family units) because there were so few sales. Ms. Obi discussed the total sales by municipality. She said when you look at the total sales over the five-year period, 45% percent of those sales occurred in six municipalities. They are Allentown, City of Bethlehem, Lower Macungie, Palmer, South Whitehall and Whitehall.

Ms. Obi said the median housing sales price for the Lehigh Valley for 2010 was \$177,000. It dipped to \$173,000 by 2012 and currently is at \$175,000, which was also the median in 2013. The highest median sales price by housing type in 2014 was Condominium at \$205,000 and single family detached at \$203,000.

Ms. Obi discussed the median sales price by municipality over the five-year period. There were five municipalities in the Lehigh Valley that had median sales prices that exceeded 150% or more of the Lehigh Valley's median of \$175,000 for five consecutive years. The municipalities were Bushkill, Hanover (N), Lower Nazareth, Weisenberg and Williams townships.

She said new construction housing sales haven't returned to the 2008 levels, but looking at 2010-2014, there were 249 sales in 2013, which was the highest over the five-year period. When you look at the median sales price for new construction housing sales, you see a huge uptick in 2014 because the Traditions of America development in Hanover (N) had 65 sales. They accounted for 34% of all new construction housing sales. The median sales price for these homes was \$439,505.

Ms. Obi said we looked at housing sales based on affordability and housing sales price. She discussed the price range of houses you can afford based on income. The report also looks at housing sales by price variety by evaluating housing sales based on a percentage of the region's median sales price for the five-year period.

In summary, Ms. Obi said we found total housing sales in the Lehigh Valley increased from 2011-2013. The median sales price was the lowest in 2012. The median sales prices for six municipalities were below 80% of the Lehigh Valley median for five consecutive years. They were Allentown, Catasauqua, Easton, Fountain Hill, Slatington and Wilson. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the Housing Market Report. Mr. Gemmel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

*Ordinance Reviews*

Ms. Wright said there are four summary sheet items on page 11 of the agenda attachments. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Lammi seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

*Environment Committee**Governor's Pipeline Infrastructure Task Force Report*

Ms. Rockwell said the Governor's Pipeline Infrastructure Task Force Report was released for public comment last month. We prepared a draft review letter on pages 12-14 of the agenda attachments. The letter is divided into three parts. The first part describes who we are and what we do here. The second part provides a short summary of the report. The Governor established this Task Force in May of this year as an opportunity for collaboration among stakeholders throughout Pennsylvania to help guide safe and responsible pipeline development throughout the state. The Task Force consists of 48 members headed by DEP Secretary John Quigley. The Task Force was broken up into 12 work groups. The work groups are listed on page 12 of the letter. The Task Force was to develop recommendations and best practices related to their topic areas. There were a total of 184 recommendations developed among the work groups. They are just recommendations at this point. Obstacles for implementation were identified by many of the work groups, including legislative action, funding and staffing.

Ms. Rockwell said the third part of the letter, beginning on page 13, provides our comments. We have one general comment---each group developed recommendations on their own, which resulted in overlap. We think they should combine overlapping recommendations to better streamline the report. Since there are so many recommendations, we reviewed them solely in relation to the Comprehensive Plan. We identified two recommendations that were not fully consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The first is the suggested setback for wetlands and watercourses of 50 feet. The Comprehensive Plan recommends riparian buffers of 75 feet. The second is the "no net loss" of regulated wetlands, interior forests or forested riparian buffers through mitigation versus the Comprehensive Plan recommendation of 100% preservation of these features. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan doesn't specifically address many of the recommendations, but where recommendations included activities such as public participation, education, training and so on, we are supportive of those.

Ms. Rockwell said the comment period ends December 29th. The Task Force will consider the comments received and present the report to the Governor in February. The next step for the Task Force will be to determine the feasibility and implementation strategies for each recommendation. Mr. Repasch made a motion to approve the letter. Ms. Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

*Transportation Committee**Federal Certification Review*

Mr. Kinney said the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study is subject to a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) combined review once every four years. There are three phases to the review. The first phase is a desk audit where we supply

information to FHWA and FTA, and they review that information in preparation for the second phase, which is a two-day, on-site visit. The on-site visit occurred about 1 ½ weeks ago. Mr. Kinney said the first day was held at the LVPC office, and the second day was held at the PennDOT District 5 office. The third phase will be a report. They will take the findings of the desk audit and on-site visit and compile that information into a report. The first part will include commendations or things we are doing really well from a process standpoint in administering our transportation program. The second part is the recommendation aspect of it. These are things that aren't necessarily against federal law, but they are recommendations that PennDOT would like to see us implement. The final is corrective action.

Mr. Kinney said, based on the feedback we received at the meeting last week, we did really well. He was expecting a more technical meeting. It was a much more give and take discussion where we talked a lot about transportation and land use integration and innovation. We talked a lot about some of the programs we are doing and how we're trying to supplement them, especially on the freight side. Mr. Kinney said he was encouraged by the conversation, and thinks we will come out of it really well. They liked that we built performance standards into the Long Range Transportation Plan for the first time ever. They were also excited about the fact we do some after-action corridor analyses. Often we suggest infrastructure improvements for a certain corridor. A lot of MPO's don't follow up and complete after-action reports to see if corrective measures were effective. We are expecting the final report in the next four to six months.

Ms. Bradley added that we are clearly a water-rich area. One of the things that happens is when you do a lot of bridge projects, you disturb a lot of wetlands. Also, during road work you are inevitably going to hit some sort of tributary or stream. One of the things the federal government is very interested in is working with us to help get projects out on the street more quickly by exploring setting up a wetland bank. When you have a disturbance or need to eliminate a wetland, you need to create a new wetland in that watershed. So thinking ahead in doing more global planning along those lines can do nothing but support the overall environmental quality and integrity of our region. The federal government wants to work with us as a pilot area in that regard, and we are hoping that will bring some additional resources to the region as well and put us in a leadership position not only in the state, but nationwide.

#### *Freight Advisory Committee*

Mr. Kinney said we recently completed our first ever Regional Freight Plan. The Freight Plan included some recommendations and some ideas going forward. One was to implement a Freight Advisory Committee to look at how we can integrate freight into our transportation processes, specifically the kinds of things we can look at from an infrastructure standpoint to improve our freight mobility and to make improvements in first and last mile corridors and those types of things. Mr. Kinney said we looked at what the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission has done in the Philadelphia area and the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority and what they have done with respect to freight planning. Based on looking at what others have done, we have developed a Freight Advisory Committee to assist the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS) in their decision making. Mr. Kinney said on November 30th the LVTS adopted the Freight Advisory Committee by-laws by resolution. He discussed the goals and objectives of the committee. He said the committee has been put together to advise the LVTS on freight movement issues, studies, projects and the development of a functioning, efficient freight system. He identified four main points that the committee is to consider:

1. Ensuring the participation of the freight industry in the planning process.
2. Identifying improvements to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of freight.
3. Implementing regional congestion intermodal management programs.
4. Improving communications, data and technology sharing.

We want to put together a forum that would be cross-representative between public and private sector participation. Initially, we are considering having the committee consist of the entire LVTS membership (which includes the three cities), a truck driver, a law enforcement official, CDL training organizations (LCTI and Northampton Community College), a freight insurance risk management provider, freight warehouse shippers and receivers, Class 1 and short line railroads, trucking firms and associations, 3rd party logistic companies, Lehigh Valley Industrial Park, Federal Highway Administration, Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association, an economic development organization (LVEDC), Chamber of Commerce, regional bus operators (Bieber, Trans-Bridge and Easton Motorcoach) and a developer. Mr. Kinney said we think that is a pretty representative group. We were very careful in the creation of the by-laws to make it an all-inclusive deal. We encourage all municipalities and both counties in the region to participate in these meetings. We should have a schedule coming out soon. We think this will be a good platform for people to share their issues, talk about solutions and talk about how we can start to actually program or consider programming money to implement solutions. Ms. Bradley added that the two counties, as well as LANta and the Airport Authority, PennDOT Central Office and PennDOT District Office, will be part of the committee.

#### *Amtrak Update*

Ms. Bradley said we are the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and we manage, prioritize and plan for all public infrastructure investments on behalf of the region. This includes a \$3.9 billion road, bridge and transit program. This also includes rail infrastructure. In as much as it is our role to plan for systems in our adopted Long Range Transportation Plan that was completed in October, we have a strong focus on multimodal connections into and out of our region. This includes how we work between our public and private bus companies, manage the congestion on our roads and tie this into making our parks, recreation and open space networks as alternatives for commuting. We introduced the Road to Rail effort and said we would work with our federal partners, who provide as much as 80% of the total budget for multimodal options. As part of the Federal Certification Review process, and at the exact same time that an Amtrak official was making certain comments related to the potential for rail into the Lehigh Valley, we were sitting with the Federal Transit Administration and Federal Highway Administration negotiating what that process would be. So the official strategy is we will do a commuter/travel mode study first. We have significant challenges to looking not only at the rail scenario, but also how we implement and support LANta in the implementation of bus rapid transit.

Ms. Bradley said we have about 88,000 people who commute into the Lehigh Valley every day from all over. About 136,000 people live and work here, and 103,000 people live here and work someplace else. There is a misnomer that they all work in New Jersey and New York City. In fact, the highest percentage of commuters actually go into the King of Prussia region, and they don't just go to one location in the King of Prussia area. There are issues as to what sort of service and what sort of options we need to offer. Very logically, the federal government said to look at that first and explore what are the best modes to serve each of these populations, not only internally, but externally. We are working with a lot of partners, which includes Amtrak, our

sister MPOs, SEPTA, PennDOT Central Office, Federal Rail Administration, etc. We are going to continue to meet on these issues. Step one, we will be required to do the commuter/travel mode study. There is a very protracted process for the implementation of rail, even if the federal government will go along with us pursuing rail after the commuter/travel mode study is done.

Ms. Bradley said the minimum time a new rail system has been added in the United States is around 12 years from start of study to implementation. The other thing you need to know is the FAST Act, which is the reauthorization of the last transportation bill, does not include any significant increases in funding for any form of transportation. A piece of that which is very important to what we do is the funding formula. The federal government generally provides 80%, and the state provides 20%. The state government took part of the Act 89 funds (roughly 11% of the 20% match) and used it to shore up the State Police Pension, reducing the amount of money available for the Lehigh Valley. If we want to bring Amtrak here, Amtrak would be competing with the same pot of money that LANta, PennDOT or our municipal governments would be competing for. The other thing you need to know is if we do qualify for additional outside Federal money through the New Starts Program or some other federal program, we are competing with the entire nation like the State of California and other areas that are pursuing new transit programs.

Ms. Bradley said we are still going to follow the federal process to explore rail with eyes wide open. The public trust is important, and overpromising is not wise. It's a very slow process. If we are approved to move forward, we will be responsible for half of the cost of the construction. Ms. Thomases asked if part of the reason why a certain piece of funding is not available is because it has already been committed to widening Rt. 22. Mr. Bradley said that has nothing to do with it. Ms. Thomases asked Ms. Bradley to explain why. Ms. Bradley said you can't take highway funding and move it to transit. That is against federal law. She said right now, 100% of transit funds go to LANta. Mr. Molchany said at the federal review we tried to ask if we could move the process along. Their response was "no", there is no fast-tracking this process. Mr. Repasch said the previous commuter study has brought a lot of criticism. He asked if there was any value to it at all. Ms. Bradley said it was not actually a commuter study, it was a rail study to one location. Mr. Dougherty said the data was very suspect. The Lehigh County Commissioners did not think they got their money's worth. Ms. Bradley said, when we talked to the federal government, they said to look at the commuter/travel mode study, but don't look at it in just one direction to New Jersey and New York City. They want us to look at it from the global transportation picture, to get new data that can actually speak to real commuter and travel patterns.

Ms. Wright said the private sector sees a rail line and feels it can put a passenger train on it along with freight. They have no concept that you can't mix the two on the same line. Ms. Calluori said she assumes we are going ahead with the commuter study. Ms. Bradley said yes, but it can't start until 2017 because of the way that the contract works. Ms. Calluori asked, in addition to looking at what commuters are doing now, will we also look at passenger rail bringing more people into the Lehigh Valley? Ms. Bradley said yes, it would affect growth and revitalization in the cities and our suburban communities, too, which could lead to sprawl conditions if proper laws are not in place. We would have to work with our municipal governments on whatever comes out of the study and determine what would happen next.

Mr. Dougherty said we have to change the current PennDOT process of being reactive instead of proactive. What we are talking about here is something that can encourage economic

activity and revitalize downtowns. It has so many implications. Rather than asking if we have enough customers to support a line from Allentown to New York City, we have to look at this in terms of the future and the real cost of highways versus rail and other forms of transportation. Multimodal is the way to go. We should look at maybe running a line down Route 78. Ms. Bradley said we have right-of-way and maybe we could use that more efficiently, which is what we're doing on Route 22. Some people don't think we should widen Route 22, but it will help improve our air quality by reducing sitting time. It is unlikely to promote sprawl. The roadway already exists. She said our population is continuing to grow every year, along with vehicle registrations and through traffic, including tractor trailers. We need to address this growth. Ms. Thomases said she has read that every time a road is widened, it ends up filling up. Ms. Bradley said it is a lot more complicated than that. If you leave Rt. 22 in a two-lane condition, in the very near future, you will not be able to travel through the Lehigh Valley in any reasonable amount of time. It was determined 20 years ago that we needed to continue to invest in that roadway. We're also improving 17 structurally deficient bridges and working within the existing rights-of-way. We have to continue to work on the maintenance of our infrastructure. Mr. Herman said he thinks the message from the Commission standpoint is that it is a positive, realistic message given what resources there are to work with. We have some serious constraints.

## ***OLD BUSINESS***

### *Plan SWL Comprehensive Plan Information Gathering Interviews*

Ms. Bradley said we are working with the six municipalities in the southwest corner of Lehigh County to update their multimunicipal comprehensive plan. This includes Emmaus, Alburts and Macungie boroughs as well as Lower Milford, Upper Milford and Lower Macungie townships. We spent the last year getting all the data together, understanding and working with the steering committee on where the community is (including transportation infrastructure, housing sales and values) and getting a good baseline set of information to work from and putting together a website for the effort.

The first week in January we are going to do some information gathering, not only from the local and regional leaders identified by the municipalities and their thoughts, ideas and challenges and the good things happening in the region, but also from the public in a charrette. Then we will also be putting out a public survey that, once we have those first set of meetings to find out what the public is thinking in terms of prioritizing those issues, we will then start to develop the draft goals and policies and take those out again to the public. By and large, we will have this wrapped up in June through a whole series of meetings and events. This will hopefully continue the great direction that these communities are on and support their growth in a responsible way. Ms. Bradley said there is an invitation at each Commission member's place to attend the January 14th public information gathering event at the Lower Macungie Community Center at 7:00 pm.

## ***NEW BUSINESS***

### *2016 LVPC Work Plan & Budget*

Ms. Bradley provided a copy of the Summary of the Work Plan and Budget, the Staff Work Plan and the Budget for 2016. Mr. Herman explained that there is an Executive Committee that, under the by-laws, looks at and acts on these issues. This has been looked at and talked about

at our Executive Committee meeting yesterday. He said the Budget and Work Plan were unanimously approved at the Executive Committee meeting.

Ms. Bradley said, in terms of revenues, we bring in about \$2.6 million. We had less than that this year, but due to the support of Lehigh and Northampton counties, we were able to increase our budget for 2016. It is a balanced budget. Our expenditures total \$2.65 million annually. The majority of our expenditures are for staff because we produce a lot of reports, which is a primary piece of our job, as well as providing a significant amount of municipal assistance. In fact, that makes up roughly \$1.9 million of the \$2.65 million expenditure line. Our sources of revenue include Lehigh and Northampton counties, who are increasing our budget from \$425,000 to \$525,000. PennDOT, through contract work, is another huge piece of our funding, as well as any state work we do through groups like the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources or any community contracts we would get with groups like the Southwest Lehigh communities.

Ms. Bradley said we are going to be doing all kinds of exciting things next year including updating the regional comprehensive plan. We have taken 2015 to be able to get baseline data together, to be able to have an honest conversation with our community as a whole, where we are at as a region. We will be talking to the public about current goals and policies, things that are changing, where we need to go. That will kick off in a public way in 2016, and that plan is anticipated to be completed in 2017. We will begin the Lehigh County Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan. We just completed Northampton County's Plan. We will be doing the same for Lehigh County next year, with the hopeful adoption of that in 2017. This will include an assessment of the agricultural environment as well. Ms. Bradley said, besides the Freight Advisory Committee, we will be completing a sidewalk inventory. This is a precursor to developing a bicycle and pedestrian strategy for the Lehigh Valley. Obviously, we are preparing for the commuter study, and as we have just learned, we have a lot of partners to talk to and coordinate with. Those activities will be contractually arranged next year and hopefully completed in 2017. One thing that we are really excited about is the growth of our scenario modeling capabilities, which includes our abilities to visualize what things will actually look like on the ground and do 3D modeling. We tested a little of that this year with the Catasauqua Urban Design Project. We want to do more of that so our communities have real opportunities to walk through, drive through or bike through the areas they are planning.

Another piece of this is we are able to purchase REMI software in an updated form. This is a financial modeling tool that will allow us to look at the financial implications of the land use decisions that we are making today. We will be purchasing that next year. We will also be able to update the Monocacy Creek Act 167 Plan through a contract with the City of Bethlehem. This affects 11 municipalities. We are updating a strategy along with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania and County Planning Directors Association for integrated water resources management. It is only becoming more and more important as we have changes in policies and laws from MS4 to Homeland Security needs and floodplain management. You saw a presentation last month on our transition from Geographic Information Systems in a static way to an on-line interactive way that will roll out in the first six months of 2016. We're updating the functional road classification system for our roads and congestion management process. We are trying to coordinate with ten municipalities in the Slate Belt region and were awarded funding from the PA Humanities Council to continue to coordinate with them. Ultimately, our greatest hope is then to get them into a single, multimunicipal comprehensive plan. We also have a traffic counting program and segment inventory on behalf of PennDOT. Other partnerships in 2016

include the Urban Land Institute, Delaware Valley Green Building Council, Chamber of Commerce, and University of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Bradley said next year the Pennsylvania Planning Association is having its statewide conference in downtown Allentown. The staff will be heavily involved in that, and it is a great way to showcase our region to the rest of the state. We will update our annual Subdivision and Land Development Activity Report and hopefully do an event around that. We will continue our Awards Program and grow our community outreach and education programs through the Local Technical Assistance Program, the Lehigh Valley Government Academy, Data & Doughnuts meetings, Policy & Pizza meetings, as well as increasing our traditional and social media presence. Ms. Sywensky asked about the Housing Study recommendation from the Regional Housing Plan and if that fits into the Work Plan. Ms. Bradley said it is an unfunded recommendation. We have to work that out. We want to work through other traditional channels to talk about these issues. Mr. Gemmel asked if we are going to be under budget for 2015. Ms. Bradley said we generally break even. Mr. Molchany made a motion to approve the 2016 Work Plan & Budget. Mr. Gemmel seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

#### *2016 LVPC & Committee Meeting Dates*

Mr. Herman said the 2016 LVPC and Committee Meeting Dates are on pages 15-16 of the agenda attachments. Mr. Greco made a motion to approve the 2016 LVPC & Committee Meeting Dates. Ms. Wright seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

***CORRESPONDENCE*** – None

***EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT*** – None

***ADJOURN***

Mr. Herman adjourned the meeting.

Submitted by,

Kathleen Sauerzopf for  
Becky Bradley, AICP  
Executive Director