



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 27 at 7:00pm

LVPC Conference Room

Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Minutes

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission met for their regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Thursday, October 27, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, 961 Marcon Boulevard, Suite 310, Allentown, PA.

Ms. Dreisbach chaired the meeting.

Ms. Willis took roll call.

Members in attendance:

Lehigh County

Percy Dougherty, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, Rick Molchany, Christina Morgan, Sara Pandl, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch, Kevin Schmidt, Christine Weaver, Donna Wright

Northampton County

Gordon Campbell, Gene Clater, John Diacogiannis, Liesel Dreisbach, George Gemmel, Tim Herrlinger, Shawn Martell, Tom Nolan, Hayden Phillips, Michael Reph, Tina Roseberry

Members absent: Karen Duerholz, Armand Greco, Edward Hozza, Steven Neratko, Brad Osborne, Julie Thomases, Christen Borso, Charles Elliott, Darlene Heller, Robert Lammi, Kevin Lott, Pamela Pearson, Lynn Prior

Staff present: Becky Bradley, Erin Willis, Geoff Reese, Eric McAfee, Sue Rockwell, Tracy Oscavich, Tamara Mittman, John von Kerczek, George Kinney, Bowen Liu and Whitney Burdge

Public Present: Lou Gombocz, Jr., WFMZ

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR: None

MINUTES

After a brief review, the minutes of the September 29, 2016 meeting were moved for approval by Mr. Clater. Mr. Herrlinger seconded the motion. The motion carried with Ms. Wright, Ms. Morgan and Mr. Gemmel abstaining.

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT

Ms. Dreisbach recognized Christine Weaver as a new commission member from the Borough of Catasauqua. She also recognized Justin Barclay and Bowen Liu as new staff of LVPC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee

Bethlehem Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Mill Creek Corp Center

Phase 1

Mr. McAfee talked about the Mill Creek Corp Center Phase 1 being an interesting consideration for Land Use of Regional Significance because it is part of a broader office complex but involves a mixture of uses. Any single one of those uses in isolation does not pass our threshold for the Land Use of Regional Significance, but in Aggregate they do in terms of the combinations we see in the office building and the hotel, the restaurant and the bank. Once the four Phases are put together, it will be a much broader mixed use project of considerable size with it being predominately an office park with some added retail. Fundamentally this is consistent with the county comprehensive plan. Mr. McAfee then passed around a large printout of the map for everyone to see. Immediately to the south on the map, you can see a residential apartment complex, so the separation and berm will help shield that much more sensitive land use from glare and noises being produced by this sizable and significant land use. We also saw the sidewalk network which, while good, could stand for some improvement particularly when it concerns crosswalks in key areas. The most critical issue is the scattering of the buildings, which is mostly an ocean of parking with a few buildings. We were a bit disappointed there wasn't more orientation towards the park-n-ride, which will make it a much more applicable transit oriented development and really feature the buildings themselves with having the parking to the other side. So in that regard, this is particularly problematic because it really doesn't capitalize on the opportunity to make this land use a transit oriented to development. And this largely echoes our conversations with LANta which you can see they also had some considerable concerns about the way it was designed. It will serve within the vicinity of three bus routes, particularly bus #212 which travels north of Emrick Boulevard which is going to be extended into this. There are no sidewalks providing linkages to the park-n-ride from anything along Emrick Boulevard, so in that regard it's also not optimal in design. LANta, like us, recommends a more direct engagement with what can be done in regards to that, particularly the arrangement of the buildings that deemphasizes the surface parking lot, providing the parking you need

but you can do it in much more of a discreet way that really encourages a walkable mixed use environment. Mr. Nolan did note that the Mill Creek project has been postponed for another month.

Ms. Dreisbach asked if there was a motion to accept the letter. Ms. Wright moved to accept the motion. Mr. Gemmel seconded that motion. The motion carried with Mr. Nolan abstaining.

Lower Macungie Township – Land Use Assumptions Report

Mr. McAfee stated that the vast majority of the document is well put together with the research. The key sections worth the most consideration are the anticipated impacts based on the land use and population projections. We wanted to moderate some of their emphasis on raw population growth with an acknowledgement also that there is a considerable amount of building permit indications that have shown a much more moderated growth in the last few years than population would. If they could base their projections and understanding of what is going to come - the housing permit data has plunged since 2006 - that would be a much more balanced way of looking at this. LVPC will be working with some new projections in the future and we also are really interested in focusing on a balance of housing that is not exclusively focused on single-family detached largely because, as of evidence of our past BuildLVs and subdivision and building activities reports, apartments seem to be the most predominant residential land use that we're seeing at this point. While these projections are built much more heavily on single-family detached residences, the reality is even though this is fundamentally still a predominately single-family detached municipality in terms of housing character, apartments are the development type we are seeing so we want to make sure they are mindful of that.

Ms. Wright made a motion to accept the staff comments as presented with Mr. Dougherty seconding that motion. The motion carried with Ms. Pandl abstaining.

Ordinance Reviews

Mr. McAfee stated that on the Review Summary Sheet, the two longer comments are the interesting ones, with one being a dry cleaners in a village setting with the zoning ordinance amendments in Lynn Township and the other in North Whitehall with a few considerations that was building on an active adult community overlay district that it first established in 2006 and it was an inconsistent letter there. Some of the things they are doing to modify are addressing the inconsistencies and in some cases they are amplifying them.

Ms. Wright made a motion to accept the staff comments with Ms. Rader seconding that motion. The motion carried with Mr. Diacogiannis abstaining.

Environment Committee

Reviews

Mr. Repasch stated the Environment Committee met on Tuesday. There are two items of action - one being Alburtis Borough with renewal of the DRBC application for groundwater withdrawal and the other one in the City of Easton for DRBC review for wastewater treatment plant and discharge.

Mr. Repasch made a motion to accept the staff comments with Mr. Herrlinger seconding that motion. The motion carried with no abstentions.

Transportation Committee

Critical Urban Freight Corridors

Mr. Kinney showed a PPT presentation where he talked about the Critical Urban Freight Corridor. This is map heavy so please see attached PPT.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Lehigh Valley Government Academy

Ms. Oscavich stated that we completed two courses in our fall series. Subdivision and Land Development will start next week. We will see all the certified Citizen Planner graduates in January when we bring them in for their ceremony.

Planning + Pizza

Ms. Oscavich stated that we just had the Monocacy Creek Watershed which was very well attended. In November, we have BuildLV where we'll be going over the BuildLV report and in December we'll have FutureLV which is a follow up to kick-off to the Regional Comprehensive Plan.

FutureLV Forum

Ms. Oscavich said that on December 2nd we'll be having a half-day workshop where we will be featuring Scott Kinney, Senior Vice President of Education at the Discovery Channel. He'll be leading a discussion inspiring us to think more broadly about our region. Ms. Bradley said we will be facilitating a discussion about what we think our strengths are in our communities and the threats to our region as a kick-off to our Comprehensive Plan in understanding who we want to be and where we want to go

and start having that broader discussion which will then be tailored down to subject areas throughout the day.

CORRESPONDENCE

Ms. Bradley wanted to note that Tori Morgan sent a nice thank you from South Whitehall Township for the honor of being this year's Community of Distinction. Ms. Bradley also included a note from the Greater Lehigh Valley Realtors thanking Ms. Bradley for being a part of the Economic Outlook Panel they do annually which brings about 200 licensed realtors from the region. Ms. Bradley wanted to acknowledge our Jeans for a Cause in August that was \$138 which the staff decided to send to the Children's Hospital at Lehigh Valley Hospital. Ms. Dreisbach noted that the citations given to us at the Gala was included in the packet.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ms. Bradley talked about how the notice of proposed rulemaking was reopened and is asking 3 specific questions. How would this proposed rule impact requirements for unified planning work products – things like Critical Urban Freight Corridor, Transportation Improvements Program, Long-Range Plan and Freight Plans among others. Any potential exceptions that people feel should be included if the final rule proceeds. Specific detailed comments on expected costs for implementing the proposed rule. What this proposed rule will do is require that where your urbanized area is overlapped, you will have to develop one single transportation funding strategy basically putting all your money in one pot and distribute it around. This is not good for the region because it would essentially create one giant 8 or 9 state metropolitan transportation improvement program that no one has any idea how it would be managed. Every metropolitan planning organization in the country that's affected by this thinks the exact same way. We are on the phone continually collaborating with all those MPOs that would be affected directly in our region all the way from the entire state of Rhode Island to New Jersey and New York and Connecticut up to Boston metro down to DC. We wrote unified letters that speak in one voice saying we think this is ridiculous. It would not cause any organization to be dissolved, it would cause us to create one giant transportation improvement program which we believe would take local people's ability to drive transportation decisions away. It could even cause things like our LANta system to be absorbed into New York systems, New Jersey transit, SEPTA and other things where we would lose the ability to meaningfully plan, so everyone sitting at the table would essentially lose their voice in the process. We don't know how much time it would cost nor how much money it would cost and we believe it would create a too-big-to-succeed situation. We expressed this in the comments and offered some advice on how we think they can do some grandfathering based on historic grandfathering. MPOs established before 1991 have a transit exception for inclusion on their MPO boards, so we suggest this type for Critical Urban Freight Corridors. It's important to note that our federal legislative delegation both democrats and republicans have been exceptionally supportive of our position and the other MPOs around us, so is The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce along with our state delegation. The Pennsylvania house wrote a letter against this back in August in

support of us. US Congressman Shuster of the 9th district who is head of the transportation committee down in the Philadelphia region has also filed with the federal government a legal opinion that this is an illegal step, if this moves forward, it is likely to end up in court.

Ms. Bradley shared the Legislative Recognitions LVPC received at our 3rd annual gala for our 55 years of service and explained we will get them framed. She said it should be something that we are all proud of with how all these people recognized the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's role and importance in the region.

ADJOURN

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

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