



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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A New Class of Citizen Planners

Some came to get the tools to have an impact in their communities, some wanted to sharpen their public service job skills and some came to learn more about how development gets done.

Nearly 70 people took Lehigh Valley Government Academy classes in 2019, including a record 22 who were honored Thursday by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission as Certified Citizen Planners for completing more than 30 hours of LVGA courses in planning, development and zoning.

LVGA courses are tailored to train local planning commissioners, zoning administrators, zoning hearing board members, elected officials or anyone with an interest in planning, about their roles, responsibilities and abilities to have an impact in their community.

LVPC offers the courses in partnership with the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute (PMPEI).

It's the only program of its type that spells out the legal obligations of municipal officials who serve on volunteer boards and commissions.

"These volunteer positions are key to maintaining the quality of life locally and regionally, by balancing growth and development with infrastructure, education, recreation, environment and other needs," LVPC Chairman Greg Zebrowski said during the January 30 Commission meeting. "We commend you all for your work in the community."

To be eligible, participants had to complete three of the four courses offered at the academy. Available courses are Community Planning, Subdivision and Land Development Review, Zoning, and Zoning Administration.

A select few students who complete all four of the courses are recognized by PMPEI for attending all four classes, logging more than 40 hours of instruction.

"Our municipal officials come to gain a greater understanding of their leadership roles and we are honored to recognize the passion and commitment they've shown," LVPC Executive Director Becky Bradley said before the Citizen Planner certificates were awarded Thursday. "There's no shortage of people who want to have an impact in their community. Our 2019 classes were sold out and our 2020 classes are already filling up."

In addition to the many public officials, several private citizens take the classes each year simply to learn more about how their government and community works.

The 2019 Certified Citizen Planner recipients were:

Minal Amin, Matt Assad, Charles "Chuck" Deprill, Mike Donchez, Ian Heck, Tim Helmer, Brian Hite, George Kinney, Donna Kohut, Thomas Long, Aubrie Miller, Tracy Oscavich, Joseph Peterson, Vincent Quinn, Selma Ritter, Jillian Seitz, Louis Stellato, Lynn Tamaro, Elena Tucci, Karin Vangeli, Michael Werst and David Wilson.

Students recognized by PMPEI for completing four courses were Jeffrey Fox, Wanda Gruber and Aubrie Miller.

Overall, 281 people have taken LVGA classes since 2014, including 75 who earned the distinction of Certified Citizen Planner.

Information about the 2020 LVGA course schedule can be found at <http://lvpc.org/lvga.html>