



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, May 28, 2020 Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on May 28, 2020 at 7:00 pm using Microsoft Teams. Commissioners and the public were able to join the meeting via web (<http://tiny.cc/FCmtg0528>) and/or via phone (1 872-222-9976, Conference ID: 275 743 010#)

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Bradley took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Mike Gibson, Steve Glickman, Kent Herman, Jamie Johnson, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Owen O’Neil, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch, Kevin Schmidt, Leonard Lightner, and Donna Wright

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Janell Connolly, Malissa Davis, Liesel Dreisbach, Charles Elliott, Darlene Heller, Susan Lawless, Robert Lammi, Kevin Lott, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Pamela Pearson, Tina Smith, and Greg Zebrowski

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Ce-Ce Gerlach, Michael Harakal, Joshua Seigel, and Amy Zanelli

Northampton County

Bryan Callahan, Carl Manges, Spirit Rutzler, and Gerald Yob

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Charles Doyle, Geoff Reese, Jill Seitz, Samantha Smith, and Bethany Vazquez

Public Present: Nicki Jacobs

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

None.

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the April 30, 2020 LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Bradley reviewed the Commission votes on the April 30th agenda items. Mr. Melnick made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Glickman seconded the motion. With Ms. Rader and Mr. Elliott abstaining from the vote, the motion passed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

None this month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Joint Comprehensive Planning and Environment Committee

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the Comprehensive Planning Committee did not meet this month due to the pandemic, and that Committee business has been forwarded to the Full Commission for consideration. Ms. Wright announced each review item with Ms. Seitz, Ms. Smith and Mr. Reese presenting the information.

1. *City of Bethlehem – Land Use of Regional Significance – Royal Farms Store*

Ms. Smith reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for the City of Bethlehem. The subject proposal qualifies as a Regional Freight Center and proposes to construct a truck stop with a convenience store and fuel sales. The proposal includes 20 tractor-trailer parking spaces, a 1,310-sq. ft. car wash and five video gaming terminals. It should be noted that the PA Gaming Control Board only allows VGTs at “truck stop establishments” on a parcel of 3 acres or larger, with 20 or more parking spaces, a convenience store, diesel fueling islands, and with anticipated sales of 50,000 gallons of diesel or biodiesel fuel per month. It appears that the design of the proposed facility and associated information in the transportation impact study supports VGTs. A convenience store, gas station, truck stop, vehicle wash and gaming will add to traffic, noise, emissions and potentially other community and economic impacts. The proposal is generally consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because it is located in an area designated for Development in the General Land Use Plan, and because of its proximity to Route 22, Lehigh Valley International Airport and the Lehigh Valley Industrial Parks I and III. The project is also located along a Major Corridor and within the Multimodal Accessibility Buffer designated in the Transportation Plan of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Development on this site will have a regional impact. The LVPC encourages careful consideration of community impacts of including VGTs within the proposed development, as it relates to a maintained ‘quality and affordability of life’ (of Policy 4.1), and to ‘increase the social, economic and environmental well-being of the region’ (of Policy 1.1). Also, the proposal is located in a designated congested corridor, and significant transportation improvements will need to be made to mitigate the additional traffic and resulting safety and mobility needs associated with the development (Policies 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, and 2.6). Ms. Smith continued by reviewing the additional LVPC comments and

concerns regarding the proposal. Ms. Wright asked if any commissioners or members of the public would like to provide comment or questions. Ms. Heller stated that the concerns of the City of Bethlehem mirror those reflected in the LVPC comments. The City will also be providing their own additional letter in conjunction with the LVPC review. Ms. Heller continued by stating that the City is especially concerned with the green infrastructure comments noted by the LVPC regarding the amount of impervious surface this site would cover. The City of Bethlehem is also reserved about the designation of truck stop use for the site. Currently the area is zoned as "General Commercial" which does not allow for truck stops. The only zoning in the City where truck stops are allowed are in those areas designated as "Industrial" zoning areas. Mr. Glickman asked if there were any provisions proposed for alternative fuel locations on the site. Ms. Smith stated that alternative fuel stations were not indicated on the site plan. Mr. Glickman asked that the letter inquire about the inclusion of alternative fuel provisions. Mr. Zebrowski asked what the chances are for a compromise on the amount of impervious surface with the development. Ms. Heller stated that the City has yet to receive a response regarding their concerns but conversations are still ongoing. Mr. Amato asked if there was a chance that the development could impede with emergency service duties. Ms. Smith stated that the connection proposed for the site would improve emergency response and access to the barracks which would in turn add to emergency response time. Ms. Bradley spoke on behalf of the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study regarding the site. The south bound lane on Airport road going opposite to the site, an additional third lane is being added to Airport Road in conjunction with the FedEx development. The LVTS has agreed to invest in an on-ramp west bound on Route 22, with a long-term desire of adding a third lane immediately adjacent to the location of the proposed development. Ms. Bradley stated that the configuration of the development as proposed would need to change should a third lane be created which would add cost to the presumably public-sector investment. The development is also located in a designated congested corridor, which is significant to the overall impact of the proposal. Mr. Glickman asked what the current impervious surface proposed was in comparison to the proposed impervious surface in the site plan. Ms. Heller stated that the comparison is roughly 7 acres to about 3.5 acres. The proposed facility would take up about half of the impervious surface of the prior facility. Mr. Molchany asked if there were other VGT terminals in the Lehigh Valley. Ms. Bradley stated that the LVPC is not aware of any VGT facilities in the area. Ms. Smith stated that there is about 15-20 VGT facilities in the state with the closest one being in Berks County. Mr. Zebrowski thanked everyone for their questions and comments and asked for a motion to approve the staff letter with the comments presented. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments with the additional Commission comments. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. With Ms. Heller abstaining from the vote, the motion passed.

2. *Lower Nazareth Township – Official Map*

Ms. Seitz and Mr. Reese reviewed the official map for Lower Nazareth Township. The draft official map is intended to further the Township goals of promoting open space and farmland preservation, by shifting away from an atmosphere of intense development. The proposed map is generally consistent with *FutureLV: The*

Regional Plan because it serves to ‘support agriculture and open space as essential components of the regional economy and identity’ (Policy 4.4), as well as the identity of the Township. The LVPC encourages the adoption of official maps by municipalities in order to ‘encourage an efficient development process that is responsive to regional needs’ (Policy 1.4). In addition to zoning and subdivision and land development ordinances and comprehensive plans, official maps provide another avenue for a municipality to promote its fiscal health and sustainability (of Policy 4.6). Mr. Reese continued with additional LVPC comments. The LVPC compliments the Township for establishing an official map that places a high priority on natural areas and trails, and aims to ‘conserve and manage natural lands and water resources for environmental and recreational benefits’ (Policy 3.1). *FutureLV* aims to maintain regional character by preserving priority environmental, scenic and agricultural assets. The identification of these assets is critical to their protection, and enhances their long-term viability (of Policy 1.3). The proposed land preservation would protect the majority of the East Branch Monocacy Creek, and the designation of parcels for acquisition adjacent to Hahns Meadow Park and Surrey Glen Park would expand protection along the stream. These protections are generally consistent with the *FutureLV* Natural Resources Plan. The LVPC encourages the Township to further explore additional protection areas along the Monocacy Creek, to conserve and manage water resources for environmental and recreational benefits (Policy 3.1). Mr. Reese also noted that the proposed map designates a substantial amount of land area, primarily farmland, for future development rights acquisition. Ms. Seitz continued to present the LVPC comments to the Commission. The LVPC commended the Township for their foresight in planning for future connectivity and infrastructure needs, in support of meeting the changing transportation needs of the region, which is of Policy 2.6. In an effort to ‘support collaboration among project partners’, related to Policy 2.6, the LVPC recommended that the Township ensure collaboration with PennDOT District 5 and the LVPC in any future intentions for actual expansion of the road right-of-ways, as conditions change. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments as presented. Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. *Lower Milford Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Medical Marijuana*

Ms. Smith reviewed the zoning ordinance amendment for Lower Milford Township. The LVPC previously reviewed and provided comments on the Expanded Overlay District and Medical Marijuana Facilities zoning ordinance and map amendment, in a letter dated August 27, 2019. Because the subject application contains two components – a zoning ordinance amendment and a map amendment, each component is considered as a separate review. The subject application amends the Township zoning ordinance to address LVPC comments regarding overly stringent requirements for medical marijuana facilities regulations, such as minimum setback provisions, proximity to residential uses, and storage and security requirement. This proposal is generally consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* for its application of

best practices in planning and zoning (of Policy 1.4). Additionally, the proposal amends existing language of the zoning ordinance to reflect the municipality's multi-municipal agreement in the Southwestern Lehigh County Comprehensive Plan. The LVPC commends the Township for revising the zoning ordinance to reflect this agreement, to 'encourage an efficient development process that is responsive to regional needs' (Policy 1.4). The submitted zoning map amendment does not present any changes to the zoning map amendment previously reviewed by the LVPC in August of 2019, under the 2005 County Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Plan: The Lehigh Valley...2030. Upon the original review, the LVPC found the zoning map amendment to be generally inconsistent. The LVPC has found the resubmitted zoning map amendment to be generally inconsistent under FutureLV. The Expanded Overlay District is proposed in areas identified in the General Land Use Plan as Natural Features, Agricultural Preservation, and Character-Defining Areas for the region. Furthermore, access to the district is limited by a High-Crash Corridor (Kings Highway north of Palm Road), making the area difficult to develop above the existing intensity. The proposed district is also in conflict with several strategies and actions in the PlanSWL: Southwestern Lehigh County Comprehensive Plan (Direct Uses Where Appropriate: Policies 1.3, 2.1 and 2.4). It is a Policy of FutureLV to match development intensity with sustainable infrastructure, and preserve natural and agricultural lands (of Policy 1.1). Ms. Wright stated that she agreed with the LVPC comments. Mr. Dougherty asked why the Township picked this particular site. Ms. Wright stated that the location is still in discussion at the Township. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Lott made the motion with Mr. Glickman seconding. With Ms. Wright abstaining from the vote, the motion passed.

4. *Lower Nazareth Township – Subdivision and Land Development – Colt's Run South II*

Ms. Seitz reviewed the subdivision and land development application for Lower Nazareth Township. The subject application proposes to construct a residential development consisting of 296 single-family dwellings on 250.2 acres of land, and is generally inconsistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. While the subject properties are located partially within the Development area, a significant portion of the site is located within the Farmland Preservation area of the General Land Use Plan. Farmland Preservation areas are recommended to remain agriculture, though they may also accommodate housing on a limited scale. Additionally, the currently proposed site design conflicts with existing High-Priority Natural Areas present on the site. To 'preserve natural areas and farmland by managing growth and development to enhance and strengthen the community' (Policy 1.1), the LVPC recommends that the applicant revise the site plan with a 'Conservation Subdivision' approach that places priority on protecting environmental assets. Ms. Seitz continued to review additional comments from the LVPC. The LVPC discourages development in hazard-prone areas (of Policy 3.2). The proposed development and open space areas on the site plan should be reconfigured, from the northwestern corner of the property to Saddle Drive in the east, and those residences on Cattle Crossing in the south, in order to 'minimize environmental impacts of development to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public' (Policy 3.2). The LVPC also advised the applicant to ensure proper geotechnical testing prior to any land development, to 'minimize environmental

impacts of development to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public' (Policy 3.2). The LVPC reviewed the Supplemental Traffic Analysis dated April 24th, 2020. The proposed development is anticipated to generate a total of 2,839 trips per weekday, with 216 weekday morning peak-hour trips and 290 weekday evening peak hour trips. The LVPC commends the inclusion of sidewalks throughout the site interior. This would also increase mixed-transportation accessibility by connecting residents to the LANTA bus stops located on Nazareth Bethlehem Pike, approximately one-third of a mile west of the site (of Policy 5.2). Ms. Davis stated that Green Pond Road is a small road and the development would create traffic issues. Ms. Davis stated that additional considerations should be sought from the adjacent municipalities. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments with the addition of Ms. Davis' suggestion. Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. With Mr. Elliott abstaining from the motion, the motion passed.

Transportation Committee

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the Transportation Committee did not meet this month due to the pandemic, and that Committee business has been forwarded to the Full Commission for consideration. Mr. Herman announced each review item with Mr. Doyle and Ms. Bradley presenting the information.

1. LVTS 2021-2024 Draft Transportation Improvement Program

Mr. Doyle stated that the public comment period of the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study's Transportation Improvement Program is open and will close on June 16th. Mr. Doyle continued by stating that the LVTS will be holding a public meeting on the TIP on June 3rd at the Joint LVTS Technical and Coordinating Committee meeting and encouraged the Commission to attend. It is anticipated that the LVTS will adopt the 2021-2024 TIP on July 8th. Ms. Bradley continued by noting that the LVTS is a separate board from the LVPC and that the LVTS functions that the LVPC provide are funded under a US Department of Transportation Contract in accordance with federal law. The functions performed by the LVPC are state mandated for counties and specific to the subdivision and land development and the comprehensive planning process. The TIP process is federal and not under the jurisdiction of LVPC. However, *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, is a joint effort of LVPC and LVTS and the draft TIP reflects the prioritization agreed upon. Mr. Doyle closed the presentation by stated that the draft 2021 TIP consists of nearly \$452 million that will be invested in communities across the Lehigh Valley for road, bridge, trail, multimodal and transit projects over the next four years. The program includes more than 120 projects that will include investments of \$167.6 million for road, trail and multimodal projects, \$134.5 million for bridge projects and \$149.7 million to operate and improve the region's transit system. More information on the TIP, how you can participate in public comments and attending our virtual LVTS Technical + Coordinating meeting on June 3rd at 9am - can be found on the LVPC website.

OLD BUSINESS

1. *BUILD Grant – Riverside Drive*

Ms. Bradley presented information on the BUILD Grant – Riverside Drive. The LVPC applied for a United States Department of Transportation, Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant. The grant request is \$24 million and match is \$20 million to make up the total project cost of \$44 million. The Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor is a 3.5-mile project that will create a robust, multimodal commuting corridor stretching from the City of Allentown through Whitehall Township in Pennsylvania. Providing safe, efficient transportation mode choices by connecting roadways, transit, sidewalks and trails into a seamless rural-to-suburban-to-urban corridor is the driving theme behind this shovel-ready project. This innovative brownfield redevelopment unites the efforts of 29 municipalities, five counties, the state government, six non-profit organizations and over 800 businesses to form the single most significant public-private partnership in the Lehigh Valley today. The Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor supports existing neighborhoods and a traditional manufacturing area, while simultaneously reinforcing existing infrastructure assets critical to the continued operation and growth of the Nation's fastest, and world's second-fastest, growing logistics hub: the Lehigh Valley. This project acts as a keystone linking the Lehigh Valley's most highly traveled highway, Route 22, to the local road, sidewalk and transit network. The Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor is the keystone of the region's mobility and economy, connecting job and freight centers in urban Allentown and suburban Whitehall Township. This project also establishes critical linkages to the Lehigh Valley International Airport and its cargo operations, three industrial parks, including the new FedEx Ground facility, the largest in the company's portfolio. Additionally, the project connects the region's largest suburban retail-commercial area and two of the biggest office clusters to adjacent residential neighborhoods and the Route 22 highway. Riverside Drive will connect, through the Fullerton Avenue interchange, to Route 22 improving access overall, but also supporting essential emergency management and safety operations across transportation modes. Pedestrians and cyclists will also have safe access to jobs, shopping, entertainment and residential areas, where it doesn't currently exist, as Riverside Drive creates a new complete street. This newly designated commuter corridor also closes Pennsylvania's highest priority trail gap between Whitehall Township and Allentown along the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and co-located September 11th National Memorial Trail. The project will simultaneously provide a missing north-south connection between the Lehigh and Northampton Transportation Authority's (LANTA) bus rapid transit network in Downtown Allentown and the suburban office-industrial-retail areas that are adjacent to the corridor.

The significant environmental justice and environmental improvements made through the Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor Project will have uninterrupted and safe access to major economic centers for employment and day-to-day needs. Concurrently, the project preserves historical and natural resources of the Lehigh River and creates new recreational opportunities. When completed, the project will re-establish neighborhood access to the Lehigh River's natural beauty and the variety of activities it has to offer, after generations of being isolated from it. Ms. Bradley concluded that the LVPC will be following up over the next week to request individual letters of support critical to showing support for the project. In the meantime, please visit the project website: BuildRiversideDrive.com for more information.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Housing Attainability Analysis

Ms. Bradley and Ms. Seitz briefly presented on the May 14th virtual WorkshopLV: Housing meeting.

2. Data Support – Allentown School District Digital Divide Analysis

Ms. Bradley and Ms. Seitz gave a brief presentation on the LVPC's analysis on the Allentown School District's Digital Divide.

COMMUNICATION

1. Morning Call Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad gave a brief update on the LVPC's Morning Call Business Cycle Column. The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission now has a recurring column that will run in the Morning Call Lehigh Valley's Business Cycle section. The LVPC be part of a regular rotation that will run about every 5-8 weeks, and it will run on Sunday, which is easily the week's most read newspaper. The first column is scheduled to run Sunday, May 31.

2. Data + Donuts: Post-Pandemic Predictions in Transportation

Ms. Bradley shared that the LVPC held a virtual Data + Donuts on May 13th to discuss the pandemic's effect on transportation. Ms. Bradley thanked Mr. O'Neil for his participation in the discussion about transit, land use, FutureLV: The Regional Plan, the interplay between public health and safety and transportation and the future of mobility in the Lehigh Valley.

3. Census 2020 and COVID-19

Mr. Assad gave a brief update on the 2020 Census response rates. While the region remains under the most restrictive social distancing guidelines, the LVPC has continued to focus Census promotion to a digital strategy that includes multiple social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram, as well as giving the Census a prominent position on the LVPC webpage. Despite the barrier of being a red region, the Lehigh Valley continues to outpace the state

and nation. Both Lehigh and Northampton counties were near 70%, while Pennsylvania was in the low 60s and the National response rate was in the high 50s. The LVPC will continue directing people the 2020 census.gov site where they can fill out the Census, at least until Census workers can hit the streets again.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Monthly Subdivision and Land Development Report

Ms. Bradley presented information on the April Monthly BuildLV: Subdivision and Land Development Report. The report will be distributed publicly around the 15th of each month and is available at lvpc.org.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Zebrowski gave a brief update on the 2020 Lehigh Valley Gala and Awards.

Ms. Vazquez stated that a list of the meetings anticipated to be canceled or postponed due to the need to maintain social distance are listed in the packet. Any questions can be referred to bvazquez@lvpc.org or called in to 610-264-4544.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual and the LVPC staff will be sending out meeting specific information and posting it to the LVPC website shortly. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Molchany made the motion. Mr. Zebrowski thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned.

Submitted by:
Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director
Bethany Vazquez, Program Associate