



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

GREG ZEBROWSKI
Chair

STEVEN GLICKMAN
Vice Chair

PAMELA PEARSON
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, February 27, 2020 Meeting

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission met for its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on Thursday, February 27, 2020 at 7:00 pm in the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's conference room located at 961 Marcon Boulevard, Suite 310, Allentown, PA.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Vazquez took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Mike Gibson, Steven Glickman, CeCe Gerlach, Michael Harakal, Kent Herman, Jamie Johnson, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Owen O'Neil, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch, Joshua Seigel, Kevin Schmidt, Donna Wright, and Amy Zanelli

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Malissa Davis, Charles Elliott, Susan Lawless, Robert Lammi, Carl Manges, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Pamela Pearson, Spirit Rutzler, Tina Smith, Gerald Yob, and Greg Zebrowski

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Leonard Lightner

Northampton County

Bryan Callahan, Janell Connolly, Liesel Dreisbach, Darlene Heller, and Kevin Lott

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Charles Doyle, Brian Hite, Craig Kackenmeister, Tracy Oscavich, Geoff Reese, Susan Rockwell, Jill Seitz, Samantha Smith, David Towsey, and Bethany Vazquez

Public Present: Lori Vargo Heffner and Charles Volk

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

None.

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the January 30, 2020 LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski opened the meeting with recognition of five newly appointed Commissioners, Ms. Zanelli (Lehigh County), Mr. Callahan (Bethlehem City), Mr. Seigel (Allentown City), Ms. Johnson (Fountain Hill Borough), and Ms. Gerlach (Allentown City). Mr. Zebrowski asked each Commissioner, with the exception of Mr. Callahan who could not be present, to give brief introductory remarks and welcomed them to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee

1. *Bushkill Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Ken Butz Elementary School Additions*

Ms. Smith reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Bushkill Township. The subject application proposes a series of additions totaling 12,709 square feet to the existing Butz Elementary School. This application is generally consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan because this addition serves to 'increase the social, economic and environmental well-being of the region' by improving educational services on a site that is already developed and can readily accommodate the proposed expansion through clustering of 'development near crossroads villages in exurban and agricultural areas'. The existing location of the school in a crossroads village is appropriate for the rural (exurban) nature of Bushkill Township and serves to 'promote education that improves social and economic opportunities'. Further, the expansion of the existing school minimizes 'environmental impacts of development to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public'. Ms. Smith shared additional LVPC comments with the Commission regarding pedestrian amenities, environmentally sensitive landscape design, and stormwater. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments as presented. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. *Forks Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Padula Road Warehouse*

Ms. Seitz reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Forks Township. The subject application proposes to construct a 433,000-square-foot warehouse. The proposed development is not consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*

because it is located in an area designated for Farmland Preservation and the Preservation Buffer in the General Land Use Plan. While areas within the Preservation Buffer may be capable of accommodating development, the General Land Use Plan outlines development criteria to determine if development is appropriate in these areas. The proposed development does not meet the development criteria due to the adverse transportation impacts created by the development. Ms. Seitz reviewed additional comments from the LVPC, including comments from the Comprehensive Planning Committee which stated that “the accumulation of snow and ice on top of trucks poses a safety hazard to other vehicles on the roadway, potentially resulting in serious injury and death. The Pennsylvania Snow/Ice Removal Law (2006) requires the removal of snow and ice from all vehicles prior to leaving the site. The LVPC recommends the installation of a snow-clearing tool at the site that would easily allow for truck drivers to clean off tractor trailers. This would serve as a preventative measure in the interest of the health and safety of those using the region’s transportation network, and help to ‘provide a safe, well-maintained transportation network...’”. Mr. Zebrowski commented that the LVPC should also include language regarding the request that environmental impact studies be submitted to the Township. In continuing with Mr. Zebrowski’s request, Ms. Wright also asked that the LVPC staff include the total acreage of agricultural security areas in the letter. Mr. Amato also inquired about the LVPC’s ability to incentivize property land use planning. Ms. Bradley stated that in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, as both the County Comprehensive Plan and the Long-Range Transportation Plan, encourages smart development and that the LVPC staff will work on language to encourage effective land use planning. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments with the addition of the Commission’s language. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. *City of Bethlehem – Land Use of Regional Significance – LVIP VII Lots 53 and 54*

Ms. Smith reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for the City of Bethlehem. The subject application proposes the expansion of an existing manufacturing facility, including a 171,643-square-foot building addition, and ancillary loading docks, sidewalks, railroad spur extension and related site improvements. The project future proposes to consolidate Lot 54 with Lot 53, where the existing facility is located. This proposal is generally consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan, FutureLV, because of its location in a development area of the Land Use Plan. The property also contains high conservation priority areas of the Natural Resources Plan. Ms. Smith also reviewed additional staff comments with the Commission relating to conservation, mixed-transportation, transit, freight mobility and stormwater. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. *City of Allentown – Rezoning – P to R-MP*

Ms. Seitz presented the rezoning application for the City of Allentown. The subject application proposes to amend the zoning map by rezoning two parcels from Parks (P) to Medium Density Residential – Planned District (R-MP). This proposal is

generally inconsistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because it conflicts with the LVPC policy to ‘minimize environmental impacts of development to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public’. Ms. Seitz also spoke on additional information that was added into the letter post a conversation with Allentown City Planning Commission Member Anthony Toth. The existing parks zoning designation for this property is far more suitable because it is unlikely that the site is able to withstand the weight of medium-density development, utilities and infrastructure. In addition, the site is located adjacent to the existing Daddona Park/Union Terrace, as well as multiple properties identified in the City of Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan as possible connections between Cedar Beach Park in the north and the Lehigh Parkway in the south. A Little Lehigh Parkway Trail connection is also proposed in this area that would link these open spaces. Utilizing the subject properties as a park would create a more robust park network and support the LVPC policy to ‘create community spaces that promote physical and mental health’ by improving access to green spaces. The LVPC urges the City of Allentown to ensure that development is viable prior to adopting a zoning change that would allow the development of residences by right. As usability of the site is dependent on the fill material used, this may require extensive ground testing and environmental remediation of the project site. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. Mr. Seigel and Ms. Gerlach abstained from the vote. With these abstentions, the motion passed.

5. *Project Review, Summary Sheet*

Ms. Wright reviewed the Comprehensive Planning Committee project summary sheet. Ms. Wright noted that the zoning map amendment for the City of Bethlehem and the zoning ordinance amendment for Bath Borough were found to be generally inconsistent with FutureLV. The zoning ordinance amendments for Lynn Township and Nazareth Borough were found to be generally consistent with FutureLV. Ms. Wright stated that if there are no further comment or questions that she would like to make a motion to approve the summary sheet as presented. Mr. Elbich seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Environment Committee

1. *Project Review, Summary Sheet*

Mr. Lammi reviewed the Environment Committee project summary sheet. The first item pertains to the Lehigh County Authority Preliminary Capital Plans. The proposed improvements/studies that will result in more efficient, safe and reliable sewer and water service are consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Volk from LCA shared additional background information on one of the projects related to PA Department of Environmental Protection regulations. Mr. Lammi made a motion to approve the staff comments for the LCA Preliminary Capital Plans. Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. Ms. Morgan and Mr. Herman abstained from the vote. With these abstentions, the motion passed.

Mr. Lammi reviewed the second item on the summary sheet which pertains to a sewage facilities planning module for a proposed project in North Whitehall Township. The project is for a proposed 24-lot residential development on approximately 21 acres, continuing development of the Fairland Farms residential development. The development is proposed to connect to the existing Fairland Farms central sewage system. This proposal is inconsistent with the County Comprehensive Plan because the proposed project is located in an area recommended for farmland preservation. Mr. Lammi made a motion to approve the staff comments for the North Whitehall Township project. Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Transportation Committee

1. Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan Update

Mr. Reese gave a brief update on the *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan*. The LVPC staff has reviewed over 160 received public comments, as well as the edits from the consultant. A full draft report is expected to be received by the consultant in about two weeks. The next WorkshopLV: Multimodal will take place at the LVPC office on March 25th beginning at 3:00 pm.

2. Zoning and Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure

Ms. Bradley gave a brief summary of the “Zoning and Electric Vehicles” Article received from Commissioner Zebrowski. Ms. Bradley discussed the implications of electric vehicle stations on zoning, not for the purpose of permitting the use as EV stations are already allowed in Pennsylvania, but in regards as to whether or not municipalities and governments can require EV Stations in particular areas or in their zoning regulations and other related legislation.

3. Free Transit? The Transit Funding Dialogue Just Got A Whole Lot More Interesting

Mr. O’Neil shared insights on the concept of ‘free transit’ from the perspective of LANTA’s programming. The idea of “free transit” was purposed for those of low income households and the elderly, in order to create autonomy and an avenue for being able to get to jobs and earn income. Mr. O’Neil further explained that the transit fare is not truly free, but rather supplemented by a different source such as an employer, the lottery (in the case of senior fares), and other like bodies.

OLD BUSINESS

1. FutureLV: The Regional Plan

Ms. Bradley announced that *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* is fully accessible online. Mr. Kackenmeister and Mr. Towsey took the Commission through the FutureLV website, as well as demonstrated the use of the interactive maps. The FutureLV plan can be found at lvpc.org.

NEW BUSINESS

1. BuildLV: 2019 Development and Housing Trends Report

Ms. Bradley, Ms. Seitz and Ms. Smith presented the BuildLV Report. Ms. Bradley began the discussion by reviewing the history of the Annual Report as well as the MPC requirements for the documents and deadlines for its release. Ms. Seitz continued the discussing by presenting the percent of Lehigh Valley residences over the decades as well as other Residential Development Trends. Ms. Seitz and Ms. Smith reviewed the Housing Trends for 2019 in comparison to previous years including median sales price by school district and median gross rent by school district. Ms. Smith closed the presentation by reviewing the non-residential development trends, including the 2019 approved non-residential square footage by municipality.

2. The Great Affordability Crisis Breaking America

This item was briefly reviewed in the BuildLV presentation.

COMMUNICATION

1. 2019 Webhits Report

Mr. Assad briefly reviewed the 2019 Webhits Report with the Commission. The LVPC homepage, DataLV page and Staff Listings homepage were the most frequently visited pages in 2019.

2. US Data

Ms. Bradley encouraged the Commission to review the U.S. Data sent by Mr. Molchany regarding a data-driven, nonpartisan snapshot of the state of the union.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Monthly BuildLV: Subdivision and Land Development Report

Ms. Bradley presented information on the January 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 AND INVITATIONS TO ATTEND THE FOLLOWING WERE MADE:

1. Data + Donuts: BuildLV

The next Planning on the Menu session will be Data + Donuts on April 29th at 8:30 am (LVPC Office) to discuss the *BuildLV: 2019 Development and Special Housing Report*.

2. *Local Technical Assistance Program*

The next LTAP Classes will be on March 5th, Pedestrian and Crosswalks, at the LVPC office from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm, and March 31st, Drainage: The Key to Roads that Last, at the LVPC office from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm.

3. *WorkshopLV: Water*

The next WorkshopLV: Water meeting will occur at the LVPC office on March 12th beginning at 4:00 pm.

4. *WorkshopLV: Freight*

The next WorkshopLV: Freight (Freight Advisory Committee) meeting will occur at the LVPC office on April 1st beginning at 10:00 am.

5. *WorkshopLV: Housing*

The next WorkshopLV: Housing meeting will occur at the LVPC office on May 14th beginning at 4:00 pm.

6. *Lehigh Valley Commercial Real Estate Outlook*

The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Commercial Real Estate Outlook event will occur on April 23rd at the Holiday Inn Conference Center (7736 Adrienne Drive, Breinigsville, PA), from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Complimentary tickets are available but limited, interested Commissioners should reach out to Ms. Vazquez for reservations.

7. *Lehigh Valley Mayors and Municipal Officials Reception*

The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Mayors and Municipal Officials Reception will occur on April 27th at ArtsQuest SteelStacks (101 Founders Way, Bethlehem, PA) from 5:00 pm to 7:30 pm. Complimentary tickets are available but limited, interested Commissioners should reach out to Ms. Vazquez for reservations.

8. *Northampton County Climate Summit*

The County of Northampton will be holding a climate summit on May 20th at Lehigh University's Iacocca Conference Center beginning at 8:30 am.

9. *2020 Northeast Bridge Preservation Partnership Meeting*

The 2020 Northeast Bridge Preservation Partnership meeting will take place from October 5th to October 7th at the Hilton Harrisburg. The Northeast Bridge Preservation Partnership is a regional forum of bridge practitioners working together to promote the benefits of Bridge Preservation through information sharing, education and application.

10. *Pennsylvania Automated Vehicle Summit*

The 2020 PA Automated Vehicle Summit will take place from October 26th to October 28th at the Pittsburgh Marriott City Center. Additional details regarding room rates and deadlines are forthcoming. The summit will discuss critical issues facing community and regional infrastructure planning and workforce development as attendees explore the future of automated vehicles.

Adjournment

With no further business, Mr. Molchany made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Zebrowski seconded the motion.

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