



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

GREG ZEBROWSKI
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Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, June 25, 2020 Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on June 25, 2020 at 7:00 pm using Microsoft Teams. Commissioners and the public were able to join the meeting via web (<http://tiny.cc/FCmtg0625> and/or via phone 1 872-222-9976, Conference ID: 597 020 244#)

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Bradley took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Steve Glickman, Michael Harakal, Kent Herman, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch, Kevin Schmidt, Joshua Seigel, and Donna Wright

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Malissa Davis, Liesel Dreisbach, Charles Elliott, Kevin Lott, Pamela Pearson, Tina Smith, and Greg Zebrowski

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Ce-Ce Gerlach, Mike Gibson, Jamie Johnson, Leonard Lightner, Owen O’Neil, and Amy Zanelli

Northampton County

Bryan Callahan, Janell Connolly, Darlene Heller, Susan Lawless, Robert Lammi, Carl Manges, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Spirit Rutzler, and Gerald Yob

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Charles Doyle, Tracy Oscavich, 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 May 28, 2020 LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Bradley reviewed the Commission votes on the May 28th agenda items. Ms. Pearson made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski reported that LVPC Committees will commence virtually beginning in July at their regularly scheduled times. Mr. Zebrowski also announced that Ms. Halper received the Lehigh Valley Business Woman of Influence Award and congratulated her on the achievement.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Joint Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee

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

- 1. Forks Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Follett Building Expansion #3*

Ms. Smith and Mr. Doyle reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Forks Township. The subject application proposes to construct a 90,100 sq. ft. building expansion and associated site improvements to an existing manufacturing facility. Follett's third expansion at the current location promotes development that complements the unique history of the Valley (policy 5.4). The LVPC commends this continued growth and encourages 'reinvestment in commercial areas' (of policy 4.6). The proposed project is consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because it is located in an area designated for development in the General Land Use Plan. As it relates to transit, LANTA service is provided in close proximity to the subject property, at the intersection of Kessler'sville and Uhler Roads. The LVPC wishes to underscore the importance of recommended pedestrian improvements at the subject property to 'encourage enhanced transit connections to improve mobility and job access' (policy 2.3) for employees who may wish to utilize this transit opportunity. The LVPC recommends that the developer consider additional opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure throughout the site design, such as the installation of rain gardens and pervious surfaces. As it relates to transportation improvements, the LVPC commends the developer for the proposed transportation improvements included with this expansion. The LVPC recommends the inclusion of on-site tractor-trailer staging and parking areas in order to further 'strengthen freight mobility to minimize quality of life impacts to residents' (policy 2.4) and 'expand truck parking options and amenities' (policy 2.4). Space should be provided for overnight parking, with sufficient overnight amenities within the site to accommodate both the tractor-trailers and drivers.

The LVPC recommends the installation of a snow-clearing tool at the site to help 'provide a safe, well-maintained transportation network' (policy 2.2). Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Herman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- 2. Hanover Township, LC – Land Use of Regional Significance – Rockefeller Industrial Development Lot 5A*

Ms. Seitz and Mr. Doyle reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Hanover Township, LC. The subject application proposes to construct a 453,600 sq. ft. warehouse, 50 ft. in height, which will include 3,240 sq. ft. of office space, 96 loading docks, and 100 tractor-trailer parking spaces. This is just south of the FedEx distribution facility on Willowbrook Road. This 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. However, there are significant unknown transportation infrastructure implications associated with this development, that need to be coordinated with a series of entities that own and/or plan for infrastructure management, maintenance and enhancement. The LVPC staff will coordinate a meeting on this topic as an after action to this letter. The proposed plan has been noted by both the Township and applicant as being associated with the previously approved Rockefeller Group project, which was reviewed by the LVPC in January of 2014, and included a Traffic Impact Study, or TIS. The proposed project was submitted with a Transportation Narrative, intended to supplement the analysis of the original TIS. While the Township has indicated that an updated TIS is not required due to provided trip generation numbers that are within the limits of trips anticipated in the overall traffic study for the Allen Township Industrial Subdivision, there are several discrepancies and notable considerations related to potential impacts of the proposal. Although the current plan is intended to be part of the overall Allen Township Industrial Subdivision land development proposal, the plans reviewed in 2014 by the LVPC do not indicate that the subject property is contained within the within the previously reviewed project area. An emerging trend in warehousing is 'high-cube warehousing', which this project proposes. Trip generation estimates were calculated based on traffic volume estimates of traditional warehousing, whereas the project proposes high-cube transload warehousing. The provided narrative implies that traditional warehouses generate greater traffic than high-cube transload and short-term storage warehouses, which are each estimated by a separate traffic trip generation rate by the Institute of Traffic Engineers Trip Generation Manual, 10th Edition. Such a proposal of automated services combined with warehousing may have greater propensity to generate increasing amounts of traffic, as these relatively new warehousing types have significant impact on the efficiency of the supply logistics chain. While this slightly overestimates the number of trips generated concerning the ITE trip manual estimates, the impacts of these warehouse types have not been observed over a significant period of time, and careful consideration should be given to the possibility of unknown adverse impacts as a result of the concentration of these develop types in a small area. Mr. Doyle and Ms. Seitz concluded the review with additional comments and recommendations by the LVPC regarding freight movements, freight facilities, multimodal related concerns, and emergency management services. Mr. Amato inquired as to whether or not the Lehigh Valley was prepared to handle high-cube warehousing when it comes to EMS response. Mr. Zebrowski stated that he was not sure if the issue was addressed by municipalities in the Lehigh Valley region. Mr. Harakal shared his concerns regarding traffic on Race Street. He inquired about the assurance regarding coordination with neighboring municipalities regarding mitigating the impact of such facilities on surrounding areas. Ms. Bradley stated that the LVPC will be working on getting another meeting with the surrounding municipalities and other organizations to discuss further planning. Ms. Wright asked if there were a type of 'special team' of EMS workers that specialize in these types of facilities. Ms. Bradley stated that the current planning group for this area does have police and fire departments at the table to discuss these issues, and

that the LVPC would work with the counties to discuss what other EMS teams need to be included. Mr. Seigel asked if there was any effort to follow-up or study if high-cube warehouses create more adverse traffic than traditional warehouses. Ms. Bradley stated that high-cube warehouses are partly about height but also about the construction of these buildings. That instead of having floors these building have more of a rack system that will bring their own types of challenges are an emerging situation as they continue to come. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Herman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. *Bethlehem Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Lehigh Valley Regional Charter Academy*

Ms. Smith and Mr. Doyle reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Bethlehem Township. The subject application proposes to construct a 215,030 sq. ft. educational building for K-12, and related improvements on 52.6 acres. The property is immediately adjacent to Route 22 to the south, and to the municipal boundary with Lower Nazareth Township to the north. The project site is located primarily within Farmland Preservation and preservation Buffer areas of the General Land Use Plan. A smaller portion of the project site is also located within the Development 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. Preservation Buffer is an area 'where factors may be present and capable of accommodating additional development', but conversely may be less suited for development 'to preserve these areas for agriculture or to maintain rural uses' based on specified development criteria. The site is almost entirely located within a High Preservation Priority area of the Farmland Preservation Plan, which indicates that continued agricultural use is strongly preferred at the subject property. The site's location in an agricultural area is underscored by the adjacent property, which is located within both an agricultural security area and agricultural easement, as well as the existing and preserved farmland areas of Lower Nazareth Township to the north. The proposed project is generally inconsistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because it does not 'preserve farmland to maintain rural character and provide open space' (policy 3.3), and because the site's location adjacent to both development and existing farmland make this a pivotal project for the Township. Project approval would result in the loss of a significant portion of the Township's little remaining agricultural land, and is likely to increase development pressure on farmlands nearby, even if they are not in Bethlehem Township. Additionally, the project will increase traffic that will adversely affect the neighboring community. The transportation impact study for the proposed project does not include coordination or reference to the proposed Colts Run South II project in Lower Nazareth Township, planned for the parcel immediately to the north of this project site. The two plans lack connectivity and may have been designed with no knowledge of the other. To 'support collaboration among project partners' (policy 2.6), the LVPC recommends that project synergy be discussed by both municipalities, specifically in regards to transportation collaboration (policy 2.2) and potential improvements and best planning practices that would be beneficial to both projects and the communities as a whole. Access via Broadhead Road by school buses is a concern due to the existing road geometry and lack of shoulders, and because the road has been posted with a truck restriction since 2004. While school buses are generally exempt from truck restrictions, the LVPC recommends that the developer confirm with Bethlehem Township as to whether an unsafe condition is presented with regard to the bus usage of Broadhead Road to 'provide a safe, well-maintained transportation network to move people and goods efficiently' (policy 2.2). Mr. Doyle and Ms. Smith shared additional comments from the LVPC concerning pedestrian networks, LANTA, parking, and environmentally sensitive design. Ms. Davis shared that one of the issues before the

Township is that though the area is in an agricultural zone, schools are a per-right use; and as such, being located on private property, could not be refused solely on the basis that the development is in an agricultural zone. Ms. Davis continued by stating that the Township goes have various concerns regarding one-way access to and from the facility, a roundabout from Hecktown Road to Oakland Road, and the intersection of Broadhead and 191. Concerning the intersection of Broadhead and 191, the Township has requested funds for a corridor study to see if they can receive approval from PennDOT to install a light at the location. Mr. Zebrowski shared his concerns with the project regarding its location in an Agricultural area. Ms. Wright asked if the project is located in an Agricultural Security Area. Ms. Smith shared that part of the project is located in an Ag. Security Area. Mr. Repasch asked if the Commission was aware of the residential component associated with the project. Ms. Bradley stated that no residential component was included with the project submission. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the presented staff comments. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. With Ms. Davis abstaining from the vote, the motion passed.

4. *City of Easton – Land Use of Regional Significance – Lafayette College, Portlock Black Cultural Center*

Ms. Seitz reviewed the land use of regional significance for the City of Easton. The subject application proposes to consolidate a series of lots and construct a new 6,315 sq. ft. building for the Portlock Black Cultural Center with related site improvements. The proposed project 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 one block away from a Major Corridor outlined in the Transportation Plan. LANTA currently provides public transportation service in the immediate vicinity on Cattell Street at the intersection of Clinton Terrace, on the same city block as the proposed project location. The LVPC commends the inclusion of sidewalk improvements that support a comprehensive pedestrian network and matches the existing neighborhood sidewalk grid, allowing for easy accessibility to transit. This improved connections between mass transit and pedestrian infrastructure (policy 2.3). The project site is located in a Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The LVPC supports the City of Easton aim to protect and preserve historic buildings and streetscapes by promoting adaptive reuse of historic buildings (policy 5.4). Reusing the existing dwellings on the site would improve the project's consistency by preserving historic buildings. The applicant should ensure that façade design and architecture is consistent with the surrounding historic buildings in the area, utilizing 'context-specific design solutions' (policy 5.4). The LVPC commends the proposed educational facility use that 'supports the educational and social experiences of students of African, Latino, Asian, and Native American descent, as well as the LGBTQIA population'. This project serves to 'create public spaces that reflect and enhance local culture', 'supports community arts' and strengthens cultural centers, all in support of complementing the unique history, environment, culture and needs of the Valley (policy 5.4). Additionally, the proposed project 'promotes education that improves social and economic opportunities', which is critical to improve equitable opportunities through the development of a well-trained workforce and the removal of barriers to employment (policy 4.3). The LVPC recommends that educational institutions incorporate environmentally sensitive building and landscape design, such as green roofs or solar panels. This would increase cost-effectiveness of building operation and further academic endeavors related to these technologies, while enhancing the campus setting, demonstrating environmental leadership within the region, and 'reducing climate change impacts through mitigation and adaption' (policy 3.4). Mr. Glickman asked if the building was a redevelopment of an existing building or a completely new construction. Ms. Seitz stated that the school is proposing to remove the existing building and build a new one. Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach

seconded the motion. With Mr. Elliott abstaining from the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

5. *City of Easton – Land Use of Regional Significance – Lafayette College, McCartney Street Housing + Wellness Center*

Ms. Seitz reviewed the land use of regional significance for the City of Easton. The subject application proposes to redevelop an entire block by consolidating existing lots, demolishing existing structures, and constructing a 94,274 sq. ft. building that will encompass an entire block. The four-story building will provide student housing and will offer health and counselling services. The redevelopment project site is located within the development area of the General Land Use Plan and is generally consistent with *FutureLV* through reuse and redevelopment in an urban area (policy 1.1) and because it promotes ‘education that improves social and economic opportunities’ (policy 4.3). LANTA service is currently provided one block from the subject property. The proximity to transit service of the proposal supports linkage between growing job and population centers (policy 2.3) and sidewalks proposed along Marquis Street improve ‘connections between bus stops and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure’ (policy 5.2). The LVPC supports the City of Easton’s aim to protect and preserve historic buildings and streetscapes by promoting adaptive reuse of historic buildings (policy 5.4). The applicant should ensure that façade design and architecture is consistent with the surrounding historic buildings in the area, utilizing ‘context-specific design solutions’ (policy 5.4). The LVPC recommends that the proposed loading zone be designated for rideshare and to accommodate retail drop-off and delivery services to ‘adapt to the contemporary retail economy’ (policy 4.2) and ‘coordinate infrastructure investments that support Centers and Corridors’ (policy 4.6). The LVPC recommends inclusion of bicycle racks with the proposed development in order to strengthen bicycle infrastructure (policy 5.3). The LVPC also recommends that education institutions incorporate environmentally sensitive building and landscape design, such as green roofs or solar panels. This would further academic endeavors related to these technologies, enhance the campus setting, demonstrate environmental leadership within the region, and ‘reduce climate change impacts through mitigation and adaption’ (policy 3.4). Ms. Wright made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. With Mr. Elliott abstaining from the vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Environment Committee

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

1. *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan*

Mr. Reese announced that the *Walk/RollLV Active Transportation Plan* was adopted by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study on June 3. This action follows approval by the LVPC on April 30th. The adopted plan is posted on the LVPC website.

2. *COVID-19 Impact on Air Quality*

Ms. Bradley and Mr. Reese gave a brief presentation on the impact of COVID-19 to the air quality levels of the region. In the coming months the LVPC plans to take a closer look at the longer term trends in the data to establish the historical context regarding air quality in region and refine analysis on COVID-19 impacts.

OLD BUSINESS

1. BUILD Grant – Riverside Drive

Ms. Oscavich announced a reminder that the LVPC has applied for a US DOT, Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant. The grant request is \$24 million and match is \$20 million to make the total project cost \$44 million. Ms. Oscavich announced that supports can go to BuildRiversideDrive.com to send to a letter of support.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Equity and Inclusion Assessment

Ms. Bradley, Ms. Seitz and Ms. Smith gave a brief presentation on the work that the LVPC is doing regarding equity. All data and maps can be found on the DATALV webpage at lvpc.org.

2. Business Cycle Colum

Mr. Assad announced that the next LVPC column will run on July 5 and focus on the latest equity analysis done by the LVPC.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. National Association of Regional Council's Photo Contest

Mr. Assad announced that the LVPC's FutureLV campaign won a national awards during the NARC annual meeting held June 7-10. There were 30 submissions from fellow Metropolitan Planning Organizations around the country and only 6 won awards.

2. Meals on Wheels – Thank you letter

Mr. Assad shared a thank letter from Meals on Wheels of the Greater Lehigh Valley regarding the LVPC's Jeans-for-a-Cause \$200 in donations to their organization.

3. Various Articles

Mr. Assad gave a brief summary of multiple articles that cover timely, impactful topics to planning such as reallocation of road space to for multimodal use, climate change, COVID impacts and more.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Monthly Subdivision and Land Development Report

Ms. Bradley presented information on the May 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:

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; Ms. Pearson made the motion. Mr. Lott seconded the motion. Mr. Zebrowski thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director

Bethany Vazquez, Program Associate