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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday, August 26, 2021 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday August 26, 2021. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Thursday July 8th, 2021.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Amofah took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Percy Dougherty, Steven Glickman, Michael Harakal, Kent Herman, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Owen O'Neil, Kathy Rader, and Kevin Schmidt.

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Malissa Davis, Liesel Dreisbach, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, Darlene Heller, Susan Lawless, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, David O'Connell, Pamela Pearson, Tina Smith and Greg Zebrowski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Philip Armstrong, Geoff Brace, Mike Gibson, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Jamie Johnson, Leonard Lightner, Ray O'Connell, Stephen Repasch and Joshua Seigel.

Northampton County

Janell Connolly, Robert Donchez, Kevin Lott, Carl Manges, and Lamont McClure.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Paul Carafides, Geoff Reese, Jill Seitz and Yvonne Amofah

Public Present: Joe, Zak, Shawna L., Lori Stauffer, Kurt Bresswein, Bob Hahn, Terri O'Leary, Derek Haager, Huey Lewis, Elizabeth, Thomas Amidon, Bill Friedmann, Jeff Ward, Heidi von Liebenstein and Beth McCrea

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Dougherty shared his sadness over the passing of former LVPC Executive Director Michael Kaiser, stating that Kaiser was a steady hand guiding the Lehigh Valley for more than 45 years. He noted that while most people know how Mr. Kaiser helped get Interstate 78 and Route 33 built, and set a vision for how the region would develop, many may not have known that he fought to protect our environment, working hard to preserve farmland and open space, while expanding the region's parks and trails network. Several other Commissioners echoed Mr. Dougherty's sentiments, and offered their condolences to Mr. Kaiser's family, including his daughter Wendy.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski announces that the LVPC was recently accepted into the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Local Climate Action Program. The Commission will work with DEP to get technical assistance to create a regional greenhouse gas inventory that will ultimately lead to climate actions that will help mitigate the impacts of climate change on the Lehigh Valley.

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the Thursday July 22nd, 2021 LVPC meeting are attached, and he then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McGee made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Rader abstaining.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee

ACTION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Trade Center III – Land Use of Regional Significance – Lower Nazareth Township and Bethlehem Township

Ms. Seitz reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Lower Nazareth Township and Bethlehem Township proposing to construct two warehouses (295,750 and 299,795 square feet) on the site of the Dutch Springs water park. While the proposal generally exhibits consistency with the General Land Use Plan Map because as it is located in an area designated for Development, multiple aspects of the proposal exhibit inconsistency with policies of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and must be addressed in order to support the long-term interests of the townships, County and region. The traffic impacts of this development, in conjunction with existing and approved freight-based businesses along the Hanoverville Road and Route 191 corridor, must be assessed in consideration of the entire regional transportation system (of Policy 2.4). A weight-restricted bridge on Hanoverville Road poses issues for both truck and transit accessibility to the site and is a critical issue that must be addressed immediately. The LVPC urges continued and frequent conversation between the Townships, LVPC and project partners to 'expand collaboration on planning and development between neighboring municipalities' (of Policy 4.6).

Commission members vocalized issues with the development proposal from air quality to transportation system impacts and from loss of a privately-help recreational facility to limited municipal controls because of an aged-Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Several members of the public also shared concerns regarding the loss of the recreational facility.

No questions were asked of Ms. Seitz. Mr. Zebrowski asked the Commission to make a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Molchany made the motion, Mr. Dougherty seconded the motion. Motion passed with Ms. Davis abstaining.

ACTION ITEM: Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital – Land Use of Regional Significance – Upper Saucon Township

Ms. Bradley reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Upper Saucon Township proposing to construct a 123,923-square-foot rehabilitation hospital, a relocation of the existing facility in the City of Allentown. Ms. Bradley states that the proposal generally exhibits consistency with *FutureLV* because it is in the Development area of the General Land Use Plan, and in this area there is growing development interest and access to appropriate transportation and utility infrastructure. However, pedestrian movements in the vicinity should be scrutinized, particularly regarding safety concerns for pedestrians attempting to cross Center Valley Parkway to access the Promenade Shops. Sidewalks, landscaping and a bus shelter were commended. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept staff comments. A motion was made by Mr. Melnick and seconded by Mr. Harakal and carried with no abstentions.

ACTION ITEM: 905 Pennsylvania Avenue – Land Use of Regional Significance – Plainfield Township and Wind Gap Borough

Ms. Seitz reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Plainfield Township and Wind Gap Borough proposing to construct two warehouses (786,000 and 308,000 square feet) and a 19,520-square-foot office and shop. The project has the potential to exhibit consistency with *FutureLV* if the appropriate

considerations are applied to mitigate the potential impacts on the community: roadways in the vicinity are not built to withstand the heavy vehicular traffic the development will generate and freight routes will need to be designated, for example. The proposal's consistency with *FutureLV* can be improved by providing pedestrian and transit infrastructure that would facilitate connections to nearby trails. However, vehicles traveling to and from the site will most likely travel through Wind Gap Borough via South Broadway (Route 512). As development proposals in the Slate Belt area continue, the LVPC urges the continuation of long-term discussions between the Slate Belt communities, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and LVPC to 'assess the impact of freight-based businesses on the entire regional transportation system' (of Policy 2.4).

Mr. Zebrowski asked the Commission to make a motion to accept staff comments. Mr. Harakal made the motion, seconded by Mr. O'Connell and the motion passed with no abstentions.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the August Comprehensive Committee items with staff presenting information. Ms. Seitz provided highlights of a Moore Township zoning ordinance amendment that proposes numerous requirements and standards for warehouse developments.

Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staffs' comments. Mr. Molchany made the motion, seconded by Ms. Heller. Motion passed with Ms. Morgan abstaining on the South Whitehall item.

Environment Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Ms. Dreisbach stated that the Environment Committee Summary Sheet is in the packet for review. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach made the motion, seconded by Ms. Pearson. The motion carried with no abstentions.

INFORMATION ITEM: Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative Final Rulemaking

Mr. Reese told the commission that the purpose of the 10-state Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) is to cap the CO2 emissions from PA electric sector producers, reduce the cap over time, sell allowances for CO2 emissions to producers and reinvest the proceeds for the elimination of air pollution. He stated the goal is to reduce CO2 emissions by 26% by 2025 and by 80% by 2050. He explained that Environmental Quality Board (EQB) adopted the final regulation on July 13, 2021. He said the final-form regulation will take effect immediately upon publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, with an intent to initiative begin in 2022. Mr. Zebrowski asks for any questions or comments. There were none.

Transportation Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: Infrastructure Funding Potential

Mr. Carafides presented information on the Senate's Federal Infrastructure Bill that includes \$550 billion in new investments future over five years. The Bill was passed by the Senate on Tuesday August 10th and will go to the House for approval on or around September 20th. Mr. Zebrowski asked for any questions or comments. There were none.

Old Business:

INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports

Monthly Subdivision, Land Development, Stormwater and Municipal Ordinance/Plans Report

Ms. Bradley presented plan and review activity for July, which included 12 Subdivisions, 33 Development proposals, 13 reviews for Stormwater Management, and 7 Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 65 reviews. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions hearing none, the agenda progressed.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Carafides presented the Highway Traffic Monitoring report for July. Vehicular traffic counts were near the highest levels on three of our four continuous counters since even before the COVID-19 pandemic began. At this point traffic seems to have found its new normal as numbers have stayed steady over the last few months.

Truck traffic tells the story of our economy and the needs created by the change in e-commerce during the pandemic. Truck traffic counts on Interstate 78 are on par with the past few months in these “new normal” times. When factoring the growth of trucks into the vehicular traffic counts, passenger vehicles on I-78 and Route 33 may be back to the old normal, but the increase of trucks is what has increased the overall average daily trips. These counts are the new reality for the region. LVPC will continue to collect the data and do a monthly analysis to better plan for our future investments into the transportation system. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions or comments. No questions were asked.

New Business:

INFORMATION ITEM: 8th Annual LVPC Gala and Awards, October 12, 5:30 PM, Virtual

Mr. Assad announced that the 8th Annual Gala + Awards was scheduled for 5:30 pm, October 12, and it will again be virtual. He explained that it would once again be about an hour-long video, but this year would include a 30-minute panel discussion where experts will talk about how the pandemic has changed us, and where we’re headed in the future. He then asked everyone to fill out a five question survey that would help in planning the Gala, and asked everyone to stay tuned for tickets becoming available at lvpc.org. Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone had any questions? No questions asked.

Executive Director’s Report

None.

Communications:

INFORMATION ITEM: Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Morning Call Business Cycle column, due to hit the internet the next day and the Sunday paper Aug. 29. He explained that in the column, Becky wrote about our BuildLV Mid-Year Report, which details a very busy first half of the development year in which we’ve reviewed more homes than we’ve seen in more than a decade and twice the amount of industrial development than we saw by last year at this time. He stated that the next column was scheduled to publish October 10. Mr. Assad went on to remind everyone to support Riverside Drive project and the LVPC’s application for a \$23 million grant by going to raisersidedrive.com and hitting the support tab at the top of the page. Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone had any questions? No questions were asked.

INFORMATION ITEM: Plan Lehigh Valley radio show on WDIY NPR 88.1FM

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley 30-minute radio show, hosted by Becky and Mr. Assad, which detailed the BuildLV: Mid-Year development report, and the busy first six months of home and industrial development proposals.

He explained the next show would include guests, developers J.B. Reilly and Mark Mulligan, talking about reuse and redevelopment projects in Allentown and Easton. He stated that show was scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, September 6, and that all past shows are streaming at wdit.org. Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone had any questions? No questions were asked.

Public Engagement

INFORMATION ITEM:

Mr. Assad announced that the Local Technical Assistance Program had a full schedule of virtual classes right into September, beginning Aug. 31 with its Roadside Vegetation Control class and continuing with about one virtual class per week. He explained that the classes are free and anyone can still sign up at

lvpc.org/ltap, or by calling Brian Hite.

Mr. Assad then announced that the Lehigh Valley Government Academy will restart in September. He said these will be our first in-person training of the year, and because of the need for social distancing, will be a max of 18 students. The two classes scheduled are Community Planning on three consecutive Mondays, September 13, 20 and 27, and Zoning Administration on three consecutive Wednesdays October 13, 20 and 27. All the classes tend to run from 5:30 pm to 9 pm, each evening. Anyone can sign up online at LVPC.ORG. Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone had any questions? No questions were asked.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on September 23. Mr. Zebrowski then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Molchany loudly made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:
Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director