

# **The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT**

**November 6, 2019 – 7 PM, Weona Park Community Center, 25 S. Main Street, Pen Argyl, PA 18072**

## **Steering Committee Attendees:**

Bangor: Brooke Kerzner, Nathaniel Dysard  
East Bangor: Jason Huggan  
L. Mt. Bethel: Susan Disidore, Sandra Newman, Jen Smethers  
Pen Argyl: Janell Connolly  
Plainfield: Tom Petrucci, Stephen Hurni, Terry Kleintop  
Portland: Lance Prator, Stephanie Steele  
Roseto: Cathy Martino, Carl Renna  
U. Mt. Bethel: Anthony DeFranco  
Washington: Robert Smith, Justin Huratiak, John Buck  
Wind Gap: George Hinton, David Hess, Louise Firestone

## **Members of the Public in Attendance:**

Judith Henckel – Upper Mount Bethel Township  
Gail Putvinski – Washington Township  
Paul Levits – Plainfield Township

## **Planning Partners in Attendance:**

Peter Barnard – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC)  
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC)  
Simon Okumu – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC)  
Stephen Reider – Slate Belt Rising  
Mark Hartney – Northampton County

## **Minutes:**

### **Roll Call**

Ms. Rockwell took roll call.

### **Minutes from the October 2nd Meeting**

Mr. Petrucci called for a vote on the October 2, 2019 meeting minutes, which are attached to the agenda. Mr. Hurni made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Dysard seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

### **Issues and Opportunities Report**

Mr. Petrucci said that Peter Barnard emailed a revised copy of the Issues and Opportunities report to all Steering Committee members on November 1.

Mr. Barnard provided a PowerPoint presentation that highlighted the comments and questions received on the report and the Development Analysis section of the report. He reviewed the main categories of comments and questions received by the municipalities. Spelling and punctuation errors have been corrected. Several municipalities had questions regarding the land

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analysis. In some municipalities, agricultural zoning allows for higher-density residential similar to low-density residential zoning. There were questions about how the population and housing projections were done. Household formation rates are changing, but some reports say they are going up and some say they are going down. The LVPC used the current rate for projections.

The Transportation Concerns map was revised to correct the LANTA service area in Bangor Borough, and the lack of LANTA service was added to East Bangor Borough. The Municipal Concerns chart was revised to indicate the most recent traffic counts and the ratio of vehicles and trucks per day. In the Slate Belt Concerns text, four of the projects had the same ranking. The text was clarified to indicate that there was a four-way tie. In the Additional Concerns chart, O W Road was previously shown in Plainfield Township but was revised to be in Washington Township.

A Development Sites map was added to the report and municipal addresses were clarified in the chart. The property tax calculation was revised to be based on a percentage of the total revenue for 2019 instead of the total budget. Several municipalities had grant money that skewed the calculations. This method meant any non-recurring revenue was factored out.

Mr. Barnard asked if there were any questions on the revisions to the report. Mr. Dysard noted that the traffic counts for Route 512 were all the same and asked if that was correct. Mr. Barnard said he would look into that.

Since there were a number of questions related to the Development Analysis, Mr. Barnard reviewed the methodology with the committee. Mr. Okumu began the presentation. He described the average cost technique that was used and discussed the four scenarios used in the analysis. Mr. Barnard noted that the High and Case Study scenarios were modeled around new or redeveloped properties. The High Scenario used high-value properties within the municipality to model the value of new development. For the Case Study Scenario, recent high-profile projects with recent assessments were selected, as many municipalities did not have a recent development of the same type needed for the analysis.

Mr. Okumu reviewed the steps for the four scenarios. Mr. Barnard said that the 100+ county land use codes were reduced to eight to make the analysis more manageable. Mr. Hartney asked how vacant and agriculture properties were identified. Mr. Barnard said it was based on how the codes were reported in the County database.

Mr. Barnard reviewed the revenue and cost calculations. He noted that the analysis was also completed for the school districts, however, they don't all follow municipal boundaries.

Mr. Okumu reviewed the scenario results. In the Existing and Average scenarios, all sites had very low value, except for downtown Portland and an industrial property in Wind Gap. Vacant properties are a lost potential revenue. For the High and Case Study scenarios, local high-valued properties out-performed county properties in several cases, indicating local projects can produce strong tax revenues. High-density residential and mixed-use development have the highest value, due in large part to building value. High-density residential pays for itself for the school district if it's new construction and communities maintain their current proportion of children. A number of municipalities do not have a lot of kids, so high density does not have the impact on the school district many would expect. Mr. Huratiak asked how you quantify the impacts of different development types on the region. Mr. Barnard said that, in terms of traffic, single-family residential has very high trip generation, much higher than apartments or rowhomes. A lot of low-density residential has a big impact on school districts because of larger

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families. There is a need for more conversation on traffic impacts of development. Agricultural and vacant properties have a lower value because there are no buildings and are assessed at lower rates. Industrial impacts of truck traffic is higher than residential impacts. Mr. Petrucci said Plainfield Township studied costs related to preserved farmland and could provide the study information.

Mr. Barnard asked if there were any questions on the Development Analysis. Mr. Hartney noted that in the County Livable Landscapes plan, homes adjacent to open space are worth more than those that are not. Mr. Barnard said a lot of things can increase property values, including trails, parks, etc., but this analysis did not look at proximity to these kinds of resources. Mr. Petrucci asked if the values account for future infrastructure replacement. Mr. Barnard said they do not. If a large development is proposed, it will need its own cost analysis. The analysis done for the report is best for incremental development. Mr. Petrucci asked who would take on that assessment, municipalities or developers and would that be put in a Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. Mr. Barnard said he would look into that. A Traffic Impact Study includes some of that, but not in depth on infrastructure costs. Mr. Hurni asked what was done for the FedEx/Race Street project. Mr. Barnard said he would look at the file. The project would have had a Traffic Study. He said these analyses have to be in an ordinance or the developer doesn't have to complete them.

**Plan Slate Belt**

Mr. Barnard reviewed the project scope. The first three phases of the project are complete. The 5th phase is developing the plan and policy framework, which will include conversations on what kinds of recommendations the municipalities want to see and will be the focus of the group. The next phase is creating the draft plan based on the policy framework and then developing a process to finalize the plan. Based on internal conversations, LVPC staff will evaluate the best way to develop all the pieces of the plan.

Mr. Hartney asked, with the completion of the Issues and Opportunities report, if it is appropriate to do a press release to the general public, indicating the accomplishment of completing the report and the ten municipalities working together. In this way, we could obtain additional input to see if the communities think we are going in the right direction. The press release could be linked to the Plan Slate Belt website. Mr. Barnard said he will discuss this with Becky Bradley. He asked the committee if the report could be placed on the website. The group indicated they were fine with that. Mr. Barnard will include LVPC contact information as well as Chair and Vice-Chair information.

Mr. Petrucci said the 2020 meeting schedule needs to be advertised for the next agenda. Mr. Barnard said LVPC staff will be in touch regarding calendars. Mr. Barnard proposed that the committee not meet in January but reconvene in February, and the committee agreed.

**Next Steps**

Mr. Barnard asked the committee members to review their current comprehensive plans for the December meeting and identify something they like about the plan, whether it's a policy idea or recommendation.

Mr. Hurni noted that, at the October meeting, a question was asked if it would be appropriate to draft a letter to the State regarding the transportation funding cuts for the ten municipalities to sign. He asked if any thought was given on how to do that. Mr. Barnard said he would discuss this with Ms. Bradley.

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**Adjourn**

Mr. Petrucci called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hurni made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Smethers seconded the motion.

**Attachments**

- October 2, 2019 Steering Committee Minutes
- November 6, 2019 PowerPoint Presentation

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.