

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT

October 2, 2019 – 7 PM, Weona Park Community Center, 25 S. Main Street, Pen Argyl, PA 18072

Steering Committee Attendees:

Bangor: Brooke Kerzner, James Kresge, Nathaniel Dysard
East Bangor: Jason Huggan, Susan Ruggiero
L. Mt. Bethel: Susan Disidore, Sandra Newman
Pen Argyl: Robin Zmoda, Janell Connolly
Plainfield: Tom Petrucci, Stephen Hurni, Terry Kleintop
Portland: Lance Prator, Stephanie Steele, Hubert McHugh
Roseto: Joseph Angelini
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
Dave Friedman – Upper Mount Bethel Township
Scott Cole – Upper Mount Bethel Township
Stavros Barbounis – Upper Mount Bethel Township
Gail Putvinski – Washington Township
Paul Levits – Plainfield Township

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Becky Bradley – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC)
Peter Barnard – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC)
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC)
Stephen Reider – Slate Belt Rising

Minutes:

Roll Call

Ms. Bradley took roll call.

Minutes from the September 4th Meeting

Mr. Petrucci called for a vote on the September 4, 2019 meeting minutes, which are attached to the agenda. Mr. Hurni made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Prator seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

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Slate Belt Bash Report

Mr. Barnard described the Slate Belt Bash event, which was held on September 29 at Weona Park in Pen Argyl Borough. LVPC staff attended the event to obtain input from the community through discussions and a chalkboard cube. The cube provided a variety of facts about the Slate Belt as well as two questions for the event attendees to respond to: 1) What Do You Love Most? and 2) What Concerns You? Photos of the event will be circulated to the committee. Mr. Barnard discussed the comments received and provided a write-up that will be added to the Issues and Opportunities Report Community Engagement section.

Draft Issues and Opportunities Report

Mr. Barnard reviewed the Issues and Opportunities Working Draft, which was emailed to committee members on September 27, 2019. A hard copy of the draft report was also provided at the meeting. He briefly went over the structure of the report before going through it section by section. Each section has a brief introduction, followed by relevant data, a detailed analysis and a summary.

The Demographic and Housing Analyses were previously reviewed with the committee. The new component was the Equity Analysis, which shows access to opportunity for the different census tracts in the Slate Belt.

The Land Analysis section is a new section. Several maps are included in this section depicting the existing landscape, including natural resources; farmland; parks, recreation and open space; water and sewer; existing land use and municipal zoning. A land analysis was completed, based on existing municipal zoning, to further discussion about where the region wants growth to occur and how that growth should be structured. Ms. Bradley noted that the analysis is a baseline analysis that provides insight on existing municipal zoning. The townships have plenty of space for projected growth, however, the boroughs are mostly built out.

Mr. Barnard discussed the Economic Analysis, which looks at the concentration of economic sectors in the region. Manufacturing is an important sector in the Slate Belt, however, other areas have much lower concentrations of employment, such as tourism. The analysis will help the communities think about the areas that are important and the areas that should be considered for economic growth. Mr. DeFranco asked where apparel manufacturing is located in the region since it is shown to be high in the region. Mr. Barnard responded that the data is national data, the location is unknown and the most recent data available is from 2017. Mr. Barnard noted that the Shift-Share Analysis chart was not included in the report but should have been. He will send it out to committee members. The Regional Commuting map shows the commuting patterns as a percentage of the Slate Belt as a whole. The All Commuters map information was obtained from the US Census Bureau. A question was raised that the map doesn't capture people that do not commute. Ms. Bradley said that that information is on the LVPC website. It is not a huge percentage of overall jobs, but we can get back to them with that information.

Mr. Barnard discussed the Development Analysis, which is also a new section. The section looks at development, redevelopment and investment sites identified by each community, with a fiscal impact analysis completed for the development and redevelopment sites. A review of municipal property taxes found that most Slate Belt municipalities do not take in anywhere near their revenue in property taxes. Most of the municipal revenue comes from a wide variety of sources, but only property tax was considered because the analysis was focused on the impact of property investment. The focus of the analysis was on what the revenues and costs might be

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for the sites under four scenarios: Existing, Average, High and Case Study. Revenues and costs were calculated per acre. The Case Study scenario used similar projects completed in Northampton County to those identified by the communities for development and redevelopment. All properties under the High and Case Study scenarios showed improvement.

Ms. Bradley discussed the Transportation Analysis section. The mapping in this section identifies the existing transportation network in the Slate Belt. The analysis can help determine how adding more housing and jobs might affect roads, and as part of this planning process, identify the transportation needs for the region. The Bridges map can be layered onto the Crashes map to identify possible investment opportunities. The Transportation Concerns identified by the communities show some alignment with the Crashes map. Mr. Kresge noted several errors in this section: On page 80, under the Bangor Borough section, Route 511 should be changed to Route 512. On page 79, the map shows the wrong location for the lack of LANTA access. There was a miscommunication on the location since the Borough uses different terminology for what it considers the "south side".

Mr. Hurni questioned whether there was any legislative recourse to the transportation cuts to the Lehigh Valley. Ms. Bradley said that the state had to make up for the loss of gas tax revenue. She isn't certain what can be done except hold the legislature accountable. Mr. Hurni asked if it would be appropriate to draft a letter for the Slate Belt municipalities to sign. Ms. Bradley said we will think about how to do that.

Lower Mount Bethel Township asked if there is a way to show the impacts (damages) of truck traffic. Ms. Bradley said that, if we have a classification count, it would tell us how many trucks, if they're overweight, etc. This type of count isn't usually done, but if we could get a list of where the municipality wants the information for, we could get traffic counters to collect that information. We would need a list of locations as soon as possible to schedule the counts.

For the Community Engagement section, Mr. Barnard said that the Slate Belt Bash handout will be added to the report. Finally, the Future Vision section includes the six draft goals identified by the Steering Committee at the September meeting.

Next Steps

Mr. Petrucci asked how the committee meetings will proceed in the future. Mr. Barnard said that committee members should review the draft report and send any questions or comments by October 16. This information will provide a better idea of concerns and can be the focus of future committee meetings. Ms. Bradley noted that the Issues and Opportunities report is the starting point to developing policies and actions.

Adjourn

Mr. Petrucci called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kresge made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Angelini seconded the motion.

Attachments

- September 4, 2019 Steering Committee Minutes
- Slate Belt Bash Comments

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.