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Executive Director

## LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

### Minutes from the Thursday, April 22, 2021 Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on April 22, 2021. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Monday, December 28, 2020.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Winton took Roll Call.

#### Members in Attendance:

##### Lehigh County

Mr. Brace, Mr. Dougherty, Mr. Elbich, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Glickman, Mr. Harakal, Mr. Herman, Mr. Lightner, Mr. Molchany, Ms. Moore, Ms. Morgan, Mr. Repasch, and Mr. Schmidt

##### Northampton County

Mr. Amato, Ms. Davis, Ms. Dreisbach, Mr. Andrew Elliott, Mr. Charles Elliott, Ms. Lawless, Mr. Lott, Mr. McGee, Mr. McGorry, Mr. Melnick, Mr. O'Connell, Ms. Pearson, Tina Smith, Mr. Yob, and Greg Zebrowski.

#### Members Absent:

##### Lehigh County

Executive Armstrong, Ms. Gerlach, Ms. Johnson, Mr. O'Connell, and Mr. Seigel.

##### Northampton County

Ms. Connolly, Mr. Donchez, Ms. Heller, Executive McClure, Mr. Panto, and Ms. Rutzler

**Staff Present:** Mr. Assad, Ms. Bradley, Mr. Hanes, Mr. Hite, Mr. Reese, Ms. Seitz, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Winton.

**Public Present:** Walter Hungarter and Jeff Ward

#### COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone wanted to speak; hearing none we proceeded to the next agenda item.

#### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski briefly celebrated Earth Day and gave special recognition to Harry Trexler and the Trexler Nature Preserve, The Rodale Family for promoting health through organic farming as well as The Moore family, for Hugh and Louise Moore Park. The generosity of those families was based on the idea that protecting our environment preserves our region's character.

## MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the March 25, 2021, LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Dreisbach made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

### Comprehensive Planning Committee

Mr. Melnick presented the April Comprehensive Committee items with staff presenting information.

1. *Action Item:* South Whitehall Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Parkway Manor Elementary School

Ms. Smith detailed the proposal which includes the construction of a new student drop-off facility. The proposal is generally consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. As it serves to improve transportation performance measures. The LVPC applauds the proposal designed to improve traffic flow. Additionally, the proposed sidewalks avoid existing mature trees which service to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Mr. Glickman asked what are the above ground infiltration detention facilities exactly?

Ms. Smith indicated they are storm water. Mr. Glickman further asked if they were bump ups, or 5 feet high? Mr. Reese indicated the facilities are ground level and below, so they offer no visual obstructions. Mr. Elbich asked why the storm water failures were not mentioned in the letter. Ms. Smith indicated that typically the main body of the letter reflects the consistency or inconsistencies of *FutureLV* that the storm-water review is more technical and treated differently and takes a few more attempts before it is approved. Ms. Bradley added that the storm-water review is a different law which is separate from the Municipalities Planning Code. Mr. Reese detailed the appropriate storm-water management act from 1978 and other laws for the 16 water-sheds within the two counties. Mr. Zebrowski asked if there were any questions or comments. Hearing none he asked for a motion to accept the staff's letter. Mr. Molchany made a motion to accept the letter. Ms. Lawless seconded the motion. Ms. Morgan abstained from the vote and the motion was passed.

2. *Action Item:* Lower Macungie Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Mertztown Residential Subdivision

Ms. Seitz detailed the application. Which contains more than 300 proposed residential units. Which includes, 264 single-family detached dwellings and 136 townhouses, at Mertztown and Butz Roads. The site is located within the Preservation Buffer of the General Land Use Plan of *FutureLV*, which are areas where preservation is preferable, but where factors may be present to accommodate development. The location is capable of accommodating the proposal based on the availability of public utility infrastructure, and the site being contiguous to existing development. The LVPC commends the range of housing types included in the proposal and strongly encourages ensuring housing opportunities are accessible for a wide range of individuals and households at a variety of income levels. The letter encourages roadway and traffic control-related improvements. The letter goes on to commend the inclusion of sidewalks

along the internal roadways and recommends extension of sidewalks along Butz Road and commends the pedestrian trail in the southeastern portion of the site. Mr. Zebrowski asked if the letter can be modified to remove the statement of “lower-wage job opportunities”. Ms. Seitz indicated it can certainly be removed. Mr. Repasch asked if it is industrial development or is it warehouse development? Ms. Bradley stated Industrial development is the general term for all things. There was another comment asking if the northern most roads were already there? Ms. Seitz indicated that this developer worked with the previous developer to connect the developments. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to approve. Mr. Lightner seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

3. *Action Item:* City of Bethlehem – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – OMU Zoning District Design Standards

The privately proposed zoning ordinance amendment refers specifically to a property located at 1170 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which is a key redevelopment site and most accessible locations. However, the proposal is inconsistent with *FutureLV* because the presented amendments would result in suburban-scale development patterns that are not conducive to multimodal accessibility. The LVPC strongly encourages reinvestment in this commercial area that is at a pedestrian scale in order for future development to complement the unique needs of the Valley and City. Although the amendments are intended for a specific site, the proposal would affect the entirety of the Office Mixed-Use (OMU) Zoning District. Therefore, the LVPC recommends the developer seek a variance from the Bethlehem Zoning Hearing Board where the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code directs requests for relief. Mr. Glickman commends the LVPC’s letter and agrees this should be heard by the zoning hearing board and the community. Mr. Zebrowski agrees that this project should receive full consideration from the zoning hearing board and public. Mr. Melnick made a motion to approve. Ms. Moore seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

4. *Action Item:* Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Summary Sheet and asked if there were any questions. Hearing no questions Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Repasch made a motion to approve. Mr. Charles Elliott seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

## **Environment Committee**

Mr. Repasch presented the report for the Environment Committee climate action and hazard mitigation. Also, Mr. Repasch noted it is Earth Day and the important work of the commission and discussed Natural Resources Plan and the four primary policies and 31 actions that work together to reduce the climate change impacts. Mr. Glickman asked if we are required to review climate action plans? Ms. Bradley stated that the LVPC does not have specific legal requirements to review under the municipalities planning code, but general authority. However, the City of Bethlehem and Easton include the LVPC and efforts to remain consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

## Transportation Committee

1. *Action Item:* Allentown Street Vacation – Dale Street from Catasauqua Avenue to N. Brick Street and unopened part of N. Brick Street

Mr. Herman introduced Mr. Okumu to report on the Street Vacation request. Mr. Okumu detailed the street vacation request submitted by Mr. Juan L. Betancourt of 1105 Catasauqua Avenue, Allentown, PA 18102, and it is recommended that the Street Vacation be denied ensuring adequate access to the rear of the lots on Catasauqua Avenue be maintained. Further there is a planned Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization Corridor to the east of the requested street vacation. The unopened Dale Street and unopened N. Brick Street may be an opportunity for a vital connection to Riverside Drive which would be consistent with LVPC's *Walk/Roll/LV: Active Transportation Plan*. Mr. Herman asked if there were any questions, hearing none asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Melnick made a motion to approve. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

## Old Business

1. *INFORMATION ITEMS:* Activity Reports:

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

Ms. Bradley noted that for March there were 67 reviews. 18 subdivision, 27 development, 16 stormwater management review and 6 municipal ordinances and maps. While both counties experienced a similar number of reviews, Northampton County has six times the amount of proposed acres to be developed by the private sector. Further detailed the types of new development. 143 new town-house units proposed, 40 single-family detached, 40 apartments, four twins and 20 condos. Non-Residential has continued at the same high-volume trend with proposed 1,907,902 total square feet. There was 101,609 commercial space proposed, the highest amount this year and 7,195 square feet of office space.

Mr. Dougherty asked if any of the 143 townhomes were earmarked as affordable housing? Ms. Bradley indicated that there is no way for us to know and that local governments cannot legally require affordable housing. However, many communities and developers are working on this issue and have asked the LVC to continue housing work regionally.

- b. Quarterly Subdivision, Land Development Report

Ms. Bradley provided a brief description of quarterly subdivision and land development report. We continued to see development activity grow with 41 subdivisions and 66 developments with 16% more development proposals and cover nearly 1,300 acres. 821 new housing units proposed in the first quarter. On the non-residential side there were 4.73 million square feet, which is 150% more than this same time last year. Mr. Repasch asked if we know how much of that is open space, green space, or agricultural space? Ms. Bradley indicated that the GIS team can track and bring this back to the commission at a future meeting.

- c. COVID-19 Pandemic Highway Traffic Monitoring  
Mr. Hite reviewed the traffic count data. Mr. McGee asked if there will be a way to do a truck traffic study in the Lehigh Valley; some of the warehouses have not moved it yet and the truck traffic is already a concern. Mr. Zebrowski added that the infrastructure is already strained. Ms. Bradley stated that the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS) is preparing a proposal to go to PennDOT and USDOT between the LVPC the Northeast PA Alliance MPO, Lackawanna - Luzerne MPO, Reading area transportation study which is Berks county planning commission and the Lebanon County Planning organization to make a request for funds to do a Freight Plan.

### **New Business**

1. *INFORMATION ITEM: Recognitions*  
Mr. Assad presented information on the LVPC's receiving the Governor's Award for Local Government Excellence for Innovative Planning + Sound Land Use Practices for *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* as well as the award from The Coalition for Appropriate Transportation – *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan*

### **Communications**

1. *INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Business Cycle Column & Monthly, Plan Lehigh Valley Talk Show on WDIY, Lehigh Valley Public Radio, 88.1*  
Mr. Assad stated the latest column is scheduled to be published on Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup>. He also noted the WDIY Radio show received rave reviews and covered a lot of ground from skyrocketing housing prices to warehouses to the pandemic which aired April 5<sup>th</sup> and is available at [wdiy.org](http://wdiy.org) if you missed it. Mr. Assad further noted the LVPC first development snapshot ran in the Lehigh Valley Business Journal on March 29<sup>th</sup> which is essentially a smaller version of our monthly Development Snapshot utilizing our logo and crediting LVPC as the source and covered a half a page to reach a whole new audience of people.

### **Executive Director's Report**

1. Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Basic Training  
Ms. Bradley provided thorough and insightful training relating to the Municipalities Planning Code, and the roles and responsibilities of the LVPC. Next month additional training should be expected. The presentation can be found at [lvpc.org](http://lvpc.org).

### **Public Engagement and Participation:**

Mr. Assad announced the upcoming engagement opportunities.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on Thursday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Molchany made a motion to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director  
Jennifer Winton, Executive Secretary