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LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday, October 28, 2021 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, October 28, 2021. The meeting was advertised in the Morning Call on Thursday, July 8th, 2021.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Benco took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, David Jones, Leonard Lightner, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Owen O'Neil, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt.

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Liesel Dreisbach, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, Darlene Heller, Susan Lawless, Carl Manges, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Pamela Pearson, Tina Smith, Gerald Yob and Greg Zebrowski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Mike Gibson, Michael Harakal, Jamie Johnson, Ray O'Connell and Joshua Seigel.

Northampton County

Janell Connolly, Malissa Davis, Robert Donchez, Kevin Lott, Lamont McClure, David O'Connell, Salvatore Panto and Spirit Rutzler.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Julie Benco, Becky Bradley, Paul Carafides, Heather Ferguson, Geoff Reese and Jill Seitz.

Public Present: Kurt Bresswein, Jeff Ward and Donald Young.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Amato shared his thanks for the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's sponsorship of the Delaware & Lehigh Heritage Half Marathon. Mr. Zebrowski reinforced Mr. Amato's statements and appreciated the Commission's participation.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski welcomed new Team Member, Ms. Heather Ferguson, Senior Advisor. Ms. Ferguson introduced herself and provided a summary of her experience and qualifications, as well as her gratitude to be a part of LVPC. Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone on the LVPC Commission had any questions for Heather. No Commission members had questions.

Next, Mr. Zebrowski congratulated the City of Bethlehem on receiving recognition for its Climate Action Plan, from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association at this year's awards ceremony that was held in Pittsburgh on October 19th. Mr. Zebrowski shared his pride towards the city's efforts to mitigate the impacts of climate change and happy to see that the city was being recognized. Ms. Heller discussed the efforts that went into creating the Climate Action Plan and thanked the Commission for recognizing their award. Mr. Zebrowski acknowledged the Plan's achievement in soliciting much public input on the Plan. Mr. Dougherty shared his congratulations to Ms. Heller and the city.

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the Thursday September 23rd, 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. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion passed with Ms. Morgan abstaining.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: PennStro Leasing – Glendon Borough

Ms. Bradley informed the Commission that the LVPC currently has two plan reviews for proposed projects in Glendon Borough. She also informed the Commission of their role in reviewing plans for municipalities that do not have their own adopted Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. She stated that the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission acts as the municipal planner, which is a very different process than the review as county planners. She explained the full timeline of the review process for these proposals. Ms. Seitz presented a quick update on the proposed project that plans to consolidate two existing lots into one lot and develop it into a truck-trailer storage and rental facility. The LVPC is currently in the process of coordinating technical review comments with the Borough Engineer and Sewage Enforcement Officer, so this item was not for action. Ms. Seitz informed that the LVPC anticipates having the Project Engineer and Applicant present their project to the Comprehensive Planning Committee next month, when the staff will go over the technical review so the Committee can recommend an action to the Commission.

INFORMATION ITEM: Chrin Maintenance Building – Glendon Borough

Ms. Seitz notified the Commission of the next proposal in Glendon Borough, which is currently under staff review. The project is located at 1270, 1280 and 1290 Industrial Drive and has two different zoning designations. The site is currently made up of three separate lots, with two lots containing existing structures, which are to be removed. Northwest of the dwelling is an existing structure that is currently used by the landfill operation, which will remain. Ms. Seitz presented the Layout Plan and explained that the project proposes to construct a 25,000-square-foot maintenance building to service trucks and equipment of the landfill operation, as well as the Chrin Company trucks and equipment.

ACTION ITEM: First Park 33 – Land Use of Regional Significance – Palmer Township

Ms. Seitz reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Palmer Township proposing to consolidate three lots into one lot and construct four warehouse buildings for a total of 781,800 square feet. The project is located at the southwest corner of Newlins Mill and Tatamy Roads. Ms. Seitz notes that while the general concept of the proposal is suitable for its location in the Development area of the General Land Use Plan, there are several opportunities to improve this project and support the long-term interests of the Township, developer and community. Based on the Transportation Impact Study, the LVPC strongly recommends the Township to pursue implementation of a traffic signal at the intersection of Tatamy Road and Newlins Mill Road. The LVPC applauds the comprehensive inclusion of landscaping throughout the site, which helps to 'create community spaces that promote physical and mental health' (Policy 5.3). The LVPC encourages the applicant to consider the benefits of incorporating sustainable practices, including renewable energy sources, green roofs and greywater reuse. These practices minimize overhead operational costs while also 'reducing climate change impacts' (Policy 3.4). Mr. Melnick asked for any comments or questions. Mr. McGee asked multiple questions regarding the occupants of the warehouses, sinkhole concerns and the roofs being built strong enough to withstand solar panels. Mr. Zebrowski echoed Mr. McGee's comments and expressed concerns regarding stormwater impacts. Ms. Bradley and Mr. Reese provided responses to Mr. McGee's questions. Ms. Rader asked Mr. Reese to explain how National Pollutant Discharge

Elimination System (NPDES) permits work. Mr. Glickman commented regarding the Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code. Mr. Amato asked about homes located within the vicinity of the project and their quality-of-life impacts and asked to add those comments to the review letter. Ms. Pearson addressed Mr. Amato's comments. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments, with Mr. Amato's suggested amendments. Mr. Molchany made the motion; Ms. Glickman seconded the motion. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: LRE Allentown Industrial Expansion – Land Use of Regional Significance – Upper Macungie Township

Ms. Seitz reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Upper Macungie Township proposing to construct a 129,816-square-foot expansion to an existing distribution center with an expanded trailer parking area. The project is located at 8001 Industrial Boulevard near Route 100 and generally exhibits consistency with *FutureLV* because it is located in the Development area of the General Land Use Plan. The LVPC recommends the developer install pedestrian improvements along the property frontage to 'improve mixed-transportation access to areas with high or growing employment opportunities' (of Policy 4.3). The LVPC encourages the developer to consider opportunities for incorporating sustainable energy systems that reduce overhead operational costs and 'minimize environmental impacts of development' (Policy 3.1). Mr. Zebrowski commented regarding warehousing in the Lehigh Valley and called for a motion to accept the staff comments. A motion was made by Mr. Dougherty, seconded by Mr. Jones and was approved with Ms. Rader abstaining.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the October Comprehensive Committee items. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach made the motion, seconded by Ms. Lawless. Motion passed.

Environment Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Committee Summary Report

Mr. Repasch presented the October Environment Committee Summary Sheet. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Melnick made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Repasch. Motion passed, with Ms. Rader and Mr. Charles Elliott abstaining.

Transportation Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Common Ridge Development – Street Vacation – City of Allentown

Mr. Carafides presented the proposed street vacation petition for 15 streets in the City of Allentown, known as "Common Ridge". The transportation review reveals that the street vacations were generally consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, to encourage reuse of vacant and underutilized properties as well as to promote context-specific design solutions of Policy 5.4. Mr. Herman asked for any questions or comments. Mr. Glickman asked questions regarding disruptions to the street grid, which were answered by Mr. Carafides and Mr. Herman. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Molchany made the motion and was seconded by Mr. Elbich. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Howe Street – Street Vacation – City of Allentown

Mr. Carafides presented the proposed street vacation petition for Howe Street in the City of Allentown. The transportation review was generally consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Mr. Herman asked for any questions or comments. There were none. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. McGee made the motion and was seconded by Ms. Pearson, with Mr. Herman abstaining. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Portion of Chestnut Street – Street Vacation – City of Allentown

Mr. Carafides presented the proposed street vacation petition for a portion of Chestnut Street in the City of Allentown. The transportation review was generally consistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. It was recommended that access of the proposed vacation of Chestnut Street, if granted, should be maintained for emergency response purposes to the apartment building to 'promote safe and secure community design and emergency management' (of Policy 5.1). Mr. Herman asked for any questions or comments. There were none. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Melnick made the motion and was seconded by Ms. Lawless. Motion passed.

INFORMATION ITEM: PennDOT 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan and Freight Movement Plan Comments

Mr. Carafides presented the comments for the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Freight Movement Plan, which are PennDOT's Federally mandated planning road maps for the next several years. Mr. Carafides provided a summary of the comments that were included in the letter. Mr. Herman 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 September, which included eight Subdivisions, 31 Development proposals, 25 reviews for Stormwater Management, and five Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 69 reviews. The reviews included 486 housing units and 877,080 total square feet of non-residential development. Mr. Zebrowski asked for any questions or comments. Mr. McGee asked about affordable housing and Ms. Bradley and Mr. Zebrowski provided comment. Mr. Herman provided comments regarding the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Carafides presented the Highway Traffic Monitoring report for September. This month's traffic count report for September showed that Route 33 and Interstate 78 were back to pre-pandemic levels for this time of year, though there was a dip at the end of September. Interstate 78, as compared to the last several months, has trended down a bit for the month of September because of summer travel and the seasonal trend down once summer ends and school begins. Route 309 is starting to get back to pre-Covid-19 volumes. The traffic counts from I-78 east of Route 33 in Northampton County and I-78 east of Route 309 in Lehigh County showed the impacts of truck traffic along the Route 33 corridor connecting Interstates 78 and 80. Trucks are venturing on 33, as well as the emerging e-commerce area of the former Bethlehem Steel along Route 412, thus impacting the section of Interstate 78 into New Jersey and destinations to the east along the I-95 corridor. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions or comments. No questions were asked.

Update on Proposed Industrial Developments

Ms. Bradley presented an update on proposed industrial developments in the region. She provided an overview of plan review activity from 2016 to the present and future, that included the raw data that encompasses the industrial development that has and will be seen in the region. Ms. Bradley showed further evidence of the accelerating pressure that the region is under. She highlighted a recently released graphic by the Transwestern Development Company, which made a case for developing industrial production in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions or comments and echoed Ms. Bradley's statements regarding proposed industrial developments in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Molchany asked about brownfield and greenfield development in the region and Ms. Bradley answered that most is greenfield development.

New Business:

INFORMATION ITEM: Changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Working Group

Ms. Bradley informed the Commission on the Working Group that is advocating for changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Ms. Bradley highlighted goals and policies from *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* that support changes to the MPC, as well as the initial platform and agenda of the Working Group. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions or comments. Ms. Rader commented regarding coordinating this Working Group with the efforts of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors.

INFORMATION ITEM: General Assembly

Ms. Bradley announced that the Lehigh Valley General Assembly on Tips and Tools for Growth Management will occur on November 30th at 7 PM virtually. At the meeting, any representatives from governmental entities within the Lehigh Valley come together to work on broad planning issues and

interrelationships between them. Attendees will receive education about changes in Pennsylvania law, the Municipalities Planning Code, an update on multi-municipal plans and more.

Communications:

INFORMATION ITEM: Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Morning Call Business Cycle column that ran Sunday, October 3rd. He explained that in the column, Becky calls for major changes to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and offers suggestions for improvements. He stated that the next column is scheduled to publish November 21st. Ms. Bradley will be writing a follow-up to this last column, which will be a how to fix the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, Part two.

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 Ms. Bradley and Mr. Assad, where they were joined by Northampton County Executive Lamont McClure and Lehigh County Executive Phillips Armstrong. The Executives talked about how the pandemic has changed the way they handle county services, and they discussed using the federal CARES Act and American Rescue Plan grants to lift thousands of struggling small businesses. Mr. Assad informed that the 30-minute show is currently streaming at WDIY.org, along with several other shows about our overheated housing market, infrastructure funding and multimodal transportation. He stated that the next show is scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, November 1 and will discuss the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

INFORMATION ITEM: WFMZ Business Matters

Mr. Assad informed the Commission that Senior Community Planner, Jill Seitz, will be appearing as an expert on Equity and Inclusion on an upcoming Business Matters show November 1 at 7:30 pm on Channel 69 WFMZ TV. The full show is on the WFMZ's Business Matters webpage as well.

Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: The Chamber's 2021 Annual Meeting

Mr. Assad announced that the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting is going to be on November 10th this year from 10am to 1pm at the Wind Creek Event Center in Bethlehem. The LVPC will be awarded the Chamber's Milestone Award, for its 60 years of leadership and service to the Lehigh Valley, and that will include a short video commemorating the history of the Commission and the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study.

INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program

Mr. Assad announced that the Local Technical Assistance Program has two virtual classes in November. The first is November 4th, covering Common Issues in Alleys and the next is November 12th, covering Winter Maintenance. He explained that the classes are free and limited to 40 students, but anyone can still sign up at lvpc.org/ltap or contact Brian Hite.

INFORMATION ITEM: 8th Annual LVPC Gala and Awards

Mr. Assad announced that tickets are now on sale for the 8th Annual Gala + Awards. This year it will be a 60th Anniversary celebration on the evening of December 9th. It will be a one-hour video on YouTube, including an appearance by Mr. Zebrowski and a panel of experts who specialize in looking into the future and the 2021 *FutureLV* Heroes Award.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on November 18. Mr. Zebrowski then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Molchany made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:
Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director and
Julie Benco, Regional Planner