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LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday, September 23, 2021 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday September 23, 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, Michael Harakal, Kent Herman, Jamie Johnson, David Jones, Leonard Lightner, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Kathy Rader and Stephen Repasch.

Northampton County

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

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Mike Gibson, Christina Morgan, Ray O'Connell, Owen O'Neil, Joshua Seigel and Kevin Schmidt.

Northampton County

Janell Connolly, Malissa Davis, Robert Donchez, Darlene Heller, Carl Manges, Lamont McClure, Salvatore Panto, Spirit Rutzler and Gerald Yob.

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

Public Present: Victor Grande, Jordan Griffith, Claudia Shank, Barb Wagner and Jeff Ward.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Amato shared a story about a young man who came into his office, that was found to have a collapsed lung. He referenced the World Health Organization's air quality guidelines, and acknowledged a possible connection between rising air pollution, asthma rates, mortality, and loss of quality of life for vulnerable populations. He commended the Commission for their work towards making a positive difference in the community. Mr. Zebrowski acknowledged Mr. Amato's statements and reinforced the Commission's mission to improve air quality in the region.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski welcomed new Commissioner: Mr. David Jones. Mr. Jones shared his remarks and his gratification towards working with the Commission in the future. Mr. Zebrowski welcomed new Team

Members: Mr. Brad Stewart, Senior Transportation Planner and Ms. Julie Benco, Regional Planner. Mr. Stewart and Ms. Benco introduced themselves and provided a summary of their experience and qualifications, as well as their gratitude to be a part of LVPC. Mr. Zebrowski asked if anyone on the LVPC Commission had any questions for Brad or Julie. No Commission members had questions.

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the Thursday August 26th, 2021 LVPC meeting are attached, and he then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion passed with no abstentions.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

DISCUSSION ITEM: PennStro Leasing – Glendon Borough

Ms. Bradley 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, including the overview of the preliminary plan, in which Commissioners can make any comments or ask any questions, and the technical review that will be presented at the October 28th Full Commission meeting. Ms. Claudia Shank, a representative from the PennStro Leasing project, acknowledged their presence in the meeting. Ms. Seitz presented an overview of the proposed project that is bounded by Interstate 78 and plans to consolidate two existing lots into one lot (5.6 acres) and develop it into a truck trailer storage and rental facility. The existing conditions are currently made up of two vacant gravel lots. Ms. Seitz presented the layout plan and the stormwater drainage for the project. Ms. Bradley explained that the staff will continue to assess the proposal and take any questions to the relevant parties so an informed review can occur. Mr. Zebrowski vocalized his comments on the project regarding the location's accessibility to appropriate infrastructure, sustainable construction of the project and community opinion.

ACTION ITEM: Southmoore Business Center – Land Use of Regional Significance – Moore Township

Mr. Melnick commended the staff for their review letter regarding the Southmoore Business Center presented at the Comprehensive Planning Committee Meeting. Ms. Bradley reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Moore Township proposing to construct two warehouses (347,750 and 140,000 square feet). The proposal is inconsistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because the proposed location lacks the necessary criteria to support the long-term success of the project and fails to 'match development intensity with sustainable infrastructure capacity' (of Policy 1.1). The project site is proposed in an area designated for Farmland Preservation in the General Land Use Plan and located over six miles away from the nearest Route 22 interchange and over nine miles away from the nearest Route 33 interchange. The development poses a risk to the region's workforce, transportation system, quality of life and environment (Policy 4.6). Ms. Bradley commended the Township for a quick legislative response to these types of development and encouraged them to utilize the Nazareth Area 2030 Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan and the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. Multiple existing residential properties will be significantly affected by this development. The rural location of the project creates a lack of alternative transportation options that reinforces dependency on automobiles and increases traffic. Data on the site plan anticipates 305 employees during a peak shift, and the ability for workers to access the site efficiently affects its marketability and occupancy. The project is anticipated to generate an average of 849 vehicle trips per day, of which 293 would be trucks, and the project site is located between two segments of Route 512 that are identified as congested corridors. The LVPC commends the proposed left turn lane with 150 feet of storage length and the southbound right turn lane with 355 feet of storage length, as these lanes will assist in queue mitigation at the new four-way intersection created by the proposed development. However, the southbound left turn lane to Fairway Avenue has been removed and may cause issues, therefore a traffic signal should be studied by the developer to 'enhance incident management strategies' (of Policy 2.2). The LVPC strongly recommends providing overnight tractor-trailer parking areas to 'expand truck parking options and amenities' (of Policy 2.4). The LVPC recommends installing multimodal infrastructure components that 'promote safe and secure community design' (Policy 5.1) at the time of land

development. While the LVPC commends the comprehensive inclusion of natural landscaping along the site perimeter, areas of additional landscaping should be designed to 'improve access to green spaces' (of Policy 5.3). The proposal can be substantially improved by incorporating sustainable systems into the functionality and design of the facility to 'minimize environmental impacts of development' (Policy 3.1). Ms. Bradley stated that the LVPC encourages continued conversations between the Township, nearby communities and project partners to 'expand collaboration on planning and development' (of Policy 4.6).

Mr. McGorry vocalized issues regarding trucking concerns and Mr. McGee commended the township's response and asked a question of the LVPC staff. Ms. Bradley provided a response on the Township's review process. Mr. Dougherty complimented the staff on their comprehensive review. Mr. Zebrowski made comments regarding the project and called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Glickman made the motion; Ms. Moore seconded the motion. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Seven Generations Charter School Building Addition – Land Use of Regional Significance – Emmaus Borough

Ms. Seitz reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Emmaus Borough proposing to construct a 4,345-square-foot addition to the existing school building. Ms. Seitz stated that the project generally exhibits consistency with *FutureLV* because it is located in the Development area of the General Land Use Plan, enhances the long-term viability of assets (of Policy 1.3) and 'expands access to education' (of Policy 4.1). The project site contains opportunities to 'connect assets to diverse transportation options' (of Policy 1.3). The LVPC strongly recommends that the existing sidewalk be extended, which would close a gap in the Borough's sidewalk network and 'promote safe routes to schools and playgrounds' (of Policy 5.2). The project site is adjacent to a trailhead for the Robert Rodale South Mountain Gateway Trail, an Existing Regional Land Trail that facilitates north-south connections between the City of Allentown and Emmaus Borough. This trail is also identified as an alternative route for the Mack Boulevard/Emaus Avenue bicycle commuting corridor in the *Walk/Roll LV: Active Transportation Plan* and provides access to the active recreation trails of the Wildlands Conservancy South Mountain Preserve. Trails in this area are also conceptualized in the Draft Borough of Emmaus Greenways & Trails Plan, currently open for public comment. Constructing sidewalk along Klines Lane would better 'encourage alternative travel options' (Policy 2.1) and support active lifestyles that 'promote physical and mental health' (Policy 5.3).

Mr. Zebrowski commented on sustainable building practices and called for a motion to accept the staff comments. A motion was made by Ms. Moore and seconded by Ms. Pearson and carried with no abstentions.

ACTION ITEM: Liberty Bell Elementary School – Land Use of Regional Significance – Coopersburg Borough and Upper Saucon Township

Ms. Seitz reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Coopersburg Borough and Upper Saucon Township proposing to construct four separate building additions to an existing elementary school totaling 12,462 square feet and a soft play area. This proposal exhibits consistency with *FutureLV* because the expansion of the existing school enhances the long-term viability of assets (of Policy 1.3) and 'expands access to education' (of Policy 4.1). The LVPC commends the included sidewalk extensions and improvements within the parking area that connect the building to the external sidewalk network and 'promote safe routes to schools and playgrounds' (of Policy 5.2). The LVPC recommends that educational institutions incorporate environmentally sensitive building design and renewable energy sources such as solar or geothermal. These enhancements further academic endeavors related to sustainable technologies, demonstrate environmental leadership within the region and 'reduce climate change impacts' (Policy 3.4).

Mr. Zebrowski asked the Commission to make a motion to accept staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach made the motion, seconded by Mr. Glickman and the motion passed with no abstentions.

ACTION ITEM: Air Products and Chemicals, Inc. Hangar – Land Use of Regional Significance – Hanover Township (LC)

Mr. Carafides reviewed a Land Use of Regional Significance in Hanover Township proposing to construct a 36,000-square-foot hangar, an office building and a service facility. This proposal generally exhibits consistency with *FutureLV* because it is located in the Development area of the General Land Use Plan and

serves to 'provide a safe, well-maintained transportation network to move people and goods efficiently, while capitalizing on existing infrastructure' (of Policy 2.2). The LVPC commends the proposal because it supports interregional transportation services (of Policy 2.2) and the expansion of local business operations that diversify the regional economy and strengthen economic resilience (of Policy 4.2). This infill project involves the removal of a garage, a trailer and other associated features on the northeast corner of the 792.45-acre Lehigh Valley International Airport lot. The LVPC commends the proposed Fire Truck/Emergency Services turn plan through the internal site of the project to 'enhance incident management strategies' (of Policy 2.2). Mr. Carafides noted that the crash history for the Airport main entrance at Airport Road/Postal Road intersection has steadily decreased over the last five years. However, in 2020, five non-fatal car accidents occurred at the intersection which still qualifies as a level of concern under PennDOT standards. The site location will be fully fenced in with a swing access gate and the hangar will be used for smaller planes which will have little to no impact to the current traffic patterns in the adjacent Airport Road corridor.

Mr. Zebrowski asked the Commission to make a motion to accept staff comments. Mr. Elbich made the motion, seconded by Mr. Melnick and the motion passed with no abstentions.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the September Comprehensive Committee items. Mr. Zebrowski called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Ms. Pearson made the motion, seconded by Mr. O'Connell. Motion passed.

Environment Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: 2020 Pennsylvania Forest Action Plan

Mr. Reese told the Commission about the 2020 Pennsylvania Forest Action Plan, that was released on August 24, 2021, as an update to the 2010 plan. He stated that the Plan assesses the current conditions and trends of Pennsylvania's forests across all ownership types and provides broad strategies to ensure the long-term sustainability of Pennsylvania's forests. Implementation of the strategies will involve coordination with landowners, forest industry, natural resource professionals, conservation organizations, community leaders and policymakers. He explained that 18 sustainability meters were developed as part of the 2010 Plan and were used to assess current forest conditions and trends. The evaluation of many of the indicators resulted in sustainability meter readings on the sustainable side, but with many causes for concern about the future sustainability of Pennsylvania's forests. Challenges and threats include land use change and development, forest health concerns, ownership demographics, detrimental management decisions and uncertainties of shale gas development and climate change. Mr. Reese went into greater detail on four indicators and 11 priority issues from the Plan. He highlighted a Land Use Change issue and discussed the related long-term strategies. Mr. Repasch concluded the statements made by Mr. Reese and reinforced the importance of forested land in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Zebrowski asked if Pennsylvania has taken a step back because of disease in forests or poor forest practices. Mr. Repasch and Mr. Reese answered, stating that both are the reason.

Transportation Committee:

Committee Report: Summary

Mr. Carafides presented an update on three discussion items from this month's Transportation Committee. First, he summarized a presentation regarding LANTA's current operations and the importance of transit to the Region. Mr. Carafides noted the rapid job growth in the Region currently and how transit service is impacted by this growth, as well as LANTA's fiscal needs. Mr. Carafides' second item was the PennDOT 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan and Draft Freight Movement Plan that are out for public comment. He notes that the staff has received both Draft Reports and are preparing comments. The website can be found at <https://www.penndot.gov/ProjectAndPrograms/Planning/Pages/index.html> or google PennDOT 2045 LRTP. All comments are due by October 19th. Mr. Carafides went over the last item: the Eastern Pennsylvania Freight Alliance Freight Plan. He explained that we are at the beginning stages of developing a new freight plan and it will take a multi-regional view of freight. A group of 5 MPOs came together to form the Eastern Pennsylvania Freight Alliance, consisting of Lackawanna/Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization (LLTS), Lebanon County Metropolitan Planning Organization (LEBCO), Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVPC/LVTS),

Northeast Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA MPO), and Reading Area Transportation Study (RATS). Currently, the group is working to create a Memorandum of Understanding and funding agreement, while gathering information and ideas from each partner agency and preparing a scope of work to create a Request for Proposals. Mr. Carafides expressed that as the project moves forward, we will work with the Transportation Committee to ensure it moves in a direction that will best serve the Lehigh Valley. 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 August, which included 23 Subdivisions, 29 Development proposals, 13 reviews for Stormwater Management, and 3 Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 68 reviews. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions hearing none, the agenda progressed.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Carafides presented the Highway Traffic Monitoring report for August. This month's traffic report continued to show that we are at traffic volumes greater than pre-pandemic numbers at all except for one of the continuous counter locations. Route 33 shows up at 81,216 vehicles on the last Tuesday of August, an increase of 4,024 vehicles since the pandemic began. Interstate 78 east of 309 has us at 72,543, an increase of 6,130 vehicles since March of 2020. Interstate 78 east of 33 in Northampton County recorded 72,397 vehicles, equating to a 7,990 vehicle increase. The Route 309 counter just north of Coopersburg in Lehigh County has us at 36,067, a decrease of 1,773 vehicles. Trucks along I-78 show a consistent trend of differences between the counter on I-78 east of 33 shown in the orange compared to I-78 east of 309 shown in the Green. Trucks are up 3,296 in Northampton County at 33, and Lehigh County by 309 has us at an increase of 2,889 trucks. While the volume on overall vehicles is steady and similar across the I-78 corridor, the greater influx of more trucks east of 33 shows the critical connection that route 33 has for our area freight movements and the connection between I-78 and I-80 to our north. Mr. Zebrowski asked for questions or comments. No questions were asked.

New Business:

None.

Executive Director's Report:

Municipal Outreach and Support Update

Lehigh Valley Government Academy

Ms. Bradley announced that the Lehigh Valley Government Academy restarted in September. She said that the first Community Planning class began on September 13th. It was the first in-person training of the year and was sold out at a max of 18 students. The next two classes in the course are on consecutive Mondays, September 20 and 27. The Zoning Administration class, which has two seats left, runs on three consecutive Wednesdays: October 13, 20 and 27. Ms. Bradley explained that it trains zoning hearing board members on their role and responsibilities under the state law. All the classes tend to run from 5:30 pm to 9 pm, each evening. Anyone can sign up online at LVPC.org.

General Assembly, November 30th at 7 PM, Virtual

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 and the Municipalities Planning Code.

Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans

Ms. Bradley reported on the status of active Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans and the direct technical assistance that is being provided to municipalities. She also reported that by the end of 2022, 32 municipalities within the Lehigh Valley will be a part of Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plans. Ms. Bradley

informed the Commission that there are working drafts for updates to the Nazareth Area Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan and the Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. She reported that issues roundtables were completed, and a community survey is underway for the Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. She also announced that the River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive planning effort was started in January, with their Community Survey complete and overarching principles/goals draft underway.

Other Requests: Growing Needs & Support

Ms. Bradley explained that there is a lot of growing need in local government given population increase and development pressure that has risen since the start of the pandemic. Ms. Bradley reported that the LVPC receives many requests for zoning and subdivision ordinances analysis and amendment support, questions about impact assessments, more data requests & interpretation, more education and grant writing support. The roll of the Commission and need for additional resources is paramount. Ms. Bradley emphasized that the LVPC must review every plan that comes in the door and there is only 30 days to complete the review. Commission members vocalized their agreement with Ms. Bradley's statements.

Communications:

INFORMATION ITEM: Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Morning Call Business Cycle column that ran Sunday, Aug. 29. He explained that in the column, Becky wrote about a very busy first half of the year with housing and development. He stated that the next column was scheduled to publish October 3rd. Ms. Bradley will be writing about the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, as well as the opportunities and challenges it provides to communities.

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, where they were joined by developers J.B. Reilly and Mark Mulligan. They discussed reuse and redevelopment projects in Allentown and Easton, as well as how the pandemic has shifted redevelopment projects. He stated that the next show is scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, October 4, and will include Lehigh and Northampton County executives. They will talk about the pandemic and how it has changed how we provide services. Mr. Assad informed that all past shows are streaming at wdiy.org.

Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: 8th Annual LVPC Gala and Awards

Mr. Assad announced that the 8th Annual Gala + Awards will be a 60th Anniversary celebration and is moved from its original date in October, to 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. He asked everyone to stay tuned for tickets and more details becoming available at lvpc.org.

INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program

Mr. Assad announced that the Local Technical Assistance Program has a schedule of virtual classes in October and November. The first is on October 14th, 11am to noon, and will cover Analyzing Crash Data at Intersections. The next are on October 19th, covering Asphalt Road Common Maintenance Problems, and November 4th, covering Common Issues in Alleys. 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.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on October 28. 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
Julie Benco, Regional Planner