LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, December 17, 2020 Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on November 19, 2020. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on October 8, 2020.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Vazquez took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County
Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Steven Glickman, Michael Harakal, Kent Herman, Richard Molchan, Christina (Tori) Morgan, Owen O’Neil, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch, and Kevin Schmidt

Northampton County
Liesel Dreisbach, Darlene Heller, Susan Lawless, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Pamela Pearson, Tina Smith, Gerald Yob and Greg Zebrowski

Members Absent:

Lehigh County
Mike Gibson, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Jamie Johnson, Leonard Lightner, Joshua Seigel, Donna Wright, and Amy Zanelli

Northampton County
Christopher Amato, Bryan Callahan, Janell Connolly, Malissa Davis, Charles Elliott, Kevin Lott, Carl Manges, William McGee and Spirit Rutzler

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Julie Benco, Charles Doyle, Michael Hanes, Brian Hite, Craig Kackenmeister, Teresa Mackey, Mahdis Modaresi, Simon Okumu, Tracy Oscavich, Geoff Reese, Bruce Rider, Susan Rockwell, Jill Seitz, Samantha Smith, David Towsey, Elena Tucci Bethany Vazquez and Vicki Weidenhammer

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR
None.

MINUTES
Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the November 19, 2020 LVPC meeting are attached. Mr. Molchan made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

New Staff Introduction
Mr. Zebrowski welcomed Michael Hanes as the new Associate Director of Transportation and Data Management and ask Mr. Hanes to share a few words. Mr. Hanes expressed his excitement to work with the LVPC.

Thank You for Your Participation and Contributions to Our Region
Mr. Zebrowski thanked the Commissioners for their partnership and dedication to the Lehigh Valley Region and announced that 2021 marks the 60th Anniversary of the Commission.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

1. South Whitehall and Lower Macungie Townships – Land Use of Regional Significance – Cedarbrook Skilled Nursing Addition
   Ms. Seitz reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for South Whitehall and Lower Macungie Townships. The project proposes a 142,00 sq. ft., 3-story expansion of the existing Cedarbrook Skilled Nursing Facility, with related site improvements. This proposal is generally consistent with FutureLV because it’s located in an area designated for Development in the General Land Use Plan. The expansion of the existing Cedarbrook campus supports practices of reuse, sustainable building, site design and community design (of Policy 3.4) and complements the unique history, environment, culture and needs of the Valley (Policy 5.4). Of note, the LVPC applauded the proposal for incorporating a green roof and rain garden, which serves to support the sustainable actions of Policy 3.2 and 3.4. Mr. Melnick requested that section 301 of the MPC be added into the letter to give municipalities more coverage when dealing with developers. Mr. Glickman made a motion to approve the letter with Mr. Melnick’s comments. Mr. Elbich seconded the motion. With Mr. Molchany, Mr. Dougherty, and Ms. Morgan abstaining from the vote, the motion passed.

2. Lower Nazareth and Bethlehem Townships – Land Use of Regional Significance – Lehigh Valley Trade Center II
   Ms. Seitz reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Lower Nazareth and Bethlehem Townships. The application proposes to construct a 527,472 sq. ft. industrial facility, comprised of 290,100 sq. ft. of warehouse space and 237,362 sq. ft. of manufacturing space. The proposal is generally consistent with FutureLV: The Regional Plan because it is in an area designated for development in the General Land Use plan and supports the location of freight facilities in areas with available and planned transportation capacity (of Policy 2.4). Comments within the letter provided further recommendations that address transportation impacts and site accessibility. Mr. Molchany made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Bethlehem Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Notre Dame High School Auditorium Expansion
   Ms. Smith reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Bethlehem Township. The plan proposes construction of a 17,157 sq. ft. auditorium expansion to the existing school. The proposal is generally consistent with FutureLV because it’s located within a development area of the General Land Use plan and serves to ‘enhance the long-term viability of assets’ (of
Policy 1.3) and ‘support cultural and social programs’ (of Policy 5.2). Additional comments in
the review letter recommended that educational institutions incorporate sustainable design to
further academic endeavors related to these technologies, enhance the campus setting,
demonstrate environmental leadership within the region, and ‘reduce climate change impacts
through mitigation and adaption’ (of Policy 3.4). Mr. Glickman made a motion to approve the
staff comments. Ms. Pearson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Comprehensive Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick stated that the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet is in
the packet for review and made a motion to approve the comments in the summary
sheet. Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Environment Committee

Mr. Repasch presented the report for the Environment Committee with staff providing information.

1. PA Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative – Review of Proposed Rulemaking and LVPC
   Comments

   Mr. Reese briefly reviewed the proposed rulemaking for the PA Regional Greenhouse
   Gas Initiative and stated that the draft LVPC comments on the proposed rulemaking are
   in the packet and briefly reviewed the staff comments with the Commission. Mr.
   Glickman made a motion to approve the staff comments as presented in the draft letter.
   Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Transportation Committee

Mr. Herman presented the report for the Transportation Committee with staff providing information.

1. City of Allentown – Street Vacation – South Fountain Street

   Mr. Doyle reviewed the proposed street vacation for the City of Allentown. The purpose
   of the project is to provide Allentown Parking Authority with consolidated grounds for a
   new parking garage along the vacated portion of South Fountain Street. The Parking
   Authority currently owns parcels on both sides of South Fountain Street. Access will be
   provided via a new private alley for the properties that front on Walnut Street. The
   proposed streets to be vacated do not appear to adversely impact the accessibility to
   existing lots and therefore appears consistent with FutureLV: The Regional Plan as the
   purpose of such plans are to allow for alternatives to on-street parking within a
downtown, redevelop an underutilized lot and promote safer downtown streets as an
identified policy within FutureLV: The Regional Plan (Policy 5.4), to promote
development that complements the unique history, environment, culture and needs of
the Valley”. Ms. Rader made a motion to approve the staff comments. Ms. Lawless
seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. PennDOT Pathways Alternative Funding Program

   Ms. Bradley reported on the PennDOT Pathways Alternative Funding Program. PennDOT is
   exploring sustainable transportation funding options through the Pathways Program to help
   address the $8.1 billion gap in its annual infrastructure funding. Through the program, the
department has launched an extensive initiative to examine possible short- and long-term
funding solutions to explore how they could potentially better serve our communities and all
Pennsylvanians for the next generation. Ms. Bradley reviewed the potential short- and long-
term solutions with the Committee. Ms. Bradley stated that a draft public comment letter to
PennDOT is in the packet and reviewed five key infrastructure considerations highlighted in the letter with the Committee.

These were the five key considerations:
1. A long-term, stable, and broad infrastructure funding program(s) must be developed to maintain the Commonwealth’s economy and future, triage funding solutions or kicking the issue down the road are unacceptable and irresponsible.
2. Transportation-only based metrics for determining system investments ignores critical and global considerations of regional economic output, population growth and impacts on communities, especially with vulnerable populations.
3. Larger pieces of transportation infrastructure and the system are often in more urbanized areas with large communities where equity is an issue. Offsets for impacts for new user fees on people and places with less access to opportunity must be accounted for.
4. Revenue generated from new transportation funding programs must stay within the county in which it is generated and be only utilized for transportation investments in perpetuity.
5. New transportation revenues must be allocated in accordance with regional long-range transportation plans and a fair share of revenues distributed to Planning Partners, and not solely distributed to projects owned by the Commonwealth because the state is not the only infrastructure owner.

Mr. Repasch asked if there was any thought to charging fees by vehicle weight. Ms. Bradley stated that PennDOT is considering those fees in the sixth category of the funding program. Mr. Dougherty asked if alternative funding in terms of electric vehicles and mileage be specifically addressed. Ms. Bradley stated that the additional comments by Commissioner Dougherty can be incorporated into the first key consideration addressed in the letter. Mr. Molchany made a motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. Elbich seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Monthly Activity Report
   Ms. Bradley presented information on the September Monthly BuildLV: Subdivision and Land Development Report. The report will be distributed publicly around the 15th of each month and is available at lvpc.org. Mr. Hite reviewed the Traffic Count data with the Commission as well.

NEW BUSINESS

1. 2021 Meeting Calendar
   Ms. Bradley stated that the 2021 meeting calendar is in the packet. Ms. Lawless made a motion to approve the 2021 calendar dates. Ms. Rader seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Morning Call Business Cycle Column
Mr. Assad state that the draft High Cube and Automated Warehouse Community Guidance published on Sunday, November 29th was in the packet. The next column will be about important updates to the LVPC’s Eviction and Foreclosure tool and is due to be published on Sunday, January 3.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

1. 2021 LVPC Budget and Workplan
   Ms. Bradley and Mr. Rider took the Commission through the 2021 LVPC Budget and Workplan. The 2021 Budget and Workplan was adopted by the Executive Committee on December 10th at its monthly meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:
Ms. Vazquez stated that a list of the meetings anticipated to be canceled or postponed due to the need to maintain social distance are in the packet. Any questions can be referred to bvazquez@lvpc.org or called in to 610-264-4544.

ADJOURNMENT
Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Molchany made the motion. Mr. McGorry seconded the motion and Mr. Zebrowski adjourned.

Submitted by:
Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director
Bethany Vazquez, Program Associate