



GREG ZEBROWSKI
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Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, March 25, 2021 Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday March 25, 2021. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2020.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Winton took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Michael Gibson, Steven Glickman, Michael Harakal, Kent Herman, Richard Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Kathy Rader, Joshua Seigel and Kevin Schmidt

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Liesel Dreisbach, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, Mike Gibson, Susan Lawless, Carl Manges, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, David O'Connell, Pamela Pearson, Tina Smith, Gerald Yob and Greg Zebrowski

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Ce-Ce Gerlach, Jamie Johnson, Leonard Lightner, Owen O'Neil and Stephen Repasch

Northampton County

Janell Connolly, Malissa Davis, Darlene Heller, Kevin Lott, and Spirit Rutzler

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Michael Hanes, Brian Hite, Simon Okumu, Tracy Oscavich, Sue Rockwell, Jill Seitz, Samantha Smith, and Jennifer Winton

Public Present: Liesel Gross, Walter Hungarter, Erin Keller, James Sieracki, Charles Volk and Jeff Ward

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Ms. Keller stated that she would like to discuss the NIZ and the ANIZDA Board's effect on housing costs in the City of Allentown. Ms. Keller referenced the March 24 article in the morning call regarding housing costs and income to rent ratio. Mr. Zebrowski stated that the LVPC provided that data for the article and will present on that information later in the meeting. Ms. Keller stated that she will defer her comments until after the LVPC presentation.

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the February 25, 2021 LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Smith made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. McGee seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

None this month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee

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

1. *East Allen Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Airport Road Commercial Park Warehouse*

Ms. Seitz reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for East Allen Township. The project proposes to demolish an existing strip mall and commercial park and construct a 452,400-sq. ft. warehouse at the southwest corner of the intersection of Airport Road and Nor-Bath Boulevard. Ms. Seitz stated that the overall project location is reasonably able to accommodate development, however the proposal is generally inconsistent with *FutureLV* due to the lack of sewer and adequate transportation infrastructure that would otherwise mitigate adverse impacts to the community and are essential to the long-term success of the development. Mr. Melnick stated that in the strip center there are four existing businesses that are likely to be impacted by the demolition of this site and that there is no mention of what is going to happen to the businesses that are going to be displaced by this project. Mr. Amato stated that he has a number of concerns about the project and shared his sentiments. Mr. Elbich expressed his sentiments for the site's history with small businesses and stated his agreement with the LVPC comments. Mr. Zebrowski stated that the staff should address that Northampton County has put significant monies into the Nor-Bath Trail and that this project would present a hazard to those on the trail. Mr. Zebrowski also shared additional comments with the Commission regarding cost-benefit analyses and the importance of local incubator spaces in the Lehigh Valley. Ms. Bradley stated that the vote on the letter would be that the Commission is not in support of the project. Ms. Bradley also stated that CBRE released an analysis on the cost per square foot for existing warehouse facilities and shared that information with the Commission. Mr. McGorry asked if there was some way that Lehigh and Northampton County could increase the land value in the region to discourage warehouse development. Mr. Zebrowski stated that the Lehigh Valley is marketed as the place to come and place to be and we are now bearing the up and down-side of development because of that. Mr. Molchany stated that the project is in the worst possible location unless the township requires infrastructure improvements, and that Bath Borough is not prepared for the impacts of this site. Mr. McGee stated that it appears the project is setting the foundation for a new industrial park. Mr. Charles Elliott inquired about Ms. Bradley's previous information regarding CBRE's findings and the net revenue. Ms. Bradley stated that she will get back to Mr. Elliott after double checking the report. Ms. Rader stated that the curse is the location of the region. Ms. Rader continued by stating that with the lessened interest in generational farming, farmers are selling their land as their retirement funds. Ms. Rader concluded by stating that review of the Municipalities Planning Code is essential for the Commission members as they need to understand what the MPC allows municipalities to control and not control is essential to the role of the Commission. Mr. Ward asked if the Commission's per-view extends to weighing alternate proposal options. Ms. Bradley stated that it does not according to the Municipalities Planning Code. Ms. Keller shared her sentiments regarding warehouses and their impact to

the region. Mr. Glickman asked if the warehouse across the street is in the same Township and that the comments for that review were similar to those proposed for this project. Ms. Seitz confirmed that both projects are located in the same township and that the development across the street was also determined as inconsistent. Mr. McGee made a motion to approve the staff comments. Ms. Moore seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2. *Upper Macungie Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Yourway Facility Expansion*
Ms. Smith Reviewed the Land Use of Regional Significance for Upper Macungie Township. The project proposes a total of 163,316 square feet of improvements at the existing pharmaceutical facility located on Snowdrift Road, including an expansion of the existing building, construction of a pharmaceutical distribution and storage facility and a new testing facility. The proposal is in a Development area of the General Land Use Plan and is generally consistent with *FutureLV* as the uses and size of the proposed expansion serves to ‘match development intensity with sustainable infrastructure capacity’ (of Policy 1.1) and ‘promote next generation manufacturing and technology’ (of Policy 4.2). Mr. Molchany made a motion to approve the staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. With Ms. Rader abstaining from the vote, the motion passed.
3. *Comprehensive Committee Summary Sheet*
Mr. Melnick stated that the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet is in the packet for review. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to approve the summary sheet. Mr. Elbich seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Environment Committee

Mr. Repasch was not present at the March meeting. Mr. Zebrowski presented the report for the Environment Committee with staff providing information.

1. *Environment Committee Summary Sheet*
Mr. Zebrowski stated that the Environment Committee Summary Sheet is in the packet for review. Mr. Charles Elliott made the motion to approve the summary sheet. Ms. Moore seconded the motion. Ms. Morgan abstained from voting on the Plainfield Township item. Mr. Herman abstained from voting on the Lehigh County Authority item. The motion passed.

Transportation Committee

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

1. *Transportation Committee Summary Sheet*
Mr. Herman stated that the Transportation Committee Summary Sheet is in the packet for review. Ms. Keller asked why the City of Allentown was vacating S. Bryan Street. Mr. Herman stated that it was a private request from the citizen for parking. Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the summary sheet. Ms. Pearson seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
2. *Transportation Committee Report*
Mr. Hanes shared a brief summary of the Transportation Committee presentations that occurred at the March 25 Transportation Committee Meeting. Mr. Hanes also stated that the Comment period on Pennsylvania’s Transportation Plan is open until April 14, 2021 and encouraged the Commissioners to complete the survey and that the team would follow up with a link to the survey.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Monthly Activity Report

Ms. Bradley presented information on the February 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. Workforce Board Lehigh Valley – Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Local Plan, Program Year 2021-2024

Ms. Oscavich stated that the Lehigh Valley's Workforce Development System Roadmap allows for the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley's vision, mission, and goals to align and integrate with state and local plans that identify workforce development to create a comprehensive workforce system. The WBLV local plan looks to improve the region's workforce system and identifies solutions to the issues of our region today. The Local plan also identifies foals to achieve a holistic workforce system that meets the needs of employers and employees in the Lehigh Valley. Ms. Oscavich continued by stating that through partnership and collaboration, *FutureLV* offers support of the WBLV's draft local plan as it is consistent with many parts of *FutureLV* as noted in the letter located in the meeting packet. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to approve the staff comments on the WBLV's *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Local Plan*. Mr. Harakal made the motion to approve the staff comments. Mr. O'Connell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

2. Housing Updates

Mr. Zebrowski asked if Ms. Keller if she would like to share her comments prior to the housing presentation. Ms. Keller shared her concerns with the NIZ and ANIZDA board regarding equity in the City of Allentown. Mr. Zebrowski thanks Ms. Keller for her comments and asked that Ms. Bradley and her team begin their presentation. Ms. Bradley, Ms. Seitz and Ms. Smith presented various housing updates with the Commission ranging from jobs and housing at risk to an analysis of the rising housing costs and planning for the new normal. Ms. Bradley began the presentation with an overview of the COVID-19 Pandemic's impact on the global economy and the effects on housing and employment in the Lehigh Valley. As a result of CARES Act funding, the LVPC was able to further their housing work and complete a Jobs and Housing Assessment by school district to provide a picture of where the Valley is today, where it is likely to go and what actions communities can and should take to ease the burden facing our neighborhoods. Ms. Smith and Ms. Seitz reviewed the housing ownership and rental market on a regional perspective for the Commission, including a review of the DATALV Housing page and its interactive mapping tools that can be accessed at lvpc.org. Ms. Bradley concluded the presentation by inviting the Commission and Public to attend the April 15 WorkshopLV: Housing meeting which with discuss next steps as the pressures of population growth, rapidly increasing housing costs and unit shortages converge with the post-pandemic economy.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Morning Call Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad state that the latest column was published on Sunday, March 14 and discussed the Lehigh Valley's development in 2020. The next column is scheduled to

publish on Sunday, April 25 and will discuss housing and take a closer look at the rising costs, unit shortages and progression through the year.

2. *Monthly, Plan Lehigh Valley Talk Show on WDIY*

Mr. Assad reminded the Commission that March 31 will be the LVPC's first taping for the new WDIY 88.1 FM Lehigh Valley Public Radio Show, Plan Lehigh Valley. It will run at 6:30 pm on the first Monday of every month. The first show airs April 15.

3. *LV Business Journal Monthly BuildLV: Report*

Mr. Assad stated that LVPC is developing a regular partnership with Lehigh Valley Business and that every month development statistics will be provided to Lehigh Valley Business and have a regular place in their print edition. This will be a similar print to the Development Snapshots on the LVPC webpage and it will begin publishing with the Lehigh Valley Business's March 29 issue.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. *Governor's Transportation Revenue Options Commission*

Ms. Bradley stated that the Transportation Revenue Options Commission was established in March 2021 through an Executive Order signed by Governor Tom Wolf. This Commission will develop comprehensive funding recommendations for Pennsylvania's vast transportation network. Ms. Bradley stated that the Commission is comprised of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors and is chaired by PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. Ms. Bradley continued by giving a brief summary of the March 25 meeting and notified the Commission as updates on the RTOC's work develop.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Mr. Assad announced the upcoming engagement opportunities and Mr. Hite shared on the Commission's efforts to support the community through an office wide food drive for Second Harvest Food Bank.

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. Zebrowski seconded the motion and adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director

Jennifer Winton, Executive Secretary