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LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday, August 25, 2022 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, August 25, 2022. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Wednesday, January 5th, 2022.

Mr. Glickman chaired the meeting.

Ms. Benco took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Bob Elbich, Philip Ginder, Steven Glickman, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Owen O'Neil, Kathy Rader and Kevin Schmidt.

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Liesel Dreisbach, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Carl Manges, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Tina Smith, Gerald Yob and Tara Zrinski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Percy Dougherty, Kent Herman, Jamie Johnson, David Jones, Dennis Klusaritz, Stephen Repasch, Joshua Siegel, Matthew Tuerk and Irene Woodward.

Northampton County

Andrew Elliott, Dan Engle, Darlene Heller, Susan Lawless, Lamont McClure, Scott Minnich, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, William Reynolds and Grace Smith.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Julie Benco, Becky Bradley, Steve Neratko, Teresa Mackey and Dean Severson.

Public Present: Kurt Bresswein, Jay Clough, Terry DeGroot, Arif Fazil, Christopher Haller and Jeff Ward.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

There were none.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Glickman highlighted a Sustainable Warehouse Forum event that Green Building United is hosting on Friday, September 23rd from 8:30-11:30am at Lafayette College. He noted that the forum will look at the warehouse development in the region and then will explore opportunities to green these buildings. LVPC is a contributor to the forum and Mr. Glickman will facilitate the roundtable discussion.

MINUTES

Mr. Glickman stated that the minutes of the Thursday, July 28th, 2022 LVPC meeting are attached, and he then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Elbich made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Cope seconded the motion. The motion passed, with Mr. Gallagher abstaining.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

ACTION ITEM: East Allen Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Route 329 Elementary School

Mr. Severson provided an overview of the project, which conceptualizes the land development and construction of a 113,238-square-foot elementary school and a 36,172-square-foot administration building/education center with associated parking lots and school bus parking. Mr. Severson noted that this review is based on plans that were submitted on June 10th, 2022. Mr. Severson highlighted comments related to the conservation priority areas, farmland preservation, green infrastructure improvements, the presence of karsts, traffic calming measures, the location of an on-site playground and electric charging stations. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Ms. Moore made the motion; Mr. Gallagher seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Glickman asked for a minor wording clarification in the letter. Mr. Amato asked that the indigenous Lenape culture within the proposal property be protected. Mr. Charles Elliott asked about the acreage of farmland that is being lost due to the proposal and asked about the language used in the letter about farmland preservation. Mr. DeGroot, the engineer of the project, answered Mr. Amato's question and ensured that the woodlands and the creek on the eastern portion of the site will not be disturbed. Mr. Amato asked if a screening for artifacts on the site will be done and Mr. DeGroot answered that a study was previously conducted on this site. Mr. DeGroot mentioned that the portion of the site that is being developed is about 78 acres of land that was previously farmland. He also mentioned that the site is conditionally zoned for school use, with approval granted by the Township. Mr. Charles Elliot asked if the letter could reference the loss of farmland and inconsistency with the policies of *FutureLV*. Mr. Fazil, an engineer representing the Northampton Area School District, noted that a plan outlining traffic patterns and certain safety concerns was provided to the Commission the day before. Ms. Bradley added that materials submitted after the review of the Comprehensive Planning Committee does not provide enough time for the Commission to perform an adequate revised review. Mr. Fazil reinforced that the location of the playground is safe and under the control of the School District. Mr. Glickman responded that Mr. Fazil's specific comments cannot be added to the letter and asked Mr. Charles Elliott if he would like to add his comments to the letter. Mr. Charles Elliott asked if the specific acreage of farmland lost can be inserted in the Farmland Preservation section of the letter. Mr. Glickman called for an amended motion to accept the staff comments with Mr. Charles Elliott's edits. Ms. Moore made the amended motion; Mr. Gallagher seconded the amended motion. Mr. Molchany asked if the site was in an Agricultural Security Area and Mr. DeGroot answered that it is not. Mr. Molchany clarified his comments on the Agricultural Security Area and farmland preservation. Ms. Bradley added that LVPC staff will check to see if the site is in an Agricultural Security Area and if it is, that can be added to the letter. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions from the public. Mr. DeGroot added that a traffic impact study was completed and reviewed by LVPC and mentioned the traffic safety measures included on and around the project site. Motion passed, with Mr. Amato abstaining.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet, which included a Lowhill Township Zoning Ordinance Amendment and the Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments on the summary sheet. Mr. Molchany made the motion; Ms. Dreisbach seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. Motion passed.

Environment Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Ms. Morgan presented the Environment Committee Summary Sheet, which included two Solid Waste Permit Renewal Applications in Lehigh and Weisenberg Townships, as well as a Sewage Facilities Planning Module for North Whitehall and South Whitehall Townships. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments on the summary sheet. Mr. Melnick made the motion; Mr. Brace seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. Motion passed.

Transportation Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: Pennsylvania State Plan for Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Deployment

Ms. Bradley presented information on the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) State Deployment Plan. She outlined how much funding would be available and where it would go, with Pennsylvania set to receive \$171.5 million over a 5-year period. Ms. Bradley discussed the three levels of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging that are available, as well as the three charger connector types that are used in electric vehicles. She discussed the Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFC) that are designated as “ready” or “pending” within Pennsylvania and the Lehigh Valley. Ms. Bradley also outlined the schedule for the acceptance of the NEVI State Deployment Plan by the US Department of Transportation. Mr. Amato asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Melnick asked if the highest-level charging increases the mileage that the car can drive per charge and Ms. Bradley answered that it depends on the battery storage capacity within the vehicle. Mr. Glickman asked if the vehicles discussed included trucks and freight vehicles and Ms. Bradley answered that it included both. Ms. Morgan asked about the life of electric batteries and the disposal of them, and Ms. Bradley responded. Mr. O’Neil mentioned the issues of range and fueling for electric transit vehicles, such as buses. Mr. McGorry discussed California’s recent mandate to ban the sale of new gasoline-powered cars by 2035. Mr. Molchany reinforced the purpose behind the NEVI State Deployment Plan.

INFORMATION ITEM: LVTS Kicks-off Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis

Ms. Bradley provided an update on the kick-off of the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT). She summarized the most recent LVTS meetings where PennDOT Deputy Secretary Jennie Louwse spoke about the consideration of passenger rail systems and offered to work with the LVTS to pursue a passenger rail analysis that will meet federal standards. Ms. Bradley described the partnership between PennDOT and the LVTS and added further details on the Analysis. She also provided information on the differences between freight rail, commuter rail and intercity passenger rail. She explained that the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis will determine what the potential for passenger rail service is, as well as look at potential routes and rail implementation partners. Ms. Bradley emphasized that the costs will be high, that the system planning is highly detailed and that the expected timeline is at least a decade or more should the LVTS and Commonwealth decide to proceed with implementation after the analysis is complete. Mr. Molchany added that the Analysis will also look at opportunities for climate action and the land use implications of passenger rail service. He also mentioned the amount of LVTS projects that are unfunded in the 25-year plan. Mr. O’Neil emphasized that the Analysis will estimate build costs and operational costs on an on-going basis. Ms. Bradley mentioned the potential land use implications that can happen as a result of passenger rail in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Amato asked for any additional comments or questions and concluded the Transportation Committee report.

Old Business:

INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports

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

Mr. Neratko presented the plan and review activity for July, which included 18 Subdivisions, 35 Development proposals, 21 reviews for Stormwater Management, and five Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 79 reviews. The reviews included 311 housing units and 6,946,596 square feet of non-residential development, consisting largely of the River Pointe Logistics proposal in Upper Mount Bethel Township. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Ms. Bradley provided the details of the July traffic counts, which shows our normal mid-summer uptick in traffic across all four of our continuous traffic counters collecting volume data. She presented the vehicle counts for State Route 33, Interstate-78, State Route 309 and State Route 22, as well as the truck counts for Interstate-78 and State Route 22. Ms. Bradley noted that Route 22 has more overall vehicles per day than Interstate-78, but Interstate-78 has more overall commercial trucks. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

New Business:

INFORMATION ITEM: Regional Broadband Analysis

Ms. Bradley discussed LVPC's Regional Broadband Analysis. She first highlighted a panel, hosted by Congresswoman Susan Wild, that LVPC was a part of that centered on internet accessibility and the broadband network. Ms. Mackey presented maps that displayed the median download and upload speeds for zip codes within the Lehigh Valley and discussed the internet speeds of certain areas. Ms. Bradley discussed the importance of the maps and the data on broadband in the region for future investments. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Molchany underscored the importance of broadband access as an equity issue and how this information impacts future grant requests. Mr. Glickman asked if *FutureLV* referenced internet infrastructure and Ms. Bradley responded. Mr. Glickman added how important internet access is and will be for future developments of any kind within the region.

Executive Director's Report:

INFORMATION ITEM: 9th Annual LVPC Outlook and Awards

Ms. Bradley announced that the 9th Annual LVPC Outlook and Awards, previously known as the Gala, will be held on November 15th from 8:30 – 10:30AM at the Lehigh University Mountain Top Campus. She provided a preview of what the event will entail. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Communications and Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: LVPC part of National Expert Roundtable

Mr. Assad informed that the LVPC was part of a panel of national experts on how the Federal Infrastructure Law will help bring a greener future. It was an hour-long discussion on how the future of urban infrastructure is being driven by two trends - digital and data driven technologies, and the move to decarbonize our urban centers. He mentioned that the panel included LVPC's Becky Bradley, Siemens USA CEO Barbara Humpton, SEPTA Chief Innovation Officer Emily Yates, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Executive Director Rick Cotton and Regional Plan Association CEO Tom Wright. The panel was viewed by people across the world, and you can find it currently streaming on YouTube by searching 'CityAge' and 'How the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill Can Drive a Clean Energy Future'.

INFORMATION ITEM: Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Business Cycle column that was published in the Sunday, July 31st Morning Call. That column focused on one of the nation's largest expanses of land, our public right-of-way, and looks at what the public-right-of-way means to us, how it's used, and in some cases misused. He stated that the next column is scheduled to publish September 11, 2022 and will focus on the passenger rail analysis being done for the Lehigh Valley, with all of its excitement and many obstacles.

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 that featured Owen O'Neil, Executive Director of LANTA. The show discussed LANTA's burgeoning enhanced bus services and how fast convenient bus services is key to our future development plans. He stated that the next show was scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, September 5th and will focus on development in the first seven months of the year and growth management.

INFORMATION ITEM: 2022 Lehigh Valley Government Academy

Mr. Assad reminded the Commission that the Lehigh Valley Government Academy Classes are currently running throughout 2022, including Community Planning on September 7, 14 & 21 and Zoning on October 6, 13 & 20. He noted that the Community Planning class is full, while there are a few seats open in the Zoning course. Anyone can sign up online at lvpc.org/lvga.

INFORMATION ITEM: PennDOT Grant

Mr. Assad announced that PennDOT is about to open a \$5 million Traffic Signal Technologies Grant Program that municipalities can use to upgrade their existing traffic signals, including everything from improving the timing of traffic signals, to synchronizing a corridor of lights and even making the signal system adapt to traffic as it changes. He informed that this is a one-time grant program, with no local match required, that opens September 1 and runs through September 30, 2022. More information can be found by searching 'PennDOT Traffic Signal Portal' on the web.

INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program

Mr. Assad announced that the Local Technical Assistance Program has a full schedule of classes coming up through the end of August and into September. Anyone can sign up at lvpc.org/ltap or contact Brian Hite. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Glickman stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on September 22nd. Mr. Glickman 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