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LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday, March 23, 2023 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, March 2023. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2022.

Mr. Glickman chaired the meeting.

Ms. Seitz took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Michael Drabenstott, Bob Elbich, Philip Ginder, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, Dennis Klusaritz, Rick Molchany, Christina Morgan, Santo Napoli, Owen O'Neil, David Petrik, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt.

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Charles Elliott, Judy Haldeman, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, Tina Smith, Taiba Sultana, and Tara Zrinski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Percy Dougherty, Jamie Johnson, Joyce Moore, Kathy Rader, and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

Andrew Elliott, Dan Engle, John Gallagher, Darlene Heller, Rachel Leon, Carl Manges, Lamont McClure, Scott Minnich, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, and William Reynolds.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Steve Neratko, Patrick Osei, Jillian Seitz, and Dean Severson.

Public Present: Jean Reinert, Gary Asteak, Brigitte Meyer, Kurt Bresswsein, Jedd Komlos, Karen Komlos, Robert Johnson, Jeanene Bauer, Lynn McMillan, Chip Richardson, Lori Richardson, C. Silva, Stephen Bonsall, Mike Siegel, Scott Cocherell, Mindy Kraky, Kim Weinberg, Debby Keba, Phil Gianficaro, Joann Mertz, Rick Dorney, Richard Shavik, Sue McGorry, Kurt Dietrich

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Welcome New LVPC Commissioners

Mr. Glickman welcomed new member of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, Taiba Sultana, elected member from the City of Easton

Executive Committee Decision on Real Estate Matter

Mr. Glickman discussed the process to locate a new office for the LVPC.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. McGorry discussed the proposed move of the LVPC offices. Dr. Amato discussed the process used to decide the new office location. Ms. Smith asked if the information used by the Executive Committee is available to the Commission members, Ms. Weinberg discussed warehouse development in rural areas, especially in Lowhill Township. She stated a need to plan for warehouse development and a model ordinance to control warehouses in rural areas. Ms. Bradley stated that there is a model ordinance available on the Northampton County website and that the LVPC will be conducting a zoning inventory of Lehigh County municipalities. She also stated that the municipalities participating in the Northern Lehigh multi-municipal comprehensive plan will be working together to update their zoning ordinances. Bill also discussed warehouses in Lowhill Township and the transportation impacts they will create. Ms. Bradley said that the LVPC reviewed plans for the three warehouses and ruled that plans for all three warehouses were inconsistent with the plans and policies of the LVPC.

MINUTES

Mr. Glickman stated that the minutes of the Thursday, February 2023, LVPC meeting are attached, and Ms. Seitz read the previously voted on agenda items. Mr. Glickman then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Melnick made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed, with Ms. Cope and Ms. Sultana abstaining.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

***ACTION ITEM:* Lower Nazareth Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – 523 Planned Business Park**

Mr. Neratko presented the review of the subject application, which is considered a Land Use of Regional Significance under *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* in the Warehouse, Logistics and Storage Facilities, Freight Facility, Local Freight Generator category. This project proposes consolidating two lots and developing 450,000 square foot warehouse and distribution center with associated utilities and parking at 523 Nazareth Pike.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Repasch made the motion; Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Melnick asked about the review letter's recommendation to coordinate efforts with PennDOT to plan for this development. He questioned what this could lead to. He also noted that Lower Nazareth Township adopted an ordinance prohibiting this type of development at this location and that the developer submitted plans one day before this ordinance became effective. He commented that this plan is contrary to the will of the citizens.

Dr. Amato discussed the transportation impacts of this project and commented that the state needs to give local communities more regulatory powers. Ms. Bradley commented that a new statewide committee has been formed to update the Municipalities Planning Code. She also discussed upcoming training sessions offered by the LVPC on how development is regulated at the local level. Mr. Weinberg asked about past recommendations of the LVPC for other warehouse development plans. Mr. Brace discussed legislation proposed by Representative Schlossberg that would give more powers to local planning agencies. Mr. Siegel commented that infrastructure concurrency laws enacted in other states should be enacted in Pennsylvania. He also commented that a model ordinance should be created to control warehouse development, especially those moving into rural areas. The motion passed.

***ACTION ITEM:* Lower Nazareth Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – 4215 Lonat Drive Development**

Mr. Neratko presented the review of the subject application, which is considered a Land Use of Regional Significance under *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* in the Warehouse, Logistics and Storage Facilities, Freight Facility, Local Freight Generator category. This project proposes the construction of a business development for a 72,850-square-foot warehouse and distribution facility with associated utilities and parking at 4215 Lonat Drive.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Repasch made the motion; Mr. Elbich seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Melnick asked what happens if PennDOT and the local community can't find suitable solutions for transportation concerns. Ms. Bradley commented that the LVPC's Land Use of Regional Significance (LURS) process brings together representatives of the local municipality, PennDOT, the Conservation District and others to discuss impacts of specific projects. Mr. Obei discussed ITE codes 150 and 154 used to calculate traffic impacts of different types of warehouse development. Ms. Bradley noted that the LVPC advocates for changes in submitted development plans as well as the local ordinances that regulate those developments. The motion passed with Mr. Melnick voting nay.

INFORMATION ITEM: Lower Macungie Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Mixed Use in the Highway Enterprise Zone (SN)

Ms. Seitz presented the review of the subject zoning ordinance amendment which proposes to amend the Township Zoning Ordinance by permitting mixed-use development as a conditional use in the Highway Enterprise (HE) Zoning District, with related regulations. Per the proposed amendment to the Township Zoning Ordinance, a mixed-use development would include two or more mixed-use structures consisting of residential units at a maximum density of 12 units per acre and non-residential buildings between 20,000 square feet and 75,000 square feet. At least two mixed-use structures must have commercial, dining or other permitted non-residential uses on the first floor.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet, which included Zoning Ordinance Amendments for Lehigh Township, Williams Township, City of Allentown, City of Bethlehem, and two zoning ordinance amendments for Upper Saucon Township.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments on the summary sheet. Mr. Elbich made the motion; Mr. Ginder seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Melnick expressed concern about the proposed rezoning in Bethlehem and the loss of land zoned and currently used for technology. The motion passed with Mr. Melnick voting nay on the City of Bethlehem rezoning.

Environment Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Pennsylvania Post-Construction Stormwater Management Manual

Mr. Severson presented a review of the Pennsylvania Post-Construction Stormwater Management Manual. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has created a manual for storm water control measures, including general information regarding their design, construction, and long-term operation and maintenance.

Mr. Repasch made a motion to accept the staff review. Mr. Glickman asked for a second. Mr. Drabenstott seconded the motion. Mr. Siegel commented that he had worked with DEP in the preparation of the last BMP manual and stressed the need for more green roofs and blue roofs with new warehouse development because we are running out of areas for groundwater infiltration. Ms. Bradley commented the LVPC will begin working next year with FEMA, PEMA, local conservation districts and others to update all of the Act 167 plans in the region and will create a BMP ordinance that will cover the entire Lehigh Valley. Motion passed.

Transportation Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Lehigh

Valley Transportation Study- Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis Project Update

Mr. Herman provided a project update on the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis. PennDOT has contracted WSP for the study. WSP will provide the LVTS Technical Committee with a status report on May 17th.

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 February, which included 21 subdivisions, 20 development proposals, 11 reviews for Stormwater Management, and 7 Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 59 reviews. The reviews include 146 housing units and 166,053 square feet of non-residential development. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Osei provided the details of the February traffic counts. He 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. Mr. Osei noted that the weather in the Lehigh Valley in February affected traffic volumes with very cold temperatures, five rainfalls and seven snowfall occurrences. As a result of February's heavy precipitation and snowfall, all of the monitored traffic volumes decreased. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

New Business:

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Transportation Study (LVTS) Revision to the Long-Range Transportation Plan Elements of FutureLV: The Regional Plan- Transportation Needs Assessment

Mr. Osei commented that the subregional Transportation Needs Assessment provides communities and transportation partners an opportunity to be heard and involved in the process of the Long-Range Transportation Plan Update. This process is required by federal statute to be undertaken every four years by the LVTS. This will reevaluate the transportation components of FutureLV: The Regional Plan. Information is being gathered on transportation issues with a focus on subregional priorities, which will help the LVTS guide and select projects, programs and plans for funding and also help develop future plans to serve the public transportation needs. Input from the community is occurring through three avenues: 27 public meetings, a general transportation needs survey and through specific project requests. We have set a goal of hearing from at least a 1,000 people in the Lehigh Valley.

It is noted that the LVTS is the only metropolitan planning organization in the state to request input on specific projects. The LVPC and LVTS in 2018 developed the second regionwide equity analysis in the nation. As part of this work, the LVTS and LVPC committed to working towards equitable access for everyone in the region, regardless of the ability to hire a third-party consultant or speak or write English well, among other factors that affect access in the region. The staff, as a result, is available to assist anyone who requests it to complete a transportation needs assessment project form.

Executive Director's Report:

INFORMATION ITEM: US Department of Environmental Protection Climate Pollution Reduction Grants Program – Formula Grants for Planning Notice of Intent

The US Department of Environmental Protection (EPA) released a formula-based grant program for climate action planning of \$1 million each for the top 67 largest metropolitan areas by population. The

Lehigh Valley is the 69th largest. A letter of intent for the formula grants is required to be received by the EPA by April 28, 2023, and no match is required.

1. The funds are to be used over the course of a four-year period to: Create a Priority Climate Action Plan, due in early 2024.
2. Develop a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan within two years of an award. and
3. Monitor and develop status reporting by the close of the award period in 2027

The LVPC has completed a regional greenhouse gas inventory through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Local Climate Action Program. They do not provide funding for the next step, a climate action plan. Lehigh County is providing some funding to help advance a portion of a regionwide plan but, Northampton County is not currently. The Lehigh Valley Transportation Study, because of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, is receiving formula funds for carbon reduction improvements to infrastructure. But we will be required to utilize the state's plan as a measure to allocate those dollars without our own plan.

It is of note that the region will be required to utilize PENNDOT derived performance measures for the allocation of \$10.8 million in carbon reduction funds over the next four years. With EPA planning funds we can develop Lehigh Valley-specific measures, which is required in their program, and be able to prioritize investment in the specific, *local* goals of *FutureLV*, like trails, crosswalks, sidewalks, and transit, among other priorities. The Commonwealth's priorities tend to focus on vehicle movement, especially moving vehicles faster and reducing traffic signals along state-owned roadways. While also important, the needs of the local system, across travel modes could be better prioritized and invested as an outcome of EPA funding. In addition, enhanced support to the region's local governments, which is often requested, could be advanced through this program. Because we are under-resourced on the planning side, prioritization of the Climate Action Plan is a struggle and will continue to be without additional planning support funding.

After coordination with Mayor Tuerk, primarily, and including Mayor Panto, Mayor Reynolds and copying Executives McClure and Armstrong, we have been encouraged by Dr. Richard Anderson, Energy Director at the US Conference of Mayors to submit a letter of intent even if we are slightly outside of the top 67 metro eligibility established by the EPA. This strategy would place the EPA on formal notice of the Lehigh Valley's commitment to climate action and the need for planning support in order to achieve goals that have been placed on the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the need for a specific plan for the Lehigh Valley, desire to achieve the broader adopted goals of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, and need for the convening, coordination and collaboration with all 62 local governments in the region in accordance with the mission of the LVPC.

The latter point is one of the primary reasons that the first set of Climate and Energy goals was developed in 2013 by the Commission in partnership with the EPA and US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and why the LVPC has continued to pursue advancement and evolution of Climate Action regionwide. In fact, the region's local governments and those with environmental advisory councils in the suburban and rural areas have requested, due to lack of capacity, that the LVPC lead a broad regional effort. Hence the greenhouse gas inventory and continued pursuit of additional specific planning around carbon reduction.

If one of the 67 eligible regions does not submit a letter of intent, it is possible for our region to become eligible. From work with the City Mayors Coalition, recently formed here, we are formally requesting to move forward with a letter of intent to the EPA, with the LVPC as the lead applicant, and in coordination with the region's local governments per the formula program requirements. The City Mayors Coalition and I will be meeting in the next several weeks to advance this initiative upon your support of the letter of intent.

INFORMATION ITEM: LVPC to receive United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley's Community Builder Award, April 4, 2023, 4:30 PM-7:30 PM, Arts Quest at Steel Stacks

The LVPC Team is being recognized with the Community Builder Award, the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley's highest honor on April 4, 2023, at Arts Quest at Steel Stacks. The award is for our dedication to improving the region over the last 62 years.

INFORMATION ITEM: Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Real Estate Outlook

Ms. Bradley stated that the LVPC will again have a major role at the upcoming Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Real Estate Outlook, during lunch on April 13 at the Delta Hotel by Marriott in Breinigsville. This is the annual opportunity to share what is happening and how the region is growing and why that matters to everyone with over 500 business leaders. She will be taking a look at an historically busy 2022 development year and taking a look at what that means for the future. There will also be a commercial real estate presentation and a live episode of Business Matters that will air on WFMZ. Given the evolving nature of the economy the event is also timely and the largest real estate event of the year. Ms. Bradley provided a preview of some of the content to be shared at the event.

Communications and Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: Plan Lehigh Valley radio show on WDIY NPR 88.1FM

Mr. Assad stated that the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show aired on March 6 on WDIY FM 88.1, and it focused on our recent annual report and our newly set in-person training schedule through the Lehigh Valley Government Academy. Joining Becky and Matt was Brian Hite, who talked about the LTAP classes, and Hannah Milagio who talked about our upcoming in-person zoning, land development and community planning classes. We also talked a lot about a 2022 that saw more homes, more industrial and more growth in generally across the region than we've seen in more than a decade. That 30-minute show is now streaming at lvpc.org and wdiy.org. The next show is scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, April 3, when we'll be talking about making the region more walkable.

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Government Academy Classes

Mr. Assad announced that the Lehigh Valley Government Academy Classes are back with four courses spread throughout the year, each consisting of more than 10 hours of instruction on three consecutive weeknights from 5:30-9 pm. We have scheduled Zoning in April, Community Planning in May, Subdivision and Land Development in September and a second Community Planning course in October.

We'll also be offering a virtual class Thursday, March 30. That one is a 90-minute class called "Building A Strong Planning Commission" and it will be taught by Becky. It begins at 6:30 pm and will use hands-on activities and interactive discussions to explore the full range of a planning commission's work, how it can be organized to accomplish more of its goals, and what is needed to prepare members to get involved in the group's work.

Mr. Assad also that Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) Classes are back in-person for 2023. After almost 3 years of virtual classes, our first in-person class also happens to be our most popular, on April 12th when we'll have Temporary Traffic Control in Work Zones. This will be followed by Erosion and Sediment Control on June 6. The April 12 class includes a light breakfast and lunch, and the June class includes light breakfast. The food and class are free.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Glickman announced an upcoming forum, sponsored by Green Building United, entitled Sustainable Warehouse Forum Part 3, Storm water management and native landscaping. The event will be held on April 14th. Mr. Glickman stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on April 27 at 7pm. 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 Dean Severson, AICP, Director of Regional Planning