

# **The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT**

**January 5, 2022 – 7 PM, Virtual Steering Committee Meeting**

## **Steering Committee Attendees:**

Bangor:	James Kresge
East Bangor:	Jason Huggan, Susan Ruggiero
Lower Mount Bethel:	Susan Disidore, Jennifer Smethers, Sandra Newman
Pen Argyl:	Robin Zmoda
Plainfield:	Tom Petrucci, Stephen Hurni, Terry Kleintop
Portland:	Lance Prator, Stephanie Steele
Roseto:	Cathy Martino
Upper Mount Bethel:	Ed Nelson
Washington:	Justin Huratiak
Wind Gap:	Louise Firestone

## **Members of the Public in Attendance:**

Judith Henckel – Upper Mount Bethel  
David Friedman – Upper Mount Bethel  
David Clunie – Upper Mount Bethel  
Jane Mellert – Plainfield  
Don Moore – Plainfield Township  
Wesley Smith – Wind Gap

## **Planning Partners in Attendance:**

Tracy Oscavich – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission  
Becky Bradley – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission  
Stephen Reider – Slate Belt Rising  
Mark Hartney – Northampton County

## **Roll Call**

Mr. Petrucci called roll. All municipalities were in attendance.

## **Minutes from the October 6, 2021 Meeting**

Mr. Petrucci said the committee could not take action on the minutes tonight through Teams, and they should be tabled.

## **New Business**

### **1. Draft Goals, Policies and Actions**

Ms. Bradley presented the first draft of the goals, policies and actions. She said we are looking for input on the direction the communities would like to go as a group, including if something is missing, if the language is not correct or if there is anything they did not like. Ms. Bradley said there have been several key policies that have been discussed over the past few meetings that she would like to focus on tonight. Mr. Hurni asked if it would make more sense to do this in a subcommittee format. He thought there could be six subcommittees based on the six goals. Ms. Zmoda noted that all communities need to be involved with all the goals. Ms. Bradley said that a few sessions could be scheduled over a shorter period of time or communities could each mark

**Slate Belt Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes  
January 5, 2022**

up the document and return it to the LVPC. Mr. Petrucci, Mr. Nelson and Ms. Zmoda agreed with marking up the document.

Ms. Bradley asked how the group wanted to proceed. She said we could focus on some of the most important policies and those we have questions on tonight. Mr. Hartney thought it would be helpful for the LVPC to lead the discussion, point out the parts that need more discussion. The homework for the next meeting would be for each community to submit comments from each community's perspective and then discuss where there is conflict.

Ms. Bradley said that one of the most important policies to focus on is Policy 1.1: Direct intense development towards boroughs, crossroads villages and surrounding areas. This is the lead-off to the plan and the most overarching policy. An additional policy to focus on is Policy 1.4: Encourage the reclamation and safety of mining sites and inactive quarries. Ms. Bradley noted that at the last meeting, several communities said they have real safety and environmental issues with quarries, and while they may have cultural/historic aspects to them, they are holding some communities back. This policy was an attempt to address the comments. The committee heard a lot about the Slate Belt Heritage Center's initiative with Northampton County and PennPraxis to create a heritage-based destination around the quarries. We tried to tie that in in other areas of the plan. She asked if Policy 1.4 addresses their concerns. Mr. Kleintop said the problem is, they need to decide how they feel about the quarries. We either embrace them or consider them as a liability. Ms. Bradley said maybe we can write about those that are determined as culturally significant and would have a different policy perspective related to heritage tourism/cultural preservation. Ms. Zmoda thought that was a good example of why each community should go back and make notes and comments on the document.

Mr. Huratiak agreed with Mr. Kleintop and Ms. Zmoda. He said communities cannot spot zone. We should look at them from an environmental/water quality perspective and develop design criteria that might supersede some of the state regulations. If they are directly connected to an aquifer, develop criteria for that. Mr. Petrucci said Plainfield Township is working on a project to implement an ordinance in the way Mr. Huratiak described. However, communities cannot supersede state regulations, they can only reinforce them. They can require an applicant to confirm they are in compliance with the state. When the Township completes the ordinance, they can share it with the group. Mr. Kleintop thought the Slate Belt could have influence with how the PADEP establishes policy on quarries, especially after the Synagro situation. The Township made their case about the issue of filling the quarry, and the state backed off. The state is not allowing anymore fill in that quarry.

Mr. Nelson said that the idea about each community marking up the document is good, however, he thinks the best approach is the group needs to try to focus on the few goals that we all think are most important, otherwise, it will take a very long time getting through all of them. Ms. Bradley said each community could go through them and mark those that are most important to them. We could create a chart with that information to organize the plan to make it more useful. So, it's about applicability, prioritization and content.

Ms. Bradley pointed out several policies under Goal 2 that the group should look at. Under Policy 2.1, did we capture everything on revitalization? This is an important policy for Slate Belt Rising to review. For Policy 2.2, how do you balance industrial heritage with the industrial environment and what does that look like? Did we get this right? This gets to the economic development strategy. She noted that Northampton County should look at Policy 2.4, which is related to housing, and outdoor recreation, Policy 2.5, is important to all communities.

**Slate Belt Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**January 5, 2022**

Ms. Bradley asked if Policies 3.1 and 3.2 under Goal 3 are the direction they want to go and did we say enough. We need more guidance from the communities.

Going back to the quarry discussion, Ms. Newman said that maybe for communities that have quarries we could have a breakout group. Lower Mt. Bethel has 100s of acres in quarries. A breakout session would be beneficial to them. Ms. Bradley said if the group is amenable to it, we could send a doodle poll to everyone and schedule a meeting in a week or two. The group agreed. Mr. Hartney noted that there could be other issues in the plan similar to quarries.

Mr. Nelson commented that for Goal 3, one of the biggest objectives is how do we offset the economic loss some communities may experience due to the changes that will be made in rezoning. For Policy 1.2, it's one thing to say to promote farmland, but how is it going to be worked? Are we preserving the farmland or the farmer? Ms. Oscavich said she thinks that Goal 5: A Strong Farming Community addresses some of Mr. Nelson's concerns.

Ms. Mellert said there was an area of concern under Policy 1.2, the action to "Connect farmers to agricultural property owners to support agricultural-based land transfers and minimize the transition to non-farming uses." There has to be a plan of action to implement this. How can this be done? There doesn't seem to be effective ways for succession planning. Ms. Bradley said we could talk to the Department of Agriculture or Penn State Extension for more direction on succession planning. Mr. Hartney said we should discuss whether we need to rethink the rules on farmland preservation to adapt to what the market dictates. There is a program called Ag Connect, which he thinks is a statewide initiative, that focuses on the business of farming, that could be useful in this discussion.

Mr. Huratiak said Washington Township is looking to preserve farmland and possibly preparing an ordinance related to the Chrin Industrial deal, where so many dollars were put into farmland preservation every time something was developed for industrial use to help offset that development. This would help minimize certain uses/development types. The ordinance could require the preservation of a certain number of acres. Mr. Hartney said that was a condition of the increment financing deal put in place around the interchange. He said communities would want to look at how the agreement was worded. Northampton County did not receive the preservation dollars promised/intended due to a loophole used by the developer. Ms. Bradley commented that the MPC does not identify this as an impact fee option for governments to use as a part of a development.

Ms. Bradley said we would want to get input from the Workforce Board Lehigh Valley on Goal 6: A Prepared Student Body and Workforce since they participated in the roundtable discussion on education. She asked the committee to think about whether the policies and actions meet the intent that they were trying to get across with this goal. Mr. Nelson said this impacts the school districts, and if brought into this discussion, they could probably develop programs to identify needed skills in the workforce. We know we need emergency services personnel. It's difficult to find people to fill those jobs. Ms. Bradley said we did invite school districts to participate in the roundtable discussions. She noted that that, as part of the MPC, school districts are to be provided with a draft plan and given a 45-day comment period. This is legally part of the review process.

Mr. Hartney said that the next step is for everyone to mark up the draft goals, policies and actions and submit them to the LVPC. He asked when the comments need to be submitted and if that be the focus of the next meeting, to identify areas of focus and conflicting comments. Ms. Bradley said yes, the comments will be the focus. We also will have a breakout on quarries. She

**Slate Belt Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**January 5, 2022**

noted that a lot of municipalities are concerned about how fast development is coming. They want to discuss coordinated zoning through this type of effort. Coordinated zoning does not mean one ordinance for all. At the back end of the plan per state law, municipalities are required to look at their subdivision/land development ordinances, zoning ordinances and Official Maps to try to make them consistent with the overall intent of the plan. We are bringing in Environmental Planning and Design to talk about this at a virtual workshop on January 31 at 7 pm. Meeting information will be sent to all.

Mr. Moore asked at what point are maps to be developed for the Future Land Use Plan. Ms. Bradley said the communities already began going through some map review. We did begin to draft Parks and Recreation, Transportation and Natural Resources maps. Once the policies are completed, we will prepare the General Land Use Plan.

## **Next Steps**

### **Courtesy of the Floor**

Mr. Petrucci asked if anyone had anything for courtesy of the floor. Mr. Hurni asked when comments should be submitted on the goals, policies and actions. Ms. Oscavich said, at minimum, a week before the next meeting, which would be January 26. Ms. Bradley said municipalities should try to get through as much as possible so the group can start going through the comments at the next meeting. She also informed the group about an MPC working group that was formed to discuss the requirements that don't work and develop recommendations for changes. The next meeting will be held at the end of January. All municipal governments are invited to attend. We will send a meeting link to everyone. The working group also released a survey on the MPC and are looking for feedback on specific issues and changes needed, and we will send that to Slate Belt municipalities as well.

### **Adjourn**

Mr. Petrucci called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Nelson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Steele seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

### **Attachments**

- November 3, 2021 Steering Committee Minutes

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.