

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT

October 6, 2021 – 7 PM, Plainfield Township Volunteer Fire Company Banquet Facility, 6480 Sullivan Trail, Wind Gap, PA 18091

Steering Committee Attendees:

Bangor: Nathaniel Dysard, Brooke Kerzner
East Bangor: Jason Huggan
L. Mt. Bethel: Sandra Newman
Pen Argyl: Robin Zmoda, Janell Connolly, Jeff Fox
Plainfield: Tom Petrucci, Stephen Hurni, Terry Kleintop
Portland: Lance Prator, Stephanie Steele
Roseto: Carl Renna, Cathy Martino
U. Mt. Bethel: Ed Nelson
Washington: Justin Huratiak
Wind Gap: Louise Firestone, George Hinton

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Judith Henckel – Upper Mount Bethel
David Friedman – Upper Mount Bethel
Jane Mellert – Plainfield
Glenn Geissinger - Plainfield
Pete Iselo - Bangor

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Tracy Oscavich – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Geoff Reese – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Mark Hartney – Northampton County

Roll Call

Ms. Rockwell took roll. All municipalities were in attendance.

Minutes from the July 7, 2021 Meeting

Mr. Petrucci called for a vote on the July 7, 2021 meeting minutes, which are attached to the agenda. Mr. Hurni made a motion to approve the minutes with an amendment under the General Issues and Opportunities Discussion that indicates the Plainfield Township Zoning Ordinance on Industrial Types is under contention and being reviewed. Mr. Prator seconded the motion. The minutes, with the amendment, were approved unanimously.

General Issues and Opportunities Discussion

- Known Plan Activity in Slate Belt Communities

Ms. Rockwell reviewed the plans and ordinances listed, which covered a three-month period from July 2021 to September 2021.

Change in Meeting Location

Mr. Petrucci said the Steering Committee will not be able to meet at the Pen Argyl Community Center due to damage to the building. The Plainfield Township Volunteer Fire Company facility is available through the end of December. Ms. Oscavich said a legal ad was placed indicating that the meetings will be held at the Fire Company facility through December.

Mr. Petrucci thanked Ms. Bradley for the articles in The Morning Call. Ms. Oscavich noted that Ms. Bradley was unable to attend tonight's meeting due to her attendance at the Northampton County budget hearing.

Old Business

1. Draft Community Preference Survey

Ms. Oscavich said that the draft survey was emailed to all committee members, and we received 79 responses to date. We need over 300 responses for a statistically valid survey. We prepared post cards with to hand out with a Q/R code. We will also be at the Northampton County Festival promoting the survey and Plan Slate Belt. She asked if anyone had any other ideas for promoting the survey. The sooner we receive responses, the sooner we can complete the plan. Mr. Petrucci asked if we could provide a Facebook template post. Ms. Oscavich said the survey will be posted on the Plan Slate Belt website. Municipalities can direct people to the website. She asked for approval to open the survey. Mr. Petrucci asked for a motion to approve the survey. Mr. Huggan made the motion to approve. Ms. Zmoda seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

New Business

1. Map Discussion to Support Policy Development

Mr. Reese asked if any communities wanted to comment on their "Where do you wish to grow?" maps. Mr. Nelson asked if the maps need to be consistent with zoning. Mr. Reese said not necessarily. There may be additional ideas they may want to consider. Mr. Nelson said that everyone has different perspectives about growth. Mr. Reese said the process for multi-municipal plans is to consider everyone's opinions.

Ms. Zmoda said that for Pen Argyl there is not much area to build out. Mostly, redevelopment would be possible in vacant, blighted areas. There are some places in the Borough they would like to protect. Mr. Huratiak said we need an open discussion about opportunities to zone out some areas under pressure, especially from warehouses. Mr. Reese said they can be more strategic about warehouse development by looking at zoning ordinances to identify the changes needed to accommodate the general land use plan. Mr. Nelson said we need to be unified ahead of time to get buy-in. He asked who would manage what is right or wrong. Mr. Reese said each municipality is voting at the end of the process to adopt the plan or not. Mr. Nelson said some municipalities could lose revenue and asked how they will be compensated. Mr. Reese said that will influence their judgement on what is on the map. We need to determine how everyone gets what they want and retain individuality. The group has a better chance working together. Ms. Henckel said you can't tell any community to take warehouses. Mr. Reese said currently every municipality must accommodate all uses. But with multi-municipal plans, that is not the case.

Mr. Fox asked if the Slate Belt will need to be one municipality at some point. Mr. Reese said no, but to legally have protection under the Municipalities Planning Code, communities must adopt the multi-municipal plan. There must be an agreement on how to work together and individually

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amend zoning ordinances to make consistent with the plan within two years of plan adoption. Mr. Petrucci asked if there is any case law on the grace period. Mr. Reese said he did not know. Mr. Petrucci said some solicitors say there needs to be one multi-municipal zoning ordinance for all. Mr. Reese said that is not the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission's (LVPC) understanding, but municipalities could if they wanted to. Mr. Petrucci said we need a memo that identifies case laws that say a multi-municipal zoning ordinance is not required and explains the LVPC's understanding.

Mr. Kleintop asked about the municipalities that opted out of the previous Nazareth Area Multi-municipal Plan. Mr. Reese said that if any community does not want to participate, all uses still have to be accommodated within the remaining municipalities. Mr. Kleintop asked how to keep municipalities from not doing the right thing. Mr. Reese said the intermunicipal agreement will cover how they will work together and make sure the plan is being implemented as approved. Mr. Petrucci said we need municipal solicitor input on multi-municipal plan requirements. He said the Municipalities Planning Code does not say municipalities do not need to accommodate all uses with an adopted multi-municipal plan. Mr. Nelson said we are creating a zoning map for the entire region, and each municipality will need to adopt the zoning in their community. Mr. Reese said we are creating a general land use plan, not a zoning map. Mr. Fox asked if you have a regional board to enforce the plan. Mr. Reese said each community would enforce their own zoning ordinance. Mr. Hartney said a board isn't needed, but the agreement could require that zoning amendments be sent to the LVPC for review.

Mr. Reese presented a series of 13 region-wide maps. He said the maps will be placed on the website as individual community maps. Each municipality should review their maps and provide comments.

- Floodplain Zones
- Natural Heritage Inventory
- FutureLV Natural Resources Plan
- Agricultural Areas
- Existing Land Use
- FutureLV General Land Use Plan
- Land Cover
- Parks, Open Space and Trails
- Average Annual Daily tTraffic
- Percent Truck Traffic
- Residential Parcel Type
- Structures Year Built
- Historic Resources

Mr. Reese said the FutureLV Natural Resources Plan will not necessarily be what is in the Slate Belt plan. He said each feature is assigned a value and are tied to policies in FutureLV. However, one size does not fit all. For example, historic communities are often built in a floodplain. We need to create policies that work for those communities. The plan can't say to avoid the floodplain for all. Mr. Petrucci asked if the map can show each of the features. Mr. Reese said yes. Mr. Fox asked what happens to a homeowner if zoning is changed due to natural resources. Mr. Reese said it is not necessarily going to change zoning. There could be a conservation easement on the property. Northampton County is very aggressive in trying to preserve property. Mr. Huratiak said every landowner affected by a zoning change will be notified. Mr. Dysard said a public notice of changes would be posted on the municipal website.

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Mr. Reese said municipalities might want to spend time on reviewing the Agricultural Areas map, which shows FutureLV agricultural preservation areas. Aerial photography was used to identify ag land cover. He said each community should also look at the Existing Land Use map, which is based on Northampton County assessment records. The LVPC has a process to take those codes and create the existing land use map. The records require some interpretation and can't be done perfectly. This map will be used to build the future land use plan. There was a question on what is quasi-public. Mr. Reese said we can put together a list and provide it to the group. Mr. Petrucci asked if roads can be included on the maps. Mr. Reese said yes, roads can be added to the individual maps.

Mr. Reese said the individual parks, open space and trails maps will show all the details. Mr. Kleintop asked how they should communicate private parks to the LVPC. Mr. Reese said to identify them on the map and then we can determine what category they should be in.

Mr. Reese said the average annual daily traffic map is based on traffic counts and will be important as we build the transportation portion of the plan. Mr. Kleintop asked how they would know when the last traffic study was completed. Mr. Reese said it was not a traffic study, just counts, which are not older than 2014. Also, the way the percent truck traffic is mapped should be changed. It does not mean the number of truck trips.

Mr. Reese said the municipalities should bring comments on the individual maps to the November meeting. Ms. Oscavich said comments could also be added to the pdf version of the maps.

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Fox asked if there is a mechanism in place to complete the survey more than once. Ms. Oscavich said the survey is based on IP addresses/devices.

Ms. Kerzner said she feels like we are not moving forward with the process; that they have heard all of this before. Ms. Oscavich said we plan to have draft policies in December. Also, map feedback will help with creating policies over the next few months. Mr. Petrucci asked when we start talking about assigning uses. Mr. Reese said we need correct data to move forward.

Adjourn

Mr. Petrucci called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Prator made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Renna seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Attachments

- July 7, 2021 Steering Committee Minutes
- Slate Belt Communities' Activity Log (July 2021 – September 2021)
- Community Visual Preference Survey

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.