



## Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

DR. CHRISTOPHER R. AMATO  
Chair

CHRISTINA V. MORGAN  
Vice Chair

ARMANDO MORITZ-CHAPELLIQUEN  
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP  
Executive Director

### LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

#### Minutes from the Thursday February 22, 2024, Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, February 22, 2024. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Wednesday, February 14th, 2024.

LVPC Chair Dr. Chris Amato chaired the meeting.

Mr. Joey Dotta took Roll Call.

#### Members in Attendance:

##### Lehigh County

Sunny Ghai, Philip Ginder, Steve Glickman, Jennifer Gomez, Kent Herman, John Inglis, Diane Kelly, Dennis Klusaritz, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt

##### Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judith Haldeman, Ken Kraft, Carl Manges, John McGorry, Scott Minnich, Steve Melnick, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, Grace Crampsie Smith, Tina Smith and Jean Versteeg

#### Members Absent:

##### Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Ron Beitler, Michael Drabenstott, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Santo Napoli, Owen O'Neil, and Matthew Tuerk

##### Northampton County

Darlene Heller, Rachel Leon, Lamont McClure, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, Jr. and J. William Reynolds

**Staff Present:** Joey Dotta, Steve Neratko, Becky Bradley, Matt Assad, Mackenzie Geisner, Susan Myerov, Patrick Osei, Denjam Khadka and Hannah Milagio

**Public Present:** Jeff Ward (WFMZ), Jay Bradley (PBS39), Kurt Bresswein (Lehigh Valley Live), Emily Zuluaga and Julia Sullivan

#### COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

No members of the public spoke during courtesy of the floor.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Amato welcomed three new commissioners of the LVPC Ken Kraft, Grace Crampsie Smith and Jean Versteeg. Chair Amato opened the floor to the new commissioners where they said they were excited to be a part of the LVPC.

#### MINUTES

Chair Amato stated that the minutes of the Thursday, January 25, 2024, LVPC meeting are attached, and Mr. Dotta presented the previously voted on agenda items. Chair Amato then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Morgan made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Glickman seconded the motion.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed. Commissioner Kelly and Commissioner Kraft abstained.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### ***ACTION ITEM: City of Allentown – Land Use of Regional Significance – Muhlenberg College Seegers Union Building Expansion***

Mr. Dotta presented a proposal for an expansion of Seegers Union student center on the Muhlenberg College campus. The project proposes new pedestrian and utility/stormwater infrastructure improvements and adds an outdoor seating area. The additional crosswalks 'provide a safe, well-maintained transportation network to move people' and the inclusion of an ADA compliant ramp and parking spaces helps 'ensure transportation accessibility for all persons.' The proposed green roof is a valued addition to the development and encourages 'sustainable building, site design and community design practices.' More detail is encouraged on the plan about what the green roof entails and may look like.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Manges made the motion, and Commissioner Minnich seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Morgan abstained.

### ***ACTION ITEM: Hanover Township (LC) – Land Use of Regional Significance – Lehigh Valley International Airport Hotel***

Mr. Neratko presented a proposal for a hotel to be developed in two phases. Phase one will be the construction of 22,356 square feet with 145 rooms and associated parking. Phase two will be a 4,108-square-foot addition to the structure adding 28 additional rooms for a grand total of 26,464 square feet with 173 rooms at 3311 Airport Road. Incremental development along the Airport Road corridor may impact traffic management strategies with traffic signals and vehicle movements and the LVPC recommends coordination with PennDOT.

Mr. Neratko noted there will be some logistical changes to the driving and parking areas and recommended that a truck turning template be developed to display the largest emergency vehicle's ability to access the site, and that the municipality and associated emergency services confirm the access configuration to meet emergency service needs. There are no oversized parking spaces depicted on the plans for the hotel and the LVPC recommends that one or more oversized parking spaces be provided given the proximity to U.S. Route 22.

Mr. Neratko noted that after the committee meeting, language recommending that the developer ensure adequate parking for the needs of the facility was added.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Molchany made the motion, and Commissioner Manges seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Versteeg abstained.

### ***ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet:***

Comprehensive Planning Committee Chair Steve Melnick presented a summary of the Committee meeting that occurred on Tuesday. The meeting included a zoning ordinance amendment in Hanover Township Northampton County.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Repasch made the motion, and Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Versteeg abstained.

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### ***ACTION ITEM: County SALDO Review - Northern Lehigh School District Baseball & Softball Field Renovations – Slatington Borough***

Mr. Khadka presented a county subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) review for the Northern Lehigh School District Baseball and Softball Field Renovations in Slatington Borough. The LVPC serves as the official municipal Planning Commission for Slatington Borough, in addition to its role as county planners. Therefore, this review is regulatory per the County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

Mr. Khadka noted that the LVPC reviewed the application and recommends conditional approval of the preliminary plan, pending compliance with the standards of the Lehigh County SALDO. Based on review of the plans and calculations relative to the stormwater management requirements in the Lehigh County SALDO, Mr. Khadka noted several deficiencies. The applicant has not demonstrated compliance with the Act 167 Ordinance dated April 2006.

The provisions of the Act 167 Ordinance were not satisfied and mentioned by Mr. Khadka. The deficiencies are noted here. The exfiltration needs to be deducted in the hydrograph routing for the existing and proposed basin. The proposed infiltration basin detail is incorrect for the depth and/or elevation of the topsoil. The proposed infiltration basin routings indicate the freeboard to the spillway invert is not met. Hydrologic Soil Group B should be used for the hydrograph calculations pre- and post-development. All existing and proposed land cover needs to be clearly labeled on the drainage area maps. Compatibility with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System requirements needs to be demonstrated through approval by the Lehigh County Conservation District.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Morgan made the motion, and Commissioner Melnick seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Glickman asked Mr. Khadka if he was able to clarify and identify an area on the site plan. Mr. Khadka explained what the area in question represented.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Schmidt abstained.

## **TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

### ***ACTION ITEM: Transportation Committee Summary Sheet***

Transportation Committee Chair Kent Herman summarized the Committee meeting that occurred hours before that included PennDOT Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF) and Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) Projects Report. The Eastern PA Freight Alliance: Freight Infrastructure Plan Update and Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis were also discussed. Finally, an action item concerning a street vacation petition received from the city of Allentown was forwarded to Chair Amato for official action.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Molchany made the motion, and Commissioner Herman seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed.

## OLD BUSINESS:

### ***ACTION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Priority Climate Action Plan for Transportation Decarbonization***

Ms. Myerov presented the plan that includes a list of strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from one of the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metropolitan Statistical Area's (MSA) top sources - the transportation sector. The MSA includes Lehigh, Northampton and Carbon counties in Pennsylvania and Warren County in New Jersey. The transportation sector was selected as the focus for this PCAP, as it was determined to be one of the largest sources of GHG emissions in the region. It is also the area where we can have the greatest impact because it provides access to billions of dollars of state and federal decarbonization funding streams, many of them created through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.

Ms. Myerov briefed the Commission on each of the six GHG reduction measures and associated emission reduction estimates that were detailed in the plan. It was summarized that potential GHG emission reductions resulting from the measures outlined in this plan are estimated at 321,000 metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e annually by 2050, a reduction from 2021 transportation sector emissions by nearly 12%.

Next, Mr. Neratko presented a review of the draft PCAP and found that it fulfills several goals and policies outlined in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan, Walk/RollLV*, the two county Livable Landscapes, as well as LANTA's plans including Moving LANTA Forward and an Enhanced BRT Strategy. Within *FutureLV*, the LVPC is tasked with researching, writing and implementing specific plans and the development of the Priority Climate Action Plan fulfills this role. Each of the six GHG measures was reviewed against *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* goals.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Chair Amato commented his excitement for measure five and the draft plan is an excellent starting point. Commissioner Melnick thanked the staff for their work and commented that some of the measures may be wishful thinking. He asked if alternative fueling is something that the LVPC can even help with. Ms. Bradley responded that the LVPC does have influence on the deployment of alternative fueling infrastructure that is supported by LVTS's alternative transportation plan that will eventually come. She noted that many MPOs are working on alternative transportation plans. She finished by saying that the adoption of electric vehicles is increasing across the Lehigh Valley and that future capacity will eventually be planned.

Commissioner Morgan commended the staff on their presentation at the meetings so far and this one. She expressed that there is interest throughout the Valley and is looking forward to continued cooperation. Commissioner McGorry commented that 15% of cars being sold are electric vehicles and asked Ms. Bradley's opinion. Ms. Bradley noted the increase compared to recent years and the numerous companies that are continually innovating. Mr. Assad added that the projected increases are modest and still are a sizable increase. Commissioner McGorry noted his concern of the pricing of the vehicles and Ms. Bradley concurred and said that it would likely become more competitive. Commissioner Molchany commented that the 15% increase is resulting in reinvesting in local electric grids.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen added that he would echo Ms. Bradley's points and that the most exciting part of the draft plan is general quality of life and community wellness measures.

Commissioner Molchany commended the plan and said that it is of utmost importance for Lehigh Valley residents. Commissioner Molchany urged that the LVTS be made more aware of this plan's information and thanked the LVPC staff for their work.

Commissioner Repasch expressed his excitement and concern for measure five specifically regarding greenery that may attract wildlife near highways.

Commissioner Ghai added there will likely be a transition between gas and electric vehicles with hybrid vehicles. Ms. Myerov answered that alternative fuel vehicles are intended to be all-encompassing and include those types of vehicles.

Commissioner Versteeg commented that the bicycle corridors are a great idea and added that it is generally difficult to bike in the Lehigh Valley due to the hills. Commissioner Versteeg commented that e-bikes may be an eventual alternative.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed.

### **INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports**

Chair Amato notified the Commission that activity reports are included in the meeting packets and will not be presented.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **INFORMATION ITEM: Annual Report**

Mr. Neratko briefed the Commission members on the recently completed Annual Report. The first part, BuildLV, covered 2023 plan activity that was over 1,250 reviews including land development plans, municipal ordinance updates, stormwater management plans, transportation impact studies, parks and recreation, and sewer and water availability. Almost one-half of the 70 grant funding review letters were related to park and recreation facility improvements as residents continue to seek more active lifestyles. Other reviews included 61 sewage facilities and solid waste plans and 153 reviews for Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection permits, marking another busy year for reviews.

The 4,916 housing units proposed in the Lehigh Valley in 2023 is 26.7% higher than the 10-year average following the housing downturn. 2023 was one of the most balanced years for residential units by type in recent memory. Non-residential reviews remained high, and the LVPC reviewed 21.4 million non-residential square feet throughout the year.

Next, Ms. Geisner presented an interactive map of plan activity and varying land uses in the Lehigh Valley from 2019 to 2023. Mr. Neratko wrapped up the first part of the Annual Report presentation with a brief explanation of multi-municipal planning efforts.

Mr. Osei presented the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update in 2023 following the Transportation Needs Assessment. As part of this plan, over 120 different data sets were mapped and examined to equitably prioritize needs for future funding, including an update to LVPC's Equity Analysis of the Lehigh Valley to incorporate Federal Justice40 guidelines, which require 40% of transportation funds be utilized for or within disadvantaged communities. Ms. Myerov followed with PCAP which is focused on the transportation sector to provide the best opportunity to have a major impact on reducing GHG emissions.

Ms. Milagio continued the Annual Report presentation with the updated Public Participation and Limited English Proficiency plans, as part of the development of *Planning for All: Increasing Equitable Access to Planning in the Lehigh Valley*. Mr. Osei mentioned details of the Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan adopted by LVPC and LVTS in 2020. In 2023, the LVPC furthered implementation of Walk/RollLV by managing 11 applications submitted for Pennsylvania's Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside funding.

Ms. Milagio presented the various training and engagement activities the LVPC does and local partners that help make them happen. Mr. Assad wrapped up the Annual Report presentation by going over outreach efforts that include a regular column in the Sunday Morning Call reaching 40,000 doorsteps and 70,000 devices, a monthly National Public Radio show, Plan Lehigh Valley on WDIY 88.1 FM, and a monthly half-page Development Snapshot in the Lehigh Valley Business Journal consumed by 12,000

subscribers. The LVPC in 2023 also kept people updated on meeting schedules, new data and grant opportunities through daily Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and X updates.

Ms. Bradley closed it out by thanking the staff and commissioners for their continued commitment and work for the Lehigh Valley.

Chair Amato congratulated the staff and asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen jokingly asked how much coffee was consumed to get the report done and thanked the staff.

***INFORMATION ITEM: Local Government Survey Results***

Ms. Milagio presented some results from the recent Local Government Survey. The survey asked partners to rank the greatest challenges to their work and communities. It then asked partners to rank their greatest land use-specific challenges. And finally, municipal partners identified their top training need as the roles and responsibilities of governing bodies in the land use and zoning processes. Top results for each question were shared and Ms. Milagio noted several opportunities for training related to the answers.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

***INFORMATION ITEM: LVPC Updates and Annual Training Part 2***

Ms. Bradley presented a continuation of Commissioner Training and detailed what laws the LVPC works within. The applicable laws include the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code (MPC), Pennsylvania Storm Water Management Act, Sewage Facilities Act, Solid Waste Management Act, Public Utility Code, Delaware River Basin Compact, and the United States Code, Title 2 and 40, as enacted and amended in conjunction with the Inflation Reduction Act. Ms. Bradley then briefly discussed the roles and structure of LVPC versus LVTS.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Molchany extended an invite to any LVPC Commissioner who wishes to attend LVTS meetings. He stated that LVPC is vital to the running of the MPO and helps meet federal requirements. Both the LVTS and LVPC differ in roles but are integral to promoting the best interest of the Lehigh Valley.

**COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

***INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Business Cycle Column***

Mr. Assad spoke about the most recent Morning Call column focused on our newly updated Public Participation and Limited English Proficiency Plans, through the lens of how the region has become so much more diverse over the past four decades. The next column will look at the Priority Climate Action Plan you heard about earlier. That column will run March 10.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

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

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show that aired February 5 on WDIY FM 88.1 and covered the Public Participation and Limited English Proficiency Plan updates. Ms. Bradley was joined by LVPC Managing Editor Matt Assad, LVPC Regional Planner for Community Engagement, and LVPC Senior Community Planner Jill Seitz. That 30-minute show is now streaming at LVPC.org and WDIY.org.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

***INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program Virtual Classes***

Ms. Milagio presented dates and times for five upcoming Lehigh Valley Government Academy classes occurring in the next few weeks.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

***INFORMATION ITEM: PennDOT Connects 2024 Municipal Outreach Meeting***

Mr. Osei presented an upcoming event to improve your local roads and transport with PennDOT Connects. The event is on May 16, 2024, from 1 PM to 3 PM at the PennDOT Engineering District 5 office. Mr. Osei urged people to come and share ideas, meet others, and plan for better transport together. Participants can join in person at District 5 or online with Go-To-Webinar.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

***INFORMATION ITEM: Grants***

Mr. Osei presented three upcoming grant opportunities which are Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) discretionary grant program, the Bridge Investment Program's "Planning" and "Bridge Project" categories for bridge improvements, and the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary program.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

***ADJOURNMENT:***

Chair Amato stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on March 28 at 7pm. Chair Amato then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Molchany made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director and Joey Dotta, Regional Planner