



GREG ZEBROWSKI
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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, June 24, 2021 Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the LVPC held a virtual public meeting on June 24, 2021. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2020.

Mr. Zebrowski chaired the meeting.

Ms. Winton took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Mr. Brace, Mr. Dougherty, Mr. Gibson, Mr. Glickman, Mr. Harakal, Mr. Herman, Mr. Lightner, Mr. Molchany, Mr. Morgan, Mr. O'Neil, Mr. Rader, Mr. Repasch, and Mr. Schmidt

Northampton County

Dr. Amato, Ms. Dreisbach, Mr. Andrew Elliott, Ms. Lawless, Mr. Lott, Mr. Manges, Mr. McGee, Mr. McGorry, Mr. Melnick, Mr. O'Connell, Ms. Pearson, and Mr. Zebrowski

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Executive Armstrong, Mr. Elbich, Ms. Gerlach, Ms. Johnson, Ms. Moore, Mayor O'Connell, and Mr. Seigel.

Northampton County

Ms. Connolly, Ms. David, Mayor Donchez, Mr. Charles Elliott, Ms. Heller, Executive McClure, Mayor Panto, Ms. Rutzler, Ms. Smith, and Mr. Yob.

Staff Present:

Public Present:

Jeff Ward

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR: None

MINUTES

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the minutes of the May 27, 2021 LVPC meeting are attached. Ms. Dougherty made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. Ms. Morgan abstained from the vote and the motion passed.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Zebrowski noted that Ms. Bradley has recently won the Walter Scheiber Leadership Award presented by the National Association of Regional Councils and detailed Ms. Bradley's many accomplishments and vision for the future and offered sincere congratulations. Mr. Molchany asked Becky to say a few words. Ms. Bradley thanked the commission and staff for their continued support.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning committee Summary Sheet and wanted to offer congratulations to Plainfield Township's Zoning Ordinance Amendment for taking the LVPC's recommendations to heart and making the changes accordingly. Mr. Zebrowski indicated they are taking proactive steps. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to accept the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet. Ms. Dreisbach made a motion to approve. Mr. Repasch seconded the motion. The motion passed.

INFORMATION ITEM: WITHDRAWN - Chapman Borough – Sketch/Feasibility Plan– Review under County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance

Mr. Melnick indicated that no action was necessary as the plans have been withdrawn.

Environment Committee

ACTION ITEM: A Regional Climate Action Assessment Draft Review and Presentation

Mr. Repasch discussed the Environment Committee's actions and asked Mr. Reese to present the Regional Climate Action Assessment. Mr. Reese detailed the Regional Climate Action Assessment which can be found at <https://www.lvpc.org/climate-action.html> along with the effects of Climate change including increased flooding with more severe storms and less snow to name a few. As well as the need to do a complete greenhouse gas inventory to identify the emission under the control of the local government (heating & cooling building, fleet vehicles and providing utilities and municipal services). Mr. Reese detailed the 10 overarching Climate + Energy Element goals that served as the foundation for the four future plans. Mr. Reese further detailed the *Lehigh & Northampton County Livable Landscapes, FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and *Walk/RollLV: Active Transportation Plan*. Ms. Rockwell then noted the Climate Action Policy Themes, Policy Assessment, Natural Asset Protection, Compact Development Form, Agricultural Land Uses and Practices, The Protection of Agricultural Lands from Urban/Suburban Encroachment, Green Infrastructure, Integration of land use Planning and Transportation, Local Street Network and Design, Transportation Demand Management and Systems Strategies, Transportation Facility Siting and Community Design, Creation of Multimodal Transportation Corridors, and the Infill Development and Redevelopment. Mr. Reese provided the conclusion and indicated the LVPC submitted an application to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Local Climate Action Program that provides technical assistance to create a greenhouse gas inventory and climate action steps. Ms. Bradley then detailed the LVPC interactive website with easy access to these documents that made up the Climate Action Assessment as well as direct links to the components of the Regional Climate Actions Assessment, *FutureLV* and both counties Livable Landscapes Plan to name a few. Ms. Bradley reinforced the Commission's continued commitment to making the LVPC website ADA friendly through the Climate Action Assessment project. Mr. Repasch thanked the staff, including Mr. Kackenmeister, for the website and Ms. Benco for hard work and dedication in creating the Regional Climate Action Assessment. Mr. Repasch made a motion to accept the assessment. Mr. Glickman seconded the motion, and the motion was approved.

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Repasch detailed the Environment Committee Summary Sheet. Then asked if there were any questions; hearing none, Mr. Repasch made a motion to approve. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Transportation Committee

ACTION ITEM: Street Vacation Review for West Sycamore Street from North Brick to West Allen Street in the City of Allentown

Mr. Hite provided details of the Street Vacation Request for a portion of West Sycamore Street from North Brick to West Allen Street submitted by Michael P. Hanlon, City of Allentown Clerk, on behalf of John Gross, Project Manager of Lehigh Engineering for their client The Waterfront Development Company. West Sycamore Street at this location is essentially a spur east of North Brick Street. The existing dwellings at 13, 15, 17 and 19 W. Sycamore St. have been purchased by the Waterfront Development Company and therefore road-frontage access is no longer required for these parcels. The proposed plan, submitted for recommendations under section 304 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, was reviewed for general consistency with the intent of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. The request does call for the vacation of the street with utilities. The City should consider the future usage and potential removal/relocation of the fire hydrant that serves this block and the adjacent residences on the west side of N. Brick Street and W. Sycamore Street. In addition, the utility pole on the northeast corner of N. Brick street also provides services to the residences in the block North. It has been confirmed with Mark Jaindl of the Waterfront Development Company, that once the street is vacated, utility and emergency services needs will be incorporated into the Waterfront Development site. It is of note The Waterfront development project was reviewed by the Commission and found consistent with the *Regional Plan*. Mr. Herman asked if there were any questions hearing none made a motion to approve. Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. The motion was approved. Mr. Molchany noted the fire hydrant removal and the effect to emergency services with many homes in the area. Mr. Lightner indicated that they are working with the developers to be sure the fire hydrants are being replaced.

INFORMATION ITEMS: Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) and PENNDOT Multimodal Programs

Transportation Alternatives Set Aside (TASA) and PennDOT Multimodal Projects Status Report

Mr. Hite provided an update on the status of projects funded by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study's (LVTS) and PennDOT's Transportation Alternatives Set Aside Funding. It was noted that these projects are direct investments that further pedestrian, ADA, bicycle, and transit connection goals as well as support agencies like Community Bike Works and the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation by preparing Kindergarten thru eighth grade students as safe cyclists. In addition, to the regional and statewide TASA funds, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PADCED) manages a Multimodal Transportation program that helps implement similar goals. The PENNDOT TASA and PADCED Multimodal program are currently accepting applications and entities with eligible projects in the region are encouraged to apply. This report is just one example of the strategic, regionwide investments made by our sister board, the LVTS, to implement *FutureLV*, *Walk/RollLV* and the Counties' *Livable Landscapes Plans* with our partners and collaborators.

2021 TASA Project Awards

Ms. Bradley detailed the Transportation Alternative Set-Aside (TASA) fund as a federal cost reimbursement program, distributed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning

Organizations. The TA Set-Aside or TASA program does not fund traditional roadway projects or provide maintenance for these facilities. Rather, the money allocated to TA Set-Aside investments is a dedicated funding source for projects that: support pedestrian and bicycle facilities; multimodal education for youth; improve access to public transportation; create safe routes to school; preserve historic transportation structures; provide environmental mitigation; or create trail projects for a transportation purpose. Each project or initiative must promote safety and mobility. TASA funds are allocated on a two-year cycle currently, as well. The projects awarded by the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study are:

- **Multimodal Education for Youth**
 - Community Bike Works, Youth Bicycle Education - \$244,036.47
 - Coalition for Appropriate Transportation, Youth Bicycle Education - \$154,036.48
- **Safe Routes to School/Pedestrian/Transit Access**
 - City of Allentown, Martin Luther King Jr. Drive Pedestrian Improvements - \$181,471.47
 - Borough of Fountain Hill, Broadway and Delaware Pedestrian Improvements - \$203,829.47
- **Multi-Use Trail and Bicycle Facilities**
 - Northampton County, Closure of the Two Rivers Trail Gap - \$654,036.47

These projects represent the available total of TASA Funds of \$1,437,410.36. Mr. Herman asked if there were any questions for Ms. Bradley; hearing none. Mr. Zebrowski proceeded to the next agenda item.

OLD BUSINESS

Monthly Activity Report

Ms. Bradley presented information on the May Monthly BuildLV: Subdivision and Land Development Report. Noting that in May was another busy month with Subdivision or Line Adjustments, 26 Development and 17 Stormwater reviews as well as Municipal Ordinances and Maps. The report is distributed publicly around the 15th of each month and is available at lvpc.org. Ms. Bradley ran a trend line on industrial development and indicated that if communities continue to approve industrial development at the same rate as the last five years, an additional 60 million to 70 million square feet could be added to industrial inventory in the region. Currently and industrial inventory is around 90 million square feet; therefore, we could be over 178 million industrial square feet in the near future. Mr. Zebrowski said we need to pay attention to the alarms and that the Lehigh Valley stands to lose the quality of life so critical to the public, health, safety and welfare. Mr. Molchany noted several items that the Commission can do and asked about additional options. Ms. Bradley noted the increase in municipal ordinance drafting and adoption to address the situation. Each community has unique ordinances and tailored solution are critical to appropriate implementation to manage industrial by the communities. There are a significant number of local governments that still need our assistance because there are only a few communities with a professional planner. Because there is so much happening, we at the LVPC are going to need additional support from the counties to get in front of the problem. To date we have not had a significant increase in our financial resources for county planning activities and the Executive Committee will have to address that situation with the Executive Director. Ms. Rader asked if open space and farmland preservation has been taking into consideration? Mr. Bradley answered yes by the local governments, counties and LVPC, as support. . Other things occurring include: if zoning definitions are not updated then developers come in and can propose uses that may not be in keeping with the local or regional comprehensive plans and communities have limited and

sometimes no way to manage a poorly located use.. Ms. Rader noted that you cannot force a farmer to preserve their farm. Ms. Bradley said there is a large waiting list in Lehigh County to preserve farms and the counties and state lack the funds to preserve farms at the rate they wish to sell their development rights. She further noted that Lancaster County is in the same situation and farmland preservation cannot be done fast enough. Next month we will be releasing the Lehigh County Government Academy schedule so we will be able to offer two classes this fall, in an effort to build the skills of local government officials and community members. Mr. Repasch asked if the Commission maintains information on acreage v. square footage of industrial development. Mr. Molchany said perhaps we can review that section of *FutureLV* to detail how much open space we are losing. Ms. Bradley indicated that we would get you that information in the next few months and that upcoming Lehigh Valley Government Academy training programs and Transformative Talks are good platforms to discuss solutions with the community. Mr. Zebrowski stated that since the state is advertising to move to Pennsylvania perhaps they can incentivize it as well so we can direct it to the best location. Mr. McGee looked at a virtual road projection and asked what is our virtual road outlook is going to be in the next two years? Second adding to Mr. Zebrowski's suggestion to incentivize perhaps we can add a tax on those new industries to direct those industries to a better location. Mr. Bradley said that a tax on industrial impacts would need to be enabled by the state, but it is a very good thought. The Transportation Revenue Options Committee (TROC) are considering a package tax, among other things, and they have until August 1st to prepare a package of recommendations for the Governor relating to infrastructure funding. Hopefully, we can start to get at this as it is statewide, and we are in the industrial growth epicenter.

Monthly Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Hite reviewed the Traffic Count data for the month of May with the Commission. Mr. Zebrowski asked who monitors traffic accidents? Mr. Hite indicated the LVPC receives that information on a yearly basis, from the state, but have requested a report on a quarterly basis. Ms. Bradley added that as a contracted Lehigh Valley Transportation Study work program tasks the LVPC staff will be working on an update Transportation Safety Plan beginning this year.

NEW BUSINESS

RAISE Grant Application for Riverside Drive

Ms. Oscavich detailed that the LVPC will be applying for a United States Department of Transportation, Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant. The grant will request over \$20 million, and match will be provided by The Waterfront Development Company. The project, Riverside Drive Multimodal Revitalization corridor, involves a transformative three-mile stretch of abandoned rail line from roughly the American on Wheels Museum in the City of Allentown to the Race Street Bridge in Whitehall Township. The plan is for a two-lane thoroughfare, paired with a 10-foot hiking and biking trail from Hamilton Street in Allentown to just north of Route 22, where it will connect to Wood Street in Whitehall Township. It will then continue north with an emergency services pathway and trail for pedestrians and bicycles. The roadway and trail components incorporate green infrastructure design throughout. This project is one of the highest priorities in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, our bi-county comprehensive plan and long-range transportation plan. We will be coming back to you individually to help support our application in the coming weeks. Mr. Zebrowski asked if there were any questions; hearing none proceeded to the next agenda item.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia *Reinventing our Communities* Program Fellow, Jill Seitz

Ms. Bradley described the Reinventing Our Communities (ROC) Cohort Program as is in-depth racial equity capacity building program for cross-sector community cohorts to connect, explore, and apply local solutions for small business programs. The Lehigh Valley Community Foundation was able to utilize our Access to Opportunity analysis to apply for this program and was awarded entrance. The LVPC was invited to participate along with 6 other community leaders by the Community Foundation. Jill Seitz is the LVPC lead on Equity and a main contributor to the Federal Reserve partnership on jobs and housing vulnerability during COVID-19 so we nominated her to represent the Organization as part of the Cohort. We are only one of five regions in the entire country, and proud Ms. Seitz will be representing the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Zebrowski thanked Ms. Seitz for all her hard work and dedication.

COMMUNICATIONS

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad detailed the Business Cycle Column published Sunday, June 6th in which Ms. Bradley gave a look at the complexities of transportation funding.

INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Op-Ed Column

Mr. Assad detailed Mr. Zebrowski's Op-Ed Column detailing the many world class companies, colleges and training facilities that are not dependent on warehouse or the jobs they create.

INFORMATION ITEM: Monthly, Plan Lehigh Valley Talk Show on WDIY, Lehigh Valley Public Radio, 88.1

Mr. Assad provided insight on the WDIY Radio show which aired June 7th as well as the next show which will include Scott Slingerland the Executive Director at the Coalition for Appropriate Transportation airing July 5th at WDIY 88.1 FM.

INFORMATION ITEMS: Engagement and Participation

Mr. Assad then reviewed the upcoming public participation opportunities with a Transformative Talk on June 25th, Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) on June 29th, July 12, 13 & August 3rd. Also, WorkshopLV and WorkshopLV Freight on July 21st at 4:00 pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Zebrowski stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on July 22, 2021. Mr. Zebrowski asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Dougherty made the motion, and the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director
Jennifer Winton, Executive Secretary