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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday, April 28, 2022 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, April 28, 2022. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Wednesday, January 5th, 2022.

Mr. Glickman chaired the meeting.

Ms. Benco took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Stephen Repasch, Kevin Schmidt and Irene Woodward.

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Liesel Dreisbach, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Susan Lawless, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Tina Smith, Gerald Yob and Tara Zrinski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Michael Harakal, Jamie Johnson, David Jones, Dennis Klusaritz, Owen O'Neil, Kathy Rader, Joshua Siegel and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

Dan Engle, Darlene Heller, Carl Manges, Lamont McClure, Scott Minnich, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, William Reynolds and Grace Smith.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Julie Benco, Becky Bradley, Paul Carafides, Bambi Griffin Rivera, Steve Neratko and Geoff Reese.

Public Present: Ron Beitler, Kurt Bresswein, David Cluncie, Charles Cole, Ben Dobil, Sunny Ghai, Judith Henckel, Katie Kleinschuster, Steve Lear, Sue McGorry, NWT, Charles Volk, Jeff Ward, 203-470-7978, 484-280-3392, 484-767-1703, 570-897-7123, 610-390-0337, 610-392-4142 and 717-991-6334.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

There were none.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Glickman welcomed the newest member of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission board, Edward Nelson. Mr. Glickman also welcomed the newest members of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission staff, Bambi Griffin Rivera and Steve Neratko. Ms. Griffin Rivera, Community and Regional Planner, introduced herself and described her previous professional experience. Mr. Neratko, Chief Community and Regional Planner, also introduced himself and summarized his work in planning. Next, Mr. Glickman announced Mr. Reese's retirement from the LVPC as Director of Environmental Planning, effective May 13th, and outlined his many contributions to the Lehigh Valley throughout his career. Mr. Reese shared

anecdotes from his 42-year career with the LVPC and described the development of Act 167 Watershed plans for all 16 watersheds in the Lehigh Valley. He thanked the Commission and the staff for the support. Mr. Repasch thanked Mr. Reese for all of his great work. Mr. Dougherty shared memories regarding the Act 167 plans and wished Mr. Reese good luck in the future. Ms. Zrinski thanked Mr. Reese for all of his work and contributions to Northampton County. Mr. Amato emphasized the great impact that Mr. Reese had on the Lehigh Valley region and thanked him. Ms. Morgan also shared sentiments and thanked him for his work.

MINUTES

Mr. Glickman stated that the minutes of the Thursday, March 24th, 2022 LVPC meeting are attached, and he then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Repasch made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. The motion passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Upper Macungie Township – Land Use of Regional Significance - Air Products Campus Redevelopment

Ms. Benco provided an overview of the project, which proposes the redevelopment of the former Air Products corporate headquarters by constructing three warehouse buildings totaling 2,600,100 square feet. Ms. Benco explained that LVPC supports the overall intent to reuse and redevelop the site, but the scale of the proposed development is not suitable for the location. Ms. Benco highlighted comments related to trip generation, sidewalks, multimodal transportation, solar panels and green infrastructure. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Melnick made the motion; Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. Mr. Dougherty commented on the truck traffic surrounding the property and solar panels on the site. Mr. Glickman commented on the office spaces that are being removed. Mr. Melnick discussed the special exception zoning involved with the property, revisions to the Transportation Impact Study and the recommendation for keeping solar panels. Mr. Repasch discussed warehousing in Lower and Upper Macungie Townships. Mr. Lear, co-chair of the Lowhill Township Planning Commission, commented on the traffic surrounding the property and air pollution concerns in the region. Mr. Dougherty asked about the retention of jobs at the office space adjacent to the property, to which Ms. Bradley and Mr. Elbich responded. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Lowhill Township – Land Use of Regional Significance - 2951 Betz Court Warehouse

Mr. Neratko provided an overview of the project, which proposes the construction of a 299,880-square-foot warehouse/distribution center on a 52-acre site. Mr. Neratko offered several comments regarding truck routing and parking. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Elbich made the motion; Ms. Lawless seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Elbich thanked the staff for adding comments regarding traffic to the review letter. Mr. Melnick asked about the classifications of the roads nearby to the property and Ms. Bradley responded. Mr. NWT, a member of the public, commented on the traffic on Kernsville Road. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Lowhill and Weisenberg Townships – Land Use of Regional Significance - 2766 Route 100 Warehouse

Mr. Neratko provided an overview of the project, which proposes a lot line adjustment to create a 43.1-acre lot, and the construction of a 312,120-square-foot warehouse/distribution center. Mr. Neratko offered several comments regarding wooded lands, sustainable practices, multimodal transportation, truck routing and parking. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach made the motion; Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Palmer Township – Land Use of Regional Significance - Carson Lot 100/200

Ms. Griffin Rivera provided an overview of the project, which proposes the construction of five warehouses totaling 1,142,683 square feet. Ms. Griffin Rivera offered several comments regarding the relocation of a historic stone farmhouse, multimodal transportation, freight mobility and on-street truck parking. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Ms. Dreisbach made the motion; Ms. Lawless seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Molchany commented on warehouse turnover and vacant warehouse properties. Mr. Amato commented on the amount of warehousing and the need to advocate for light manufacturing or different types and scales of development. Mr. Glickman emphasized the guidance that LVPC is developing and providing to municipalities. Mr. Melnick suggested language regarding fines for the failure to remove snow and ice from trucks that should be added to the review letter. Mr. Glickman asked about language in the review letters and Ms. Bradley responded. Mr. Dougherty emphasized the Commissioners' comments regarding warehousing and asked about model guidance regarding freight and the industrial market. Ms. Bradley responded that LVPC needs Lehigh County funds to start the model guidance project and that the creation of model guidance for Northampton County is underway. She also mentioned the assistance LVPC has provided to municipalities regarding industrial development and freight, as well as the Eastern Pennsylvania Freight Alliance that will develop a freight infrastructure plan. Mr. Dougherty emphasized the need for Lehigh County to act on the freight model guidance. Ms. Bradley discussed how many local officials want the tax revenue from industrial development and Mr. Glickman asked about her comment. Ms. Bradley emphasized the infrastructure costs that are involved with industrial development. Mr. Amato thanked Ms. Bradley for her comments. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: City of Bethlehem, Lehigh County – Land Use of Regional Significance - Lehigh Valley Academy Regional Charter School (New LVA Campus)

Ms. Benco provided an overview of the project, which proposes a 25,520-square-foot gymnasium and redevelopment of existing office space for a new Lehigh Valley Academy Campus. Ms. Benco offered several comments regarding sidewalk connectivity, green infrastructure and sustainable technologies. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Dougherty made the motion; Mr. Gallagher seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. Motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments on the summary sheet. Mr. Melnick made the motion; Ms. Zrinski seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Environment Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Repasch presented the Environment Committee Summary Sheet and noted that Mr. Reese could answer any questions. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments on the summary sheet. Ms. Moore made the motion; Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. Mr. Cole commented on the Portland Borough/Upper Mount Bethel Township Application to Renew Approval of Existing Groundwater Withdrawal and Expand Service Area item. He asked about the withdrawal and the flow of Slateford Creek and Mr. Reese responded. Ms. Henckel, a resident of Upper Mount Bethel, asked about the increase in the ten-year peak month demand and Mr. Reese responded. Mr. Cole commented regarding steam monitoring in the watershed. Motion passed, with Ms. Morgan and Mr. Herman abstaining.

Transportation Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: Draft 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program Public Comment Period

Mr. Carafides discussed the public comment period for the Draft 2023 – 2026 TIP and highlighted the public meetings that would occur throughout May. Mr. Herman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

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 March, which included 20 Subdivisions, 44 Development proposals, 22 reviews for Stormwater Management, and seven Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 93 reviews. The reviews included 914 housing units and 428,383 square feet of non-residential development. Mr. Molchany and Ms. Bradley commented on the housing shortage in the Lehigh Valley.

Quarterly Subdivision and Land Development Report

Ms. Bradley presented the Quarterly Subdivision and Land Development Report for the first quarter of 2022, which included 143 Subdivision and Land Development proposals, 49 reviews for Stormwater Management, and 13 Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 205 reviews. The first quarter reviews included 1,332 housing units and 3,453,132 square feet of non-residential development.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Carafides provided the details of the March traffic counts that showed two years of traffic monitoring since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. Route 33 near 248 and Interstate 78 east of 209 recorded an increase of vehicles since March 2020, while Route 309 near Coopersburg had a decrease. Trucks on Interstate 78 increased by 3,569 since the same time period two years ago. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

New Business:

INFORMATION ITEM: LVPC Commissioner Retreat, May 20th, 12-2pm, LVPC, 961 Marcon Blvd, Suite 310, Allentown, PA

Mr. Glickman announced that a date was selected for the Commissioner Retreat based on the Doodle Poll responses and it will be held on May 20th from 12-2pm at the LVPC office.

Communications and Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: Business Cycle Column

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Business Cycle column that was published in the Sunday, March 27th Morning Call. That column takes a hard look at the Lehigh Valley's frenzied housing market and shows how the busiest housing development year since 2007 will take a few steps in helping to remedy the region's housing shortage. He stated that the next column was scheduled to publish May 8, 2022 and it will focus on the Draft Four-Year Transportation Improvement Program.

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

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley 30-minute radio show which covered transportation, truck traffic and our Multi-Regional Freight Plan efforts with Paul Carafides, LVPC Director of Transportation Planning and Data. Mr. Assad informed that the 30-minute show is currently streaming at WDIY.org. He stated that the next show was scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, May 2 and will focus on the Draft TIP.

INFORMATION ITEM: 2022 Lehigh Valley Government Academy

Mr. Assad reminded the Commission that the Lehigh Valley Government Academy Classes are currently running throughout 2022, including Subdivision and Land Development on May 3, 10 & 17, Community Planning on September 7, 14 & 21 and Zoning on October 6, 13 & 20. Anyone can sign up online at lvpc.org/lvga.

INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program

Mr. Assad announced that the Local Technical Assistance Program has a full schedule of classes coming up through April and into May. Anyone can sign up at lvpc.org/ltap or contact Brian Hite.

INFORMATION ITEM: Transformative Talks

Mr. Assad reminded the Commission that the Transformative Talk series is back. The first one of the year on coordinated zoning was on February 1st and the recording can be found on our website. He announced that two more were scheduled for 2022, including Zoning 101 – What Communities Need to Know on August 9th and Act 209 – Transportation Impact Fees on October 11th. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Glickman stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on May 26th. 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
Julie Benco, Regional Planner