



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION Minutes from the Thursday, April 27, 2023 Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, April 27, 2023. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2022.

Mr. Glickman chaired the meeting.

Ms. Griffin-Rivera took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Bob Elbich, Philip Ginder, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, David Petrik, Kathy Rader, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt.

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judy Haldeman, Darlene Heller, Rachel Leon, Carl Manges, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, Taiba Sultana and Tara Zrinski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Percy Dougherty, Michael Drabenstott, Jamie Johnson, Dennis Klusaritz, Owen O'Neil, Santo Napoli, and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

Jessica Cope, Andrew Elliott, Dan Engle, Lamont McClure, William McGee, Scott Minnich, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, William Reynolds, Tina Smith.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Bambi Griffin-Rivera, Steve Neratko, Dean Severson, Christian Martinez, and Joey Dotta.

Public Present: Cassie Hilgert, President and CEO, ArtsQuest

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Mr. Glickman noted that the LVPC appeared before Lehigh County to present the activities of the LVPC and that there will be a presentation next Thursday before Northampton County. He also noted that Representative Michael Schlossberg has introduced House Bill 27 which would amend the Municipalities Planning Code to provide for a coordinated, timely review of developments of regional significance. Representative Schlossberg and Mr. Brace have been invited to the May 25th LVPC meeting to discuss HB 287.

Mr. Molchany commended the presentation made to the Lehigh County Commissioners especially in the areas of equity housing, climate action, particularly in the areas of air and water, and future zoning opportunities. Mr. Elbich also commended the staff presentations. Mr. Glickman that the presentation was recorded and available on the Lehigh County website.

MINUTES

Mr. Glickman stated that the minutes of the Thursday, March 23, 2023, LVPC meeting are attached, and Ms. Bradley read the previously voted on agenda items. Mr. Glickman then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Repasch made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. Melnick seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed, with Ms. Rader, Ms. Moore, Mr. Gallagher, and Ms. Heller abstaining.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

***ACTION ITEM:* City of Bethlehem – Land Use of Regional Significance REVISED – ArtsQuest Southside Bethlehem Cultural Arts Center**

Ms. Griffin-Rivers presented the review of the subject application, which is considered a Land Use of Regional Significance under *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* in the Educational Facilities category. This project proposes to redevelop the site by constructing a 78,855-square-foot cultural arts center.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Molchany made the motion; Mr. Menges seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Ms. Heller noted that the City of Bethlehem was very happy with the project and that it has been working closely with ArtsQuest. City officials feel the project completes the block and is an anchor institution. Ms. Heller added that it is a walkable site. Mr. Molchany stated that he likes the sustainable development comment added to the review and that the Commission should consider adding it to all of our reviews. He also commented that the Commission isn't looking for a LEED type development, only that sustainable elements be added to the design. Mr. Glickman noted that reuse and adapting of existing buildings is much more sustainable.

Ms. Leon noted concerns on attracting development to areas like this and making sure the community isn't displaced in the process and inadvertently affecting the rental community. Mr. Moritz-Chapelliquen wondered if some of the specific items that were mentioned in the letter were addressed such as gray water reuse, green roofs and solar panels. Ms. Heller noted that many of those items will be addressed as site plans for the project are reviewed.

Ms. Hilgert noted that the project will include an enhanced building envelope, indigenous plants, minimal internal finishes, and bicycle racks, among other elements. Ms. Smith noted impacts on neighboring businesses such as street closures.

The motion passed. Ms. Heller abstained.

***ACTION ITEM:* Chapman Borough – Zoning Ordinance and Map**

Mr. Severson presented the Chapman Borough Zoning Ordinance and map which is the first zoning ordinance prepared by Chapman Borough.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Gallagher made the motion; Mr. Molchany seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. The motion passed.

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet, which included three zoning ordinance amendments for Fountain Hill Borough, Whitehall Township and Lower Macungie Township, and a zoning ordinance and map amendment for Lower Saucon Township. Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments on the summary sheet. Ms. Moore made the motion; Mr. Manges seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Elbich asked about the minimum lot area proposed in Fountain Hill Borough. Ms. Seitz stated that this lot area reflects existing lot sizes in the applicable area. Ms. Bradley stated that this lot size is common for historic boroughs. Mr. Brace noted that he has experience with his own residence having similar lot sizes to those

proposed in Fountain Hill. Mr. Repasch noted that he is a resident of Fountain Hill, and the local comprehensive plan encourages the Borough to align its regulations with the actual community conditions. Mr. Glickman noted that, like Mr. Brace, he has had similar experiences and that historic development pattern considerations should be included in the regulatory considerations of communities. The motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet, which included subdivision and land development amendments for Weisenberg and Upper Macungie Townships, and zoning amendments for the City of Allentown (2), and Upper Macungie, Lehigh, and Moore Townships.

Mr. Repasch made a motion to accept the Summary Sheet. Mr. Glickman asked for a second. Ms. Heller seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion carried. Ms. Rader abstained from the proposals in Upper Macungie Township; Mr. Elbich abstained from the proposal in Weisenberg Township.

Environment Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Weisenberg Township – Stormwater Management Ordinance

Mr. Severson presented a review of the project, which proposes to consolidate its stormwater ordinances from both Act 167 and National Pollution Discharge System (NPDES)/Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4).

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Melnick made the motion; Mr. Charles Elliott seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Mr. Molchany asked that the Lehigh County Conservation District be copied with the review. Motion passed with Mr. Elbich abstaining.

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Ms. Moore made a motion to accept the Summary Sheet. Mr. Glickman asked for a second. Ms. Rader seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion carried.

Transportation Committee:

INFORMATION ITEM: Walk Audit

Mr. Martinez reported on the Walk Audit program, noting that a launch event was held on April 25 along with the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and AARP. He explained what a walk audit contains. Mr. Neratko demonstrated the Walk Audit GIS tool.

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis

Ms. Bradley discussed the Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis which is being conducted by the LVTS and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The Analysis will be examining the feasibility of passenger rail service between the New York metropolitan area and the Lehigh Valley, and the Philadelphia metropolitan area and the Lehigh Valley. Part 1 and Initial Findings will be presented at the LVTS Technical Committee on May 17th.

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 11 subdivisions, 25 development proposals, 15 reviews for Stormwater Management, and seven Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 58 reviews. The reviews included 410 housing units and 746,301 square feet of non-residential development. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Annual update on the Lehigh Valley's Industrial Market.

Mr. Dotta reported that the private sector industrial property owners combined are earning an estimated \$881 million/year in industrial rents and \$7.05 billion over the average eight-year lease term.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Ms. Bradley provided the details of the March traffic counts. She presented the vehicle counts for State Route 22, State Route 33, Interstate 78, and State Route 309, as well as the truck counts for Interstate-78 and State Route 22.

New Business:

INFORMATION ITEM: A report on the US Environmental Protection Agency's Carbon Pollution Reduction Grant for Climate Action Planning.

Ms. Bradley reported that starting in the second half of 2021 the LVPC was admitted into the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Local Climate Action Program. In addition, we have been actively pursuing funding to update the Act 167 Stormwater Management Plans for all 16 Lehigh Valley Watersheds and create a single-regionwide green infrastructure ordinance.

Then in November 2021, Congress passed the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or IIJA. This included two new infrastructure funding categories for Carbon Reduction and hazard mitigation, called Protect. The Carbon Reduction funding allows for the Metropolitan Planning Organization, LVTS to create a specific strategy to reduce carbon emissions in the transportation sector. We will present more on this at an upcoming meeting.

The second funding stream from the IIJA is Protect for infrastructure resiliency associated with climate change. These dollars are formula funds sent to each State DOT. PENNDOT intends to keep at least the first two years of these dollars for state owned transportation infrastructure and we are active members of the Financial Guidance Working Group working with the DOT to advocate for a portion of these funds to go out to the regions. USDOT also released a federal notice of funding availability for a national discretionary grant for these funds yesterday. We are reviewing this to see if we will apply.

As we have been pursuing these initiatives we became aware that the Inflation Reduction Act passed by Congress included new Climate Action Planning funds that would be allocated to the states and largest regions in the Nation. We are the 69th largest region and the top 67 largest were offered the opportunity for Carbon Pollution Reduction Program Block Grants. States were required to submit their Notice of Intent to apply by March 31st. All but four states did so. We had been advocating since we were very close in line for regions by size and the EPA decided to allocate the funds not accepted by states out to the next largest regions.

On Friday, April 14th in Harrisburg the LVPC was recognized as a \$1 million recipient of these funds. We met with EPA and DEP already to discuss required coordination and next steps. Specifically, the EPA has organized the program as a "down payment" on climate action per Region 3 Administrator, Adam Ortiz. This means that we are charged with building capacity per program requirements.

We are incredibly excited to be able to advance the goals, policies and action outlined in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* which includes a strong and continued commitment to the environment and management of the realities of a robust industrial economy. We are also delighted to have the Commonwealth as a

partner in industrial decarbonization. We expect to discuss this and the many dovetailing partner initiatives with the Environment and Transportation Committees over the next several years.

Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Bradley stated that Pennsylvania WalkWorks recently opened a new grant window for municipalities that want to create more walkable communities. These are grants aimed strictly at municipalities and MPOs and the grants run up to \$35,000 to help communities devise active transportation plans with an emphasis on walking, biking, wheelchair accessibility and public transit. This is a Pennsylvania Department of Health program, so it's about transportation and healthy living. The deadline to seek questions from the department is May 12 and the deadline to apply is May 26.

Also, time is running out to apply for this round of PennDOT's electric vehicle infrastructure grants. PennDOT has \$56 million available for the installation of charging sites in this first round of funding that is open to private and public entities, so long as they provide a 20% match and are within one mile of an approved alternative fuels corridor, though some exceptions will be allowed. I-78 and The Pennsylvania Turnpike are our alternative fuels corridors. There is lots more information through the PennDOT webpage.

Another funding source to keep in mind is the Transportation Alternatives Program, which specifically focuses on non-motorized transportation options such as walking, rolling and biking, as well as education of our children. Applications will be available on the TASA website May 10, there will be a webinar on May 24th and the actual application cycle will begin May 29th. This is a great opportunity for organizations and municipalities to fund projects that promote safe and accessible non-motorized transportation and education for all. More information will be available and updated shortly at the PennDOT TASA website, which can easily be found by searching PennDOT TASA.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) has a Multimodal Transportation Fund that is available for projects that are specifically for multimodal development, rehabilitation and enhancement of transportation assets to existing streetscape, lighting, sidewalk enhancement, pedestrian safety, connectivity of transportation options for all modes of travel, including biking and walking. This funding is available to organizations and municipalities across Pennsylvania, and applications are open until July 31st. More information is available on the DCED website or by searching PA DCED Multimodal Transportation Fund.

PennDOT will also be accepting applications for the 2023 Automated Red-Light Enforcement (ARLE) Funding Program from June 1st through June 30th, 2023. The 2023 program will continue to prioritize safety enhancements considering both PennDOT's Safety Network Screening methods for the project location and Crash Modification Factors associated with proposed improvements. If you want to go for one of these, you'll need to do a few things soon because a pre-application scoping form is required prior to submitting an application. Scoping forms should be submitted via email to ARLE@pa.gov. The scoping form should be submitted no later than April 30, 2023 to allow time for PennDOT to review and provide feedback prior to the application period in June. The completed and reviewed scoping form must be uploaded as an attachment to the formal application submission.

The Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Discretionary Grant Program (CFI Program) is a new competitive grant program created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to strategically deploy publicly accessible electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure in the places people live and work, urban and rural areas alike, in addition to along designated Alternative Fuel Corridors (AFCs). This first round of funding makes \$700 million from Fiscal Years 2022 and 2023 funding available to strategically deploy electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and other fueling infrastructure projects in urban and rural communities in publicly accessible locations, including downtown areas and local neighborhoods, particularly in underserved and disadvantaged communities. Electric vehicle charging deployment is highlighted in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and we are quickly moving to see if we can form a partnership

with PPL to apply by the May 30 deadline. This program does require at least a 20% match which will likely be our indicator of eligibility to apply.

The Safe Streets and Roads for All Program, which is run by the U.S. Department of Transportation, provides funding to develop the tools to help strengthen a community's approach to roadway safety and is designed to meet the needs of diverse local, and regional communities that differ dramatically in size, location, and experience administering Federal funding. We are determining whether we will apply at this time.

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 26 Morning Call. That column's headline is "Knowledge is Power: This Region Craves It." Becky talks about our in-person Lehigh Valley Government Academy Transportation and Planning Classes, how some of them are the most well-attended in Pennsylvania, as well as a Tech Assist program free to any municipality, that PennDOT holds out as a statewide model. That column can be found at mcall.com and lvpc.org/news/v. The next column is focused on why it's vital for us to act as a region and speak with a unified voice as the region competes with other regions and states for status, influence and funding. It is set to publish Sunday, April 30, but may show up online a few days sooner.

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 that aired on April 3 and focused on efforts being done to make the region more walkable and bikeable. Joining Becky and Mr. Assad were LVPC Community Fellow Christian Martinez and Carmen Bell, who is director of aging at the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley. They talked about what appears to be a nationwide increase in aggressive driving since the Pandemic, and the efforts to make our communities more accessible to everyone, including seniors. Carmen and Christian also laid out their plans, in partnership with the AARP to do a series of walk audits designed to identify difficult corridors issue with the idea of finding solutions that can be addressed in our upcoming Transportation Safety plan. That 30-minute show is now streaming at lvpc.org and wdiy.org.

Mr. Assad stated that the next show will focus on regionalism and is scheduled to air at 6:30 pm, May 1.

INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh Valley Government Academy Classes

Mr. Assad reminded everyone that our in-person Lehigh Valley Government Academy classes, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute, are now in season. We just wrapped up a very full class for Zoning, and Community Planning classes will begin Tuesday, May 9. Each course consists of more than 10 hours of instruction on three consecutive weeknights from 5:30-9 pm. We still have a few seats available for Community Planning. After that, Subdivision and Land Development is in September. And because Community Planning sold out so quickly last year, an encore showing will be held in October. These classes are key in training the next generation of community leaders. More information and registration is available at lvpc.org/lvga

On April 12 LVPC had 28 students in its large conference room learning about Temporary Traffic Control (Work Zones), including students from Montgomery County and Wayne County.

That class was so popular another was scheduled for May 11th. This class emphasizes worker safety, including what to wear, safe work zone practices and how to set up an appropriate work zone. The

LVPC's second most requested class, Erosion and Sediment control, is set for June 6, and there are still some seats left.

Mr. Assad also noted that there are still virtual LTAP Classes offered, in partnership with PennDOT. May 4th brings a one-hour class for Speed Data Collection. May 11th is the temporary traffic control, and Bridge and Culvert Inspection for Municipalities is offered June 6.

The new Municipal Stormwater Facilities Program class is being held on June 13th for the first time and on June 20th the stormwater Control Measures Operations and Maintenance (or O&M) is scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Glickman stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on May 25 at 7pm. 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 Dean Severson, AICP, Director of Regional Planning.