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**LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday June 22, 2023, Meeting**

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, June 22, 2023. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2022.

Mr. Glickman chaired the meeting.

Mr. Neratko took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Percy Dougherty, Michael Drabenstott, Philip Ginder, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, Dennis Klusaritz, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Santo Napoli, David Petrik, Stephen Repasch, and Kevin Schmidt

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judy Haldeman, Darlene Heller, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, and Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen,

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Geoff Brace, Bob Elbic, Jamie Johnson, Rick Molchany, Owen O’Neil, Kathy Rader and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

Dan Engle, Rachel Leon, Carl Manges, Lamont McClure, William McGee, Scott Minnich, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, William Reynolds, Tina Smith, Taiba Sultana and Tara Zrinski.

Staff Present: Matt Assad, Becky Bradley, Steve Neratko, Dean Severson, Brian Hite, Joey Dotta.

Public Present: Craig Beavers, Gary Asteak, Jeff Ward, Judy Henckel.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Mr. Glickman noted that last month in Detroit, during the National Association of Regional Council’s annual meeting, the Association awarded Becky the Tom Bradley Award, given each year to recognize the leadership and excellence of one elected or appointed official in advocating for regional concepts, approaches, and programs at any level of government. He noted that the nomination came as a surprise to Becky, who couldn’t be in Detroit during the presentation, so County Executive Armstrong was gracious enough to accept the award on her behalf.

In presenting the award, National Association President-Elect Carol Vinton said “Becky is an exemplary leader and planner with a remarkable track record of accomplishments that demonstrate her dedication to creating sustainable, equitable and livable communities. Her achievements have made a significant impact on the Lehigh Valley region and serve as a model for other planners across the nation.” We agree with President-Elect Vinton and congratulate Becky on this well-earned recognition.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

No members of the public spoke.

MINUTES

Mr. Glickman stated that the minutes of the Thursday, May 25, 2023, LVPC meeting are attached, and Mr. Neratko presented the previously voted on agenda items. Mr. Glickman then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Dougherty made a motion to approve the minutes and Mr. McGory seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed. Mr. Drabenstott, Mr. Klusaritz, and Ms. Cope abstained.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

ACTION ITEM: Catasauqua, North Catasauqua and Northampton Boroughs and East Allen and Hanover (LC) Townships – River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Severson reported that the Draft River Central Area Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan (Plan) represents the first multi-municipal plan between Catasauqua, North Catasauqua and Northampton Boroughs, and Hanover and East Allen Townships. The plan was created with the assistance of the LVPC staff. The General Land Use Plan is fully consistent with FutureLV. The Plan serves to promote several goals and policies outlined in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

The Draft Plan's major goals include balancing preservation and development; promoting and coordinating a mixed-use transportation region; protecting and enhancing farmland and the farming community; preserving and expanding natural, recreation, cultural and historic resources; enhancing housing opportunities; and strengthening safe, healthy, creative inclusive and livable communities. Additionally, the plan meets all legally required criteria outlined in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code for Comprehensive Plans.

The Plan offers a variety of tools to coordinate new development with natural resources and open space, farmland, and the historic heritage prevalent throughout the region. Examples include conservation design consistent with the LVPC's Conservation Guide and Model Regulation. The LVPC commends the inclusion of Goal 1: "Balance preservation and development aligned with appropriate infrastructure." This objective aligns with the overall goal of FutureLV, which emphasizes sustainable growth and development while preserving the region's natural and open spaces.

Mr. Severson noted that the plan encourages directing growth to designated centers and corridors, promoting mixed-use development that combines residential, commercial, and recreational uses. The goal is to reduce sprawl, enhance transportation options, and foster sustainable and livable communities. Similarly, the plan recognizes the importance of aligning industrial development with existing road capacity, transit service, and utility infrastructure to ensure efficient transportation and utility systems.

Mr. Dotta reported that the Plan's policies recommending aligning development with sewer, water, and stormwater infrastructure reinforce FutureLV's policy 3.2, which is to minimize environmental impacts of development to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public. Additionally, limiting public sewer and water system expansions to designated development areas and accommodating low-intensity development in exurban areas with on-lot sewage disposal and water supply help ensure efficient use of existing infrastructure. The plan's emphasis on discouraging infrastructure-intensive land uses in areas served by on-lot sewage disposal or privately owned central sewage facilities is crucial for maintaining the capacity and functionality of these systems. The inclusion of capital improvement programs that prioritize

utility infrastructure needs and address drainage problems aligns well with responsible planning and Act 167 stormwater management plans.

The LVPC supports Goal 4 of the Draft Plan, "Preserve and expand natural, recreation, cultural and historic resources as essential to quality of life". Preserving and enhancing historic/cultural resources is a commendable initiative within the Draft Plan's goals (of Policy 3.1 and 5.4 *FutureLV*). Goal 5, "Enhance housing opportunities for all", is supportive of Policy 4.5 of *FutureLV* which encourages a wide variety of housing types at diverse and attainable price points to spur social and economic opportunities. The Draft Plan involved community engagement (of Policy 1.4 *FutureLV*) that revealed residents' concern to age in place. The Plan's strategies align with *FutureLV* Policy 5.2 by promoting universal design standards and adapting older housing units to align with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Mr. Dotta noted that the Draft Plan's goals to grow the River Central economy aligns with several policies in *FutureLV* that promote sustainability of municipalities (Policy 4.6 *FutureLV*) and strengthen economic resilience and growth (Policy 4.1 and 4.2 *FutureLV*). The special focus of preserving and fortifying arts into the River Central community increases social and cultural opportunities (of Policy 4.2 *FutureLV*) by integrating community arts into public space (of Policy 5.4 *FutureLV*).

Mr. Severson stated that The Plan notes the difficulties individual emergency service providers face in personnel, funding, equipment and training. The Plan recommends increased coordination between emergency service providers, a regionwide response plan for community emergencies, and collaboration for cost-sharing opportunities for training recruits as well as facilities and equipment. This is an exemplary example of regional collaboration efforts recommended in *FutureLV*.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Dougherty made the motion; Dr. Amato seconded the motion. Dr. Amato stated that this was a very good plan and provided an opportunity for communities to bond together and to save their residents money. Mr. Moritz-Chapelliquen noted that the plan provided the impetus for these communities to come together. Ms. Bradley stated that for almost seven years these communities had discussed how they could come together. The LVPC looked at which communities were already working together and supported the creation of the multi-municipal plan.

The motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: Plainfield Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Warehouse and Wholesale Establishments

Mr. Neratko presented the review of the subject application, which proposes to amend the Township Zoning Ordinance pertaining to warehouses and wholesale establishments, including revised definitions, changing permitted uses in commercial and industrial zoning districts and additional regulations and provisions.

The new definitions for 'Warehouse' and 'Wholesale Establishment' create subcategories for small and large developments based on square footage, using a threshold of 50,000 square feet. The LVPC applauds the Township for establishing multiple categories of freight uses, which is a recommended best practice for strategically managing growth and development (of Policy 1.4). This approach will enable the Township to ensure freight facility proposals, which can have a tremendous impact on traffic conditions and residents' quality of life, are scaled and located appropriately to cause the least impact on the community (of Policy 2.4). Additionally, the amendment proposes to permit small warehouses and small wholesale establishments by right in commercial and industrial zoning districts. Large warehouses and large wholesale establishments are proposed to be permitted as special exception uses. The designation of large warehouses and large wholesale establishments as a special exception rather than permitted by right in certain districts allows consideration of proposals on a case-by-case basis to determine context-specific reasonable conditions to meet the goals of the Township, the Township's Comprehensive Plan and the near-completion Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan.

Freight is a continually evolving and growing industry, and by 2040 the flow of freight is projected to increase by 96% (*FutureLV Freight Special Section*). The proposed amendments align with best practices and recommendations included in the Northampton County Freight-Based Land Use Management Guide and serve to minimize freight impacts on residents (of Policy 2.4). As the Township continues to evaluate its ordinances to ensure the best possible growth outcomes for the community, the LVPC recommends additional provisions that will enhance the quality of freight developments, such as requiring snow removal equipment, driver lounges and electric hookups and charging stations, and sustainable design considerations. Overall, the LVPC commends Plainfield Township for taking the initiative to address a regionwide issue and promote best practices in establishing efficient development processes responsive to regional needs (of Policy 1.4) through a well-written and thoughtful zoning ordinance amendment proposal.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Mr. Gallagher made the motion, Ms. Moore seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. The motion to accept the staff comments was amended to make this change.

The motion passed.

ACTION ITEM: North Whitehall Township – Zoning Ordinance Amendment – Open Space and Recreation Areas

Mr. Neratko presented the review of the subject application which proposes an amendment to North Whitehall Township's SALDO Ordinance, to modify the amount of recreational land required to be dedicated, to update the amount of recreation fees to be paid in lieu of dedication, and the requirement to construct walking trails along the perimeter of all subdivisions and land developments where sidewalks are not required. The inclusion of trails in areas without sidewalks will 'promote safe routes to school', ensure transportation for all persons', and 'strengthen sidewalk, bike route and trail infrastructure' (of Policies 5.1 and 5.3). The LVPC commends the inclusion that pathways and bikeways located away from street shall be adequately lighted which supports the 'promotion of pedestrian scale lighting' (of Policy 5.3). The suitability of Land Proposed for Dedication should be expanded to include all lands within the 500-year floodplain, rather than the 100-year floodplain. North Whitehall Township should prioritize medium or high-level natural resource conservation areas as based on the Natural Resource Plan, as well as the Natural Heritage Inventory of Lehigh and Northampton Counties. The LVPC recommends ensuring that all provisions of the MPC have been met that allow for adoption of a dedication or fee-in-lieu ordinance. The LVPC also encourages the inclusion of American with Disability Act compliant sidewalks with curb cuts for all new subdivisions and land developments as this supports the 'strengthening of sidewalks' of Policy 5.3.

Mr. Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Dr. Amato made the motion, Mr. Ginder seconded the motion. Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

The motion passed. Mr. Klusaritz abstained.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Mr. Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet, which included zoning ordinances for Wind Gap Borough, City of Bethlehem, Williams Township, Allen Township, and South Whitehall Township.

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

Environment Committee:

Mr. Repasch reported that the Environment Committee had been cancelled.

Transportation Committee:

Mr. Herman reported the Transportation Committee meeting included a LVTS long range transportation plan update, Bridge Projects status report, a report on the 2020 Census Urbanized Area Smoothing, and updates on the passenger rail analysis and Eastern PA freight alliance infrastructure plan.

ACTION ITEM: Transportation Planning Committee Summary Sheet

City of Allentown, Lehigh County, Dodge Street from S. Muhlenberg Street to S. 24th Street

Mr. Herman moved, and Mr. Melnick seconded the motion to approve the Transportation Summary Sheet containing the street vacation. The motion passed. Mr. Petrik abstained.

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 May which included 16 subdivisions, 29 development proposals, 18 reviews for Stormwater Management, and two Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 65 reviews.

The reviews included 871 housing units, the majority of which continue to be apartments, with a substantial number of single-family detached, townhouses and twins as well. Additionally, there were 551,542 square feet of non-residential development. The majority of industrial and overall non-residential square footage was due to warehousing (primarily River Pointe Logistics), at 2,171,140 square feet reviewed.

Mr. Glickman asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Hite noted that the Total Vehicle Traffic chart has changed a bit for this month's report. The Route 33 counter south of Route 248 has been deactivated to enable the paving of Route 33 in the area. It is anticipated to be re-installed by the end of this summer.

He presented the vehicle counts for State Route 22, Interstate 78, and State Route 309, as well as the truck counts for Interstate-78 and State Route 22.

New Business:

Local Government Appreciation Day

Mr. Hite reported that the 2023 Local Government Appreciation Day will be held from 11 am to 1 pm, Wednesday June 28th at Wayne Grube Park. We'll be recognizing all the local government people who have participated in the Local Technical Assistance Program and the Lehigh Valley Government Academy classes over the past couple of years.

Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Bradley reported that on Friday, April 14th in Harrisburg the LVPC was recognized as a \$1 million receipt EPA's Carbon Pollution Reduction Program funds. Last Thursday, the LVPC Executive Committee

voted to file the required Notice of Intent. The notice has been filed and we received confirmation of receipt.

Our next step is to prepare a budget and work proposal and submit to the EPA by May 30th. 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 intend to coordinate this with new Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requirements of the MPO for carbon reduction and protection and will be following-up PENNDOT and USDOT, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, Southwest Pennsylvania Commission, PA DEP and EPA further and will be bringing additional back as necessary. It is of note that DVRPC and SPC are the two other regions in the Commonwealth that also are recipients, as is the DEP.

Ms. Bradley noted that 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. There is a significant deadline of March 1, 2024 for the Priority Climate Action Plan for Industrial Decarbonization. Again, we are coordinating with the PA DEP, as they have the same deadline and requirements at the state level. We are in regular communication with DEP, as a result and I’m anticipating that we have a lot more to discuss at the Environment Committee and potentially the Transportation Committee next month.

Because of the deadline for part one of the CPRP, the LVPC Team, has already been organizing to accommodate this funding deadline. Critical to that is that we are wrapping-up three key projects that we have spent significant time on this first half of the year. Those projects are the River Central Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, that you reviewed this evening; the Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan that the final version will be sent to the Steering Committee next week for their meeting in July; the last major item is the LVTS’s review and edit of the transportation elements of FutureLV: The Regional Plan. LVTS is meeting through June to make those edits and staff will have a complete revision in July. You can expect to see the LVTS’s proposed revisions at the Transportation Committee next month, as well.

We are fast tracking the data components of our equity and housing data updates, both critical to the work that Lehigh County is invested in. Regarding housing, we are obligated to create a Housing Supply and Attainability Strategy for the region. Jill and I meet with the Urban Land Institute and Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia, and all agree that with the data updates occurring through the summer that, both of our program partners can reasonably mobilize to start the public portion of the housing work in January. There are two areas where we actively need to nudge the workplan and those are with the Lehigh County Industrial Land Use project. On this item, as soon as we can get done with the transportation updates to FutureLV, we believe we can start the data effort here but, we will need to adjust the final deliverable till next year. Lastly, we have been pursuing the consolidation and update of the 15 watershed plans we have written per Act 167. This is where we have regulatory authority, as delegated by the counties. Tracy and I have been actively organizing funding for the Global Act 167 Stormwater management plans update and we believe that we will have the funding organized by fall.

If our estimation is correct, we may need to adjust the work plan further. The main point here is that, so as long as we stay on task, we anticipate that we can remain on target with the work plan items, even with the addition of the EPA CPRG program. This is largely because we already had the DEP Local Climate Action planning work on the work plan. Now this is rolled into CPRG.

Ms. Bradley reported that the Eastern Transportation Coalition Freight Academy educates US Department of Transportation, State DOTs and Metropolitan Planning Organization professionals on freight movements, infrastructure needs, how the industrial economy works and what that means for transportation professionals and their work. The Freight Academy is a multi-month training program and is critical to helping the public sector best manage and invest federal, state, and regional transportation dollars into infrastructure.

The week of June 12th the Lehigh Valley hosted the academy for a day. It was an honor to be selected to discuss how the traditional freight economy (Crayola, Mack Trucks, B.Braun, etc.) operates in relationship to the rapid growth in new industrial uses. LVPC, along with LANTA, the Airport Authority, Workforce Board, PENNDOT, Pennsylvania Motor Truck Association, and J.G. Petrucci had the opportunity to present and discuss all aspects of land use, the environment, workforce, transit, land development, sewer and water, air and water quality, the needs of truck drivers, emergency services and the changing requirements of tenants of industrial buildings.

There are several key items to report:

First, Brian Hite was selected to participate in the Freight Academy. It is an application and acceptance process. He also received a full scholarship for the Academy, that covered all of his training and totals over \$5,000. We are very proud of him as a transportation professional and also to be recognized nationally for his work in freight.

Secondly, the Commission is being heard and there is a growing alignment between other public agencies, like the USDOT and PENNDOT, and the industrial community made up of manufacturers and logistics companies. The transportation land use connection and the idea of limited financial resources to maintain the transportation system is widely recognized. Because of the massive challenges associated with rapid industrial development in the Lehigh Valley, we are being recognized as a leader nationwide in our work.

Additionally, manufacturers and even e-commerce companies are working to reduce their environmental footprint. We visited Alpa plastics, a new manufacturer in the Lehigh Valley located on the Southside of Bethlehem. They produce plastic containers for food and detergents that you see in your grocery stores. Their plastic pellets make the containers that come in on rail to the building and are moved by tubes into molding equipment. Bottles that are flawed are recycled and even the bottle labels are embedded onto the bottle surface to reduce the number of materials needed for the containers. The goal is to have a net zero waste stream, and to reduce energy costs, which the owner of the building has worked with them to do.

We also toured a brand new 425,000 square building in East Allen Township built by JG Petrucci. The building is LEED Silver certified. When we asked about this, and without hesitation, Petrucci began talking about the importance of reducing the carbon footprint. They cited not only it being the right way to build for our planet today and tomorrow but, they mentioned the reduction in longer term costs, sound, visual buffering and water management benefits, reduction in construction waste and energy usage and costs. Two other key points were made. The first is that more and more tenants are demanding it and the LVPC review letters supported greener building. It is of note that in addition to a green industrial facility, the site includes truck parking, a truck driver lounge and restroom. The message of the LVPC is being heard here but, also, your work is being heard by 40 transportation professionals of significant influence across the country. It's something for all of us to be proud of.

Communications and Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: Grants, Communication and Training

Mr. Assad reported that in the most recent Business Cycle Column published June 9, and under the headline stating, "A Giant Leap Forward on Climate Action," Becky spelled out the unprecedented opportunity the region has by pushing its way into the federal Environmental Protection Agency's Carbon Pollution Reduction Program. As part of the program, the LVPC has been awarded a \$1 million grant that serves as a downpayment for years of funding and programming for a potentially long list of programs designed to not only reduce carbon emissions but make our Lehigh Valley more resilient to the impacts of climate change. That column can be found at mcall.com and lvpc.org/news/vl. The next column will focus on the result of our Transportation Needs Assessment. That one will be published July 9.

He also reported that the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show aired on June 5 on WDIY FM 88.1, and it focused on the Social and Monetary Benefits of protecting our environment. Joining Becky and Matt was LVPC Master Planner and Engineer Geoff Reese. We talked a lot about how that \$1 million climate reduction grant will kickstart a new push for climate action as well as some past LVPC studies and analysis that show just how much our environment means to our economy. That 30-minute show is now streaming at lvpc.org and wdiy.org. Our next show will focus on our Transportation Needs Survey and the Long-Range Transportation Plan. That will likely air at 6:30 pm, July 10.

Mr. Assad also reminded our municipal partners and non-profits that PennDOT recently opened its next application cycle for grants of \$50,000 to \$1.5 million for Transportation Alternative Set-Aside (TASA) projects. Municipalities and organizations with projects that promote walking, rolling, biking and transportation alternative education programs for children, can now apply for grants from a state fund of at least \$28 million. Projects can range from sidewalk improvements to traffic calming to pedestrian safety to bicycle lanes to education programs for children K-12. The deadline for the draft application is July 17. More info is available on PennDOT's TASA page.

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development also has a Multimodal Transportation Fund that provides grants of \$100,000 to \$3 million to municipal governments, businesses or transportation agencies. The money is for development, rehabilitation and enhancement of transportation assets to existing communities, streetscape, lighting, sidewalk enhancement, pedestrian safety, connectivity of transportation assets and transit-oriented development. Applicants must provide a 30% match and applications are due by July 31. More information and applications are available at DCED's Multimodal Fund page.

Mr. Assad also reported that our in-person classes through the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute will continue this fall, with a Subdivision and Land Development Class on three consecutive Wednesdays beginning September 6, and Community Planning on three consecutive Mondays beginning October 9th. All classes run from 5:30 pm-9:00 and go towards earning the designation as Certified Citizen Planning. More info and registration are on the LVPC website.

Mr. Hite reported that next week on June 27 there will be a virtual class on Municipal Stormwater Facilities Programs, and then on August 3, LTAP is hosting training on the Safe System Approach from 11 AM to noon. PennDOT Connects is offering workshops on Bicycle Selection later this month and Active Transportation in late September. Registration links and contact persons were provided.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Glickman stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on July 27th at 7pm. Mr. Glickman then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Dougherty made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director and Dean Severson, AICP, Director of Regional Planning.