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LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes from the Thursday August 24, 2023, Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, August 24, 2023. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on December 28, 2022.

Mr. Glickman chaired the meeting.

Mr. Dotta took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Geoff Brace, Michael Drabenstott, Bob Elbich, Philip Ginder, Steven Glickman, Kent Herman, Rick Molchany, Joyce Moore, Christina Morgan, Santo Napoli, Kathy Rader, and Kevin Schmidt

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judy Haldeman, Rachel Leon, William McGee, John McGorry, Stephen Melnick, Scott Minnich, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, Tina Smith, and Tara Zrinski.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Percy Dougherty, Jennifer Gomez, Jamie Johnson, Dennis Klusaritz, Owen O'Neil, Stephen Repasch, and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

Dan Engle, Darlene Heller, Carl Manges, Lamont McClure, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, William Reynolds, and Taiba Sultana

Staff Present: Joey Dotta, Steve Neratko, Evan Gardi, and Becky Bradley

Public Present: Jeff Ward, Joseph Uliana, Jessica Urbas, Ed Konjoyan, Andrew Bennett, Hunter Lewis, John Sieger, Michelle Suarez, Connor Lagore, and Clair Williamson

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chair Glickman introduced the newest member of the LVPC staff Evan Gardi.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

No members of the public spoke.

MINUTES

Chair Glickman stated that the minutes of the Thursday, July 27, 2023, LVPC meeting are attached, and Mr. Dotta presented the previously voted on agenda items. Chair Glickman then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Elbich made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner

Moore seconded the motion. Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions. Commissioner Rader pointed out a correction that it said June on the top of the July minutes. Chair Glickman noted the correction. The motion passed. Commissioner Leon abstained.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

ACTION ITEM: 7150 Ambassador Drive Building Expansion Land Use of Regional Significance – Upper Macungie Township

Mr. Neratko presented the subject application which is a Land Use of Regional Significance under *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* in the 'Warehouse, Logistics and Storage Facilities, Freight Facility, Local Freight Generator' land use category. The proposed project is a 332,240 square foot expansion of the existing Americold Cold storage Facility at 7150 Ambassador Drive in Upper Macungie Township, Lehigh County.

The 332,240 square foot expansion project will generate 455 passenger vehicles and 249 commercial vehicles per day, according to estimates compiled utilizing the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual, 11th edition and Land Use Code 157 "High-Cube Cold Storage."

The inclusion of sidewalks along the frontage of Mill Road is an important asset and the development should be commended for including it in the plans. In addition to supporting pedestrian access and ADA accessibility, the sidewalk supports transit access through the site. A similar approach to sidewalks should be taken along the frontage of Ambassador Drive. It is also recommended that bicycle racks be located at convenient locations on the campus to facilitate utilization of alternative to engine powered vehicle modes of transportation (of Policy 5.2).

It is recommended that the developer and municipality engage with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) on strategies to improve congestion along the corridor at the intersection of Mill Road and Tilghman Street. Incremental vehicle and freight movements along this corridor such as this expansion should be carefully monitored by PennDOT and Upper Macungie Township as to potentially address mitigation strategies that may help in the safe and efficient movements of freight and people. (of Policies 2.2 and 3.2).

It is recommended that all additional parking lots proposed to be constructed include the necessary infrastructure to support and integrate electric vehicle charging on site. It is necessary to begin implementation of this infrastructure now. Air quality is an important component of a healthy community and the improvements that will result from decarbonization efforts from the private and public sectors, such as deployment of electric vehicles, are essential to incrementally improving air quality within the Lehigh Valley.

It is strongly recommended that the trailer storage areas be constructed with the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the electric powering of trailer refrigeration units. This is not only an air quality improvement but will also improve sound levels, which are also an important quality of life issue (of Policies 2.2 and 2.5).

It is strongly recommended that the existing truck route signage be studied as to whether any additional signage is needed to clearly communicate the safest and most efficient route from the facility to Interstate Routes 78 and 476. (of *FutureLV* Policy 2.4). The gate operations for the access along Mill Road for the 36 trailer spaces to remain is a concern as far as queuing of tractor trailers waiting or receiving gate access. The ability for a tractor trailer to access the site and potentially await entry without impeding traffic along Mill Road is a critical safety and traffic management concern. The developer should confirm the ability for a tractor trailer to que in front of the gate awaiting entry and not back up on to or anyway block traffic.

The emergency access along Ambassador Dr. should be clarified as to whether this will be gated and how access will be managed. It is also imperative that this emergency access be maintained at all times, including during inclement weather (e.g., snow) so as to provide safe and clear movements if required by emergency personnel. Coordination with emergency response entities and personnel is highly encouraged, especially to communicate potential hazards within the building and access to the building prior to occupancy and or if any hazard potential changes due to operations or storage of materials. (of Policy 2.2)

Chair Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Elbich made the motion, Commissioner Moore seconded the motion. Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Amato asked if the proposed project would support *FutureLV* Policy 4.2 in 'diversifying our regional economy.' Ms. Bradley followed up that it is an existing warehouse that is proposed to be expanded. Commissioner Amato asked if the warehouse supports Policy 4.3 in advocating for livable wages. Ms. Bradley answered that the average logistics job, which cold storage is not average, makes \$16-20 per hour but the specific wage in this warehouse is not available to the LVPC. Ms. Bradley noted that cold storage facilities are highly automated, and that this development is in an industrial area.

Commissioner Melnick commented that there should be language added to advocate for construction that is capable of hosting alternative energy solutions, like solar energy. A sentence noting that new warehouse develops should be capable of accommodating solar energy was proposed to be added to this letter and future letters.

Commissioner Melnick made a motion to amend the letter to add solar capability language and Commissioner Elbich seconded the motion.

Commissioner Molchany echoed the sentiments made by Commissioner Amato and suggested that the new motion should be in context of *FutureLV* policies. The LVPC Commission Staff was asked which policy it would pertain to, and Commissioner Amato replied with Policy 3.2.

Commissioner Melnick accepted Commissioner Molchany's comment and the motion to amend the letter passed. Commissioner Rader abstained.

Commissioner McGee asked if there was a way for the LVPC to verify the wages of the workers. Ms. Bradley responded that monitoring wages is not something that is included in land development reviews. Chair Glickman added that at this time the LVPC does not know the potential wage of workers there.

Chair Glickman called for a vote to accept the staff comments and forwarded the original first and second of the motion with permission. The motion passed. Commissioner Rader abstained.

ACTION ITEM: DeSales University Welcome Center Land Use of Regional Significance – Upper Saucon Township

Mr. Dotta presented the subject application which is considered a Land Use of Regional Significance under *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* in the Educational Facility category. The subject applicant proposes construction of a 7,760-square-foot welcome center and additional improvements including an emergency access drive, extending, and connecting the concrete walkway for pedestrians, the addition of a new driveway and other associated improvements at 2755 Station Avenue.

The LVPC commends the inclusion of crosswalks throughout the proposal and the extension of the existing pedestrian walkways to the proposed expansion. Students, faculty, employees, and visitors to the campus will be able to utilize the improved pedestrian network to safely navigate around campus which 'improves efficiency of existing infrastructure' (of Policy 2.2).

The LVPC recommends that the approach to the proposed Emergency Access Driveway restrict motorists from entering it from Preston Lane or turning onto it from Land Mill Road. Installing a barrier that can be removed as needed will prevent entrance, except when deemed desirable by the University, and would mitigate the risk of vehicles entering an area intended for pedestrians.

The LVPC advises the applicant to ensure proper geotechnical testing prior to any development at this location, to 'minimize environmental impacts of development to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public' (Policy 3.2).

Commissioner Andrew Elliott joined the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

Chair Glickman called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Ginder made the motion, Commissioner Leon seconded the motion. Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Melnick offered a correction of the spelling of Landis Mill Road.

Commissioner Gallagher suggested amending the letter to add similar language about new developments being able to accommodate alternative energy solutions. Commissioner Amato seconded the motion.

Commissioner Melnick suggested that language involving new developments being able to accommodate alternative energy solutions be standardized in future letters.

Commissioner Leon asked to clarify if the motion was to mandate or recommend the use of solar energy. Chair Glickman clarified it was a recommendation.

Chair Glickman called for a vote to accept the staff comments and the motion passed. The original motion to accept the staff comments was forwarded to the amended motion. The motion for an amendment to the letter passed.

ACTION ITEM: Project Review Summary Sheet

Comprehensive Planning Committee:

Commissioner Melnick presented the Comprehensive Planning Committee summary sheet that included Berks County's Comprehensive Plan, two zoning map amendments in Lower Saucon Township, one zoning map amendment in Hanover Township, and zoning ordinance amendments in Lehigh Township (2), Tatamy Borough (1), Plainfield Township (1), City of Allentown (1), and Hanover Township (1).

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

Commissioner Elbich clarified a correction discussed in the Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting earlier in the week to change language from "holiday season" to "winter holiday season." Mr. Neratko confirmed that the change was made in the letter.

Commissioner Amato asked if the two amendments in Hanover Township were related to an "unpopular" potential development. Joseph Uliana from Majestic Reality answered that the zoning ordinance is to bring the township ordinance more up to date. The zoning map amendment is related to the specific development and will be something that is reviewed at a later date.

Commissioner Amato requested that the development of the property takes into consideration the policies in *FutureLV*. Uliana confirmed that it would take *FutureLV* and NazPlan into consideration.

Chair Glickman called for a vote and the motion passed.

Environment Committee:

Chair Glickman reported that the Environment Committee did not meet and briefed the agenda coming up.

Transportation Committee:

Commissioner Herman summarized the Transportation Committee meeting which included LVTS long range transportation plan update policy discussion, transportation alternatives set aside and multimodal transportation fund projects status report, funding into the regional for the first USDOT and PENNDOT National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure grants, and announcement of an upcoming PENNDOT Vulnerable Road Safety Assessment Survey.

Commissioner Herman noted two street vacation requests in the City of Allentown.

Commissioner Herman moved to accept the staff comments and Commissioner Rader seconded the motion. Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions. The motion passed.

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 July which included 16 subdivisions, 26 development proposals, 10 reviews for Stormwater Management, and four Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 56 reviews.

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

Highway Traffic Monitoring

Mr. Gardi presented the Monthly Traffic Count report which summarized 107,234 vehicles on Route 22 between Airport Road and the Lehigh River Bridge, ending July.

Interstate 78 located just east of Route 309 recorded 76,761 vehicles. Route 309 near Coopersburg, the LVPC's oldest continuous traffic counter, registered 40,567 vehicles.

Mr. Gardi reported that Interstate 78, east of 309, recorded 21,027 commercial trucks at the end of July. On Route 22, just east of the Lehigh River Bridge, there were 14,100 commercial trucks.

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

2nd Quarter Industrial Market Monitoring Report

Mr. Dotta reported that the average asking lease rate increased in both counties and most noticeably in Lehigh County. The overall inventory of leasable square footage increased by 1.6 million square feet and the vacancy rate increased to 4.7 percent.

Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Amato thanked Mr. Dotta for the analysis and data resources.

New Business:

Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Training

Ms. Bradley introduced a multi-part series for LVPC Commissioners and the public for training in four parts about county planning in the region. The series will cover four parts spread over the next four months to explain the Municipal Planning Code (MPC), what the MPC means for county planning, what the LVPC is able to do, and what the future work program looks like. Ms. Bradley explained the first part of the series and presented an overview of what the MPC is and what is in it.

Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Molchany asked where to find the information presented on it and Ms. Bradley said that she would share it by email. Chair Glickman added that after a four-month series that sections of *FutureLV* be added to future meetings.

Executive Director's Report:

Ms. Bradley presented that the LVPC is hosting a Pennsylvania House of Representatives Local Government Services Committee Hearing on House Bill 782 on September 6th, 2023, courtesy of efforts done by Commissioner Brace. Invitations were extended to the commissioners.

Chair Glickman asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked if commissioners were to testify on behalf of the Commission or as an individual. Commissioner Brace responded that those who like to speak in a capacity outside of their role as a LVPC Commissioner would need to organize time to speak with staff of Representative Freeman. Commissioner Molchany asked if there would be an opportunity to confirm what Ms. Bradley and Chair Glickman will testify at the September 6th hearing.

Ms. Bradley stated that the testimony will be a culmination of commissioner comments. Commissioner Brace clarified that the event is a hearing and does not ultimately mean that a vote will be taken.

Communications and Public Engagement:

INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Business Cycle Column

Ms. Bradley spoke about the most recent Morning Call column called "Our Thirst for Stuff is Changing the Lehigh Valley." The next column is going to focus on the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

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

Ms. Bradley summarized the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley 30-minute radio show that aired on August 7th on WDIY and focused on the impacts of our "stuff" economy. Ms. Bradley was joined by LVPC Editor Matt Assad and Lehigh Valley International Airport Executive Director Tom Stoudt to talk about e-commerce and the growth of air cargo traffic.

Ms. Bradley noted the next show will air September 4th at 6:30 pm and will focus on the region's industrial market.

INFORMATION ITEM: U.S. DOT Rural and Tribal Grant Program

Ms. Bradley spoke of the U.S. Department of Transportation piloting a Rural and Tribal Assistance Program that will provide grants to fund financial, technical, and legal assistance to small and rural communities. The application window is open until September 27.

INFORMATION ITEM: PA Broadband Development Authority

Mr. Gardi presented to the commission about a public meeting that's planning to get comments on Pennsylvania's Statewide Broadband Plan. This is part of a \$65 billion plan to get reliable and affordable broadband internet access to every person in America within five years. This was laid out in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and this is part of a series of public meetings being held across Pennsylvania to get input.

INFORMATION ITEM: In-Person 2023 PMPEI Classes

Mr. Gardi shared that PMPEI classes will be held at the LVPC Office Conference Room this fall, with a Subdivision and Land Development Class on three consecutive Wednesdays beginning Sept. 6th. Those classes are currently sold out. In October, Community Planning will be back for an encore performance on three consecutive Mondays beginning Oct. 9, given the popularity of the spring classes. All classes run from 5:30 pm-9pm and go towards earning the designation as Certified Citizen Planning.

INFORMATION ITEM: LVGA Local Technical Assistance Program

Mr. Gardi shared a few virtual training opportunities. LTAP is offering a virtual How to Use Drones class on September 7, from 11 am to noon. That will be followed by two classes in-person at the LVPC. One will be Traffic Signal Basics on September 19, and the second offering is Winter Maintenance on October 11. PennDOT Connects is offering a workshop on Active Transportation on September 28. Registration links are listed on the slide, and you can always call either Hannah Milagio or Brian Hite for help with registration.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Glickman stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on September 28th 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 Joey Dotta, Regional Planner