



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday April 25, 2024, Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, April 25, 2024. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Wednesday, February 14th, 2024.

LVPC Chair Dr. Chris Amato chaired the meeting.

Mr. Joey Dotta took Roll Call.

Members in Attendance:

Lehigh County

Michael Drabenstott, Sunny Ghai, Philip Ginder, Steve Glickman, Kent Herman, John Inglis, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Santo Napoli, and Stephen Repasch

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judith Haldeman, Darlene Heller, Carl Manges, John McGorry, Steve Melnick, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, Tina Smith and Jean Versteeg

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Ron Beitler, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Jennifer Gomez, Diane Kelly, Dennis Klusaritz, Owen O'Neil, Kevin Schmidt and Matthew Tuerk

Northampton County

Jessica Cope, Ken Kraft, Rachel Leon, Lamont McClure, Scott Minnich, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, Jr., J. William Reynolds and Grace Crampsie Smith

Staff Present: Joey Dotta, Jill Seitz, Becky Bradley, Hannah Milagio, Bambi Griffin Rivera and Brian Hite.

Public Present: Jeff Ward (WFMZ), Jason, Phil Gianficaro (Lehighvalleynews.com), Monica Beaky

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Monica Beaky brought to the Commission's attention the amount of trash and litter beside roads in the Lehigh Valley and how it relates to the recent highway interchange greening project. Ms. Beaky offered any help or information that may alleviate the litter problem in the Lehigh Valley.

Ms. Bradley thanked Ms. Beaky for the volunteering and further provided information that the project application was submitted with PennDOT as a partner. Ms. Bradley said that the LVTS is hoping to start project planning soon but it is still too early in the process right now.

Commissioner Morgan thanked Ms. Beaky for her work and echoed Ms. Bradley's point that as of right now it is still just an application. Commissioner Morgan stressed the importance of the litter problem and the information that Ms. Beaky knows may be able to help in the planning process.

Commissioner Molchany urged Ms. Beaky to bring this information to a LVTS meeting since the grant application is an LVTS initiative. Commissioner Molchany asked Ms. Beaky to come to one of the next few meetings to express concerns about litter, especially how it relates to PennDOT.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Amato updated the Commission of the upcoming General Assembly meeting on May 14, 2024, at 7 PM at the new LVPC office.

MINUTES

Chair Amato stated that the minutes of the Thursday, March 28, 2024, LVPC meeting are attached, and Mr. Dotta presented the previously voted on agenda items. Chair Amato then asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner McGorry made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Molchany seconded the motion.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed. Commissioner Drabenstott, Commissioner Elbich, and Commissioner Leon abstained.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: South Whitehall Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Parkland School District New Operations Center

Ms. Rivera presented a proposal for modifications to a project originally reviewed by the LVPC on December 16, 2022. The proposed modifications are to add a 12,832-square-foot addition to the second floor. No building footprint modification or site improvement changes are proposed at 2619 Stadium Road.

Ms. Rivera said that the LVPC recommends communication with the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission to ensure that impacts to the Pennsylvania Turnpike rights-of-way are addressed. The review also recommends that the school district verify there will be enough onsite parking spaces to accommodate the expansion compared to the previous review provided by LVPC on December 16, 2022.

Ms. Rivera recommended signage and a pavement-marked crosswalk be added on Stadium Drive to communicate to drivers that vulnerable road users cross the roadway and other multi-modal transportation accessibility improvements.

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

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Herman abstained.

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet:

Comprehensive Planning Committee Chair Steve Melnick presented a summary of the Committee meeting that occurred on Tuesday. The meeting included a total of eight zoning ordinance amendments featuring three in Lower Nazareth Township and one in Macungie Borough. The other zoning ordinances were in Moore Township, two in Plainfield Township and Hanover Township.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Ginder made the motion, and Commissioner Repasch seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Versteeg abstained from the Hanover Township vote.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet:

Environment Committee Chair Steve Repasch presented a summary of the Committee meeting that occurred on Tuesday. The meeting included four Delaware River Basin Commission reviews involving treatment plant and water withdrawal renewals in Slatington Borough, Lehigh Township, Washington Township (NC) and Lower Nazareth Township.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Melnick made the motion, and Commissioner Morgan seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioner Ghai abstained from the Washington Township (NC) vote.

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: Street Vacation Petition Review, portion of North Elizabeth Street, City of Allentown

Transportation Committee Chair Kent Herman summarized the Committee meeting that occurred hours before.

Mr. Hite presented the proposed street vacation application submitted by the City of Allentown on behalf of Diane C. Schmidt of 323 North Ott Street. The proposed street vacation requests to vacate a portion of North Elizabeth Street from previously vacated Wayne Street to Monroe Street and was reviewed for recommendations under Section 304 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, and for general consistency with the intent of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

Mr. Hite recommended utilities that are above or below ground remain accessible as they are today in the event of maintenance or repair that may be required to maintain the essential power and telecommunications utilities as well as any City of Allentown or Lehigh County utilities and infrastructure. It is recommended that the petitioner acquire concurrence signatures for the street vacation petition by all affected property owners.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Herman made the motion, and Commissioner Repasch seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS:

INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports

Ms. Seitz presented the Monthly Subdivision Report that featured 12 Subdivisions, 23 Development proposals, 9 Stormwater Management reviews, and 5 Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 49 reviews over 169 acres. 18 of those reviews were in Lehigh County and 31 were in Northampton County. Ms. Seitz added that the LVPC reviewed 389 total residential units, consisting of 28 single-family detached, 335 apartments and 26 twins.

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

Mr. Dotta presented the Quarterly Subdivision Report that summarized 160 reviews over 1,382 acres, consisting of 31 lot line adjustments, 74 development proposals, 48 stormwater management proposals, and seven municipal ordinance, map and plan reviews. There was a total of 1,401 residential units reviewed in the first quarter of 2024. Apartments made up a majority of that with 905 units reviewed, followed by 451 single-family detached, 40 twins, and five townhouse units. Commercial proposal square footage was up by 23% over the first quarter of 2024 at 2,483,942 total square feet.

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

Mr. Hite presented the Monthly Traffic Report, which featured a counter on Route 22 between Airport Road and the Lehigh River Bridge, logging 106,588 vehicles per day. Interstate 78, just east of Route 309, recorded 74,515 and Route 309 near Coopersburg logged 37,518 vehicles.

Next, Mr. Hite presented commercial truck traffic. Interstate 78 east of 309 recorded 23,512 trucks. Route 22, just east of the Lehigh River Bridge, recorded 11,101 trucks.

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

NEW BUSINESS:

INFORMATION ITEM/DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM: We Have Moved

INFORMATION ITEM: LVPC'S new office at 615 Waterfront Drive, Suite 201, Allentown, PA, 18102

Chair Amato updated the Commission that the LVPC has officially moved into the new office and proposed eventual in-person or hybrid meetings so that the Commissioners can see the new space.

Ms. Bradley noted the amount of work that went into the move and the extra work that was needed to move all the files and furniture. The new office space was summarized, and the executive committee was thanked for their help, specifically Commissioner Glickman.

Commissioner Morgan added that the Waterfront Property won an award for green buildings for large businesses at the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce Energy and Environment Committee.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM: Keeping Meetings Virtual? Or Move to Hybrid or In-Person?

Chair Amato asked the Commission whether they would like to make a motion to alter the setting of next month's Full Commission meeting to either hybrid or in person.

Commissioner Ghai made a motion to make the meeting hybrid and Commissioner Melnick seconded that motion. Commissioner Molchany added that the staff should verify their audio and video capabilities for a hybrid meeting. Ms. Bradley added that all committees chose to remain hybrid and the full setup of hybrid meeting equipment will not be functional until the next week. Ms. Bradley added information about the new building's security features and the logistics that would need to be prepared for in-person meetings. More information was estimated to come in the middle of May. Costs relating to readvertising and extra staffing.

Commissioner Melnick asked if there will be any time after working hours that Commissioners will be able to access without the need for a staff member to open the door. Ms. Bradley responded not at this time and that the extra security measures in place are necessary due to threats that staff members have received in the past. The intent is to test the hybrid video capabilities and staffing relating to security at the General Assembly on May 14.

Commissioner Ghai amended the motion to remain virtual and Commissioner Molchany added that if the meeting remains virtual there is no need for a motion or vote. Commissioner Molchany asked Ms. Bradley if her idea is an update of the success of the General Assembly and the opportunity for the Commission to vote on the structure of the June meeting. Ms. Bradley noted that the LVPC will do whatever the Commission decides and suggested informing Commissioners after the General Assembly.

Commissioner Tina Smith asked if hybrid would be possible without the need to hire four additional security personnel. Ms. Bradley clarified that no additional costs relating to hiring security personnel would occur, but rather that an additional LVPC staff person would need to be there to open the front door. There would be some additional costs relating to having to readvertise the meeting from virtual to hybrid if the Commission decides to change formats.

Commissioner Repasch asked if the General Assembly was the best meeting to test the new system. Ms. Bradley agreed but added that renting a space was not in the budget and the LVPC staff is taking extra steps to make sure the meeting runs smoothly. Commissioner Melnick added that any future issues will likely be solved easily.

Commissioner Molchany added that there is no action if the Commission stays virtual, but action may be taken at May's meeting for the format of June's meeting. Chair Amato asked if the LVPC should consider preemptively consider readvertising the June meeting to virtual. It was decided to move on to the next agenda item.

No vote was taken.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

INFORMATION ITEM: Quarterly Work Plan Update

Ms. Bradley presented an overview of work program accomplishments in quarter one. These projects included the Lehigh Valley Priority Climate Action Plan and the Implementation Grant Application, the Effectiveness of the City of Allentown Neighborhood Improvement Zone Development Authority Report, the Passenger Rail Analysis, 2023 Annual Report, and many more projects.

Ms. Bradley went over several of the many presentations that the LVPC made or contributed to. The primary results for a Municipal Farmland/Open Space Referendum was shared by Ms. Bradley that had a slim vote in Whitehall Township and Heidelberg Township.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. Chair Amato added that the close margin of both votes was surprising.

Commissioner Ginder added that the referendum was based on real estate taxes rather than earned income tax vote to distribute effect more evenly.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Business Cycle Column

Ms. Milagio spoke about the most recent Morning Call column under a headline "The Data-Driven Effort for Safer Roads," where Becky explains the several big-ticket projects designed specifically to improve safety and save lives in the draft Transportation Improvement Program. That column can be found at lvpc.org/news/v or at mcall.com. The next column will look at our recently filed Lehigh Valley Green Transportation Infrastructure Grant, and that will run May 19.

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

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

Ms. Milagio summarized the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show that aired April 1, and it covered the recently released Lehigh Valley Passenger Rail Analysis, and we were fortunately to have as our guest Angela Watson, who is PennDOT's Director of Rail, Freight, Ports & Waterways. That show is streaming at lvpc.org/news/v and at WDIY.org. Ms. Milagio also announced that new WDIY Executive Director Margaret McConnell will be joining Becky and Matt for all future shows.

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

INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program Virtual Classes

Ms. Milagio summarized the PA Municipal Planning Education Institute (PMPEI) being offered in PA land use and planning. In 2024, the three courses offered are Zoning Administration in May, Subdivision and Land Development in September, and Community Planning in October.

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

INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

Mr. Hite presented an upcoming LTAP class on May 2, 2024, from 11 am to noon called “Nighttime Visibility for Safety.”

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

INFORMATION ITEM: PennDOT Connects 2024 Municipal Outreach Meeting (BH)

Mr. Hite presented an event on May 16th where PennDOT Connects provides an opportunity to interact with PennDOT, Planning Partners, and other municipalities in the area at the PennDOT District offices or virtually from 1 to 3 pm.

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

INFORMATION ITEM: Grants

Ms. Milagio presented grant opportunities coming up that many of municipal partners can take advantage of, starting with the Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Safe Streets for All and the Multimodal Transportation fund through the Department of Community and Economic Development. Another one presented is the state Department of Environmental Protection Municipal Recycling Program Grant, and the application for that one is May 10.

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

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Amato stated that the next LVPC meeting is set to be virtual on April 25 at 7pm. Chair Amato then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Molchany made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

Becky Bradley, AICP, Executive Director and Joey Dotta, Regional Planner