



# Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

DR. CHRISTOPHER R. AMATO  
Chair

CHRISTINA V. MORGAN  
Vice Chair

ARMANDO MORITZ-CHAPELLIQUEN  
Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP  
Executive Director

## LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

### Minutes from the Thursday June 27, 2024, Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, June 27, 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, Steve Glickman, Jennifer Gomez, Kent Herman, John Inglis, Diane Kelly, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt

##### Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Jessica Cope, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judith Haldeman, Darlene Heller, Carl Manges, John McGorry, Scott Minnich, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen, Edward Nelson and Jean Versteeg

#### Members Absent:

##### Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Ron Beitler, Percy Dougherty, Bob Elbich, Philip Ginder, Dennis Klusaritz, Santo Napoli, Owen O'Neil and Matthew Tuerk

##### Northampton County

Ken Kraft, Rachel Leon, Lamont McClure, Steve Melnick, Salvatore Panto, Jr., J. William Reynolds, Grace Crampsie Smith and Tina Smith

**Staff Present:** Joey Dotta, Jill Seitz, Becky Bradley, Christian Martinez, Susan Myerov, Matt Assad and Brian Hite.

**Public Present:** Jeff Ward (WFMZ), Phil Gianficaro (Lehighvalleynews.com), Ce-Ce Gerlach, Brett Webber, Craig Beavers, David Salinas, John Best, Liesel Gross, Olivia, and Ryan S.

#### COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

None appearing.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Amato revealed that the LVPC has been awarded the 2024 Innovation and Collaboration Award - Government Awardee by the Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin (WRA). The WRA is a non-profit, non-partisan organization representing water professionals, water purveyors, and commercial, industrial, and maritime river users. Chair Amato said that the LVPC won this award for its long history of protecting the environment, and more recently for its innovative Lehigh Valley Green Transportation Infrastructure Plan.

#### MINUTES

Chair Amato stated that the minutes of the Thursday, May 23, 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 Morgan seconded the motion. Commissioner Drabenstott and Commissioner Kelly abstained.

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

## **ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **INFORMATION ITEM: Lehigh County Authority Update from Liesel Gross**

Ms. Gross presented an informational slideshow about the Kline's Island Sewer System (KISS) Regional Sewer Plan. In the presentation were details of what the sewer system entailed and some major challenges to the sustainability of its operations. A timeline of what regulatory action has occurred was provided along with a call to action to support the various municipal sewer rehab programs, along with the KISS Act 537 Projects. Ms. Gross noted that the total cost estimate is north of \$561 million for all the KISS Act 537 Projects combined.

Commissioner Repasch seconded Ms. Gross's comments and reiterated the importance of sewer and water infrastructure. Commissioner Morgan thanked Ms. Gross for her time and emphasized the importance of the Regional Sewer Plan.

### **ACTION ITEM: Act 537 Review - Roseto Borough Sewer Authority Corrective Action Plan**

Ms. Myerov reviewed the Roseto Borough Sewer Authority (RBSA)'s draft Corrective Action Plan or (CAP), prepared to address hydraulic overload conditions within its collection systems which were identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in its review of Bangor Borough Authority (BBA), Roseto Borough Sewer Authority (RBSA), and Washington Township 2022 Municipal Wasteload Management Annual Report.

Ms. Myerov said that the provision of environmentally sound and efficient sewage disposal for existing and future development is a goal of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. Actions to remove or reduce excessive infiltration and inflow align with *FutureLV* Policy 3.2, 'to protect the quality and quantity of surface water and groundwater'. The upgrades of the sewer system align with the *FutureLV* action to 'improve the utility and mobility infrastructure of the region' (under Policy 1.1). The LVPC recommends continued coordination among the partners to address these issues. Long-term monitoring, as proposed in the CAP, will help prevent future problems.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Repasch made the motion, and Commissioner Drabenstott 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 Morgan abstained.

### **ACTION ITEM: PA Public Utility Commission - Service Territory Addition for Ridings at Parkland Phase 2 - North Whitehall Township**

Ms. Myerov presented an application to the Pennsylvania Utilities Commission for approval of a wastewater service territory addition for the Ridings at Parkland, Phase 1 and 2 Subdivision in North Whitehall Township. The proposed subdivision consists of 38 lots on 25.94 acres and then six lots within Phase 1 of the residential subdivision, shown on the slide. The existing Township Act 537 Sewage Facilities Plan revision was approved by the PA Department of Environmental Protection on January 26, 2021, officially recognizing that the Applicant can serve additional sewage flows up to 120,000 gallons per day of the design and permitted capacity of the existing treatment plant. Therefore, additional capacity is available at the plant to handle the flows from the proposed development of Phase 2 as well as flows generated from the six Phase 1 lots.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Repasch made the motion, and Commissioner Heller 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.

***ACTION ITEM: Agriculture Security Area 7-Year Review - Lower Milford Township***

Mr. Martinez presented an evaluation of Lower Milford Township's Agricultural Security Area (ASA) 7-Year review recommendations. The project parcels are now a residential subdivision, which was formerly a farm. LVPC staff conducted a Geographical Information Systems (GIS)-based analysis of the properties utilizing 2023 aerial imagery and agricultural property data information. This information was overlaid using the ASA property boundary data provided by the Township and compared with LVPC data. Mr. Martinez forwarded the letter's recommendation that the Township's analysis is accurate, and these properties should no longer qualify for ASA inclusion.

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

Commissioner Repasch noted that this type of review is quite rare to see. Commissioner Nelson asked if there are tax impacts and Ms. Bradley noted that it's determined by the municipality. Commissioner Nelson asked how the parcels were first designated as agriculture and Ms. Bradley responded that they were likely previous agricultural uses but that changed over time.

Commissioner Repasch asked if we will be seeing more of these types of reviews. Ms. Bradley agreed and noted Ms. Myerov and Mr. Martinez were having conversations with municipalities.

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

***ACTION ITEM: Agriculture Security Area Interim Review - Upper Milford Township***

Mr. Martinez presented an evaluation of Upper Milford Township's Agricultural Security Area Interim Review recommendations. As part of this review, the Township must request the county planning commission, the LVPC, to review the ASA and make recommendations. Out of the 282 parcels enrolled in the Township's ASA, 157 were identified by the Township to be reviewed based upon evidence that such properties have been changed to residential or nonagricultural commercial uses. Mr. Martinez said that it is the letter's recommendation that the Township's analysis is accurate, and these properties should no longer qualify for ASA inclusion.

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

Commissioner Nelson asked what happens when parcels are originally in farmland preservation areas and that use changes to no longer conform. Mr. Molchany noted that the agricultural security area is a precursor to development. Chair Amato thanked the staff for their work.

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

**COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

***ACTION ITEM: Fountain Hill – Land Use of Regional Significance – Fountain Hill Elementary School***

Mr. Dotta presented a proposal to demolish the existing Fountain Hill Elementary School and construct a new 87,000-square-foot elementary school at 1330 Church Street. New bus loading and student drop-off areas, vehicle parking and outdoor play areas for students are intended to accompany this proposal. In addition to construction of a larger school building, the redevelopment includes construction of a 'Family

Center and Food Pantry', supporting cultural and social programs. Additionally, the proposal to expand community and educational opportunities in Centers and along Corridors improves equity and increases access to daily needs for all people.

Mr. Dotta noted that the proposed signage limiting Church Street, from Norway Place to Greene Court, to bus traffic only from 8 am to 9:30 am and 2:30 pm to 4 pm should also note the days and dates enforced, leaving the street open for all traffic during weekends and off-months. The egress from the western staff parking lot empties onto Church Street and staff member access should be considered during the two identified time blocks.

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

Commissioner McGorry asked to clarify the location of the proposed project. Commissioner Repasch clarified.

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

***ACTION ITEM: City of Allentown – Land Use of Regional Significance – Peregrine Tower***

Mr. Dotta presented a proposal to construct a 37-story building with 206 residential units, 2,651 square-feet of retail and 9,953 square-feet of office space. The proposed uses by floor are retail space on the first and fourth floors, office space on the second, third and fourth floors, residential from floors six to either 33 or 37 and a restaurant on the top floor. The project parcel is currently undeveloped with proximity to the Allentown Parking Authority Maple Street Parking Garage and multiple single-family attached residences.

Mr. Dotta reviewed the letter which recommends the developer clarify the proposed height, in feet, of the building and the number of stories between either 33 or 37. Additionally, it is recommended that the developer provide shadow diagrams to determine how lights and shade impact surrounding lower-scale buildings and public spaces.

Mr. Dotta noted that the proposed height of 33 to 37 stories greatly surpasses the surrounding properties and would surpass the nearby, 22-story PPL Tower in height by 11 to 15 stories. If constructed at 37 stories, this project would be the tallest building in Pennsylvania, outside of the cities of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, and would be 16 stories more than the old Martin Tower site. Because the height of the building would exceed anything in the city and region, careful consideration should be given to the interplay between density and the surrounding community. With the increasing number of taller buildings in the City of Allentown, it is imperative that impact analysis, especially related to height, façade design and setbacks be required for developments at the scale of the current proposal.

Mr. Dotta explained that this proposal is a bellwether of the direction of development in the Lehigh Valley and is one of the most significant development proposals in the City and region's history. This proposal is worthy of intense examination for its potential effect on Allentown and on the region. The review was conducted per the county planning requirements of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and the LVPC offers the City additional consultation and support as needed.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Glickman made the motion, and Commissioner Manges seconded the motion.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked what the proposal looked like back in 2015, when the LVPC last reviewed the proposal. Commissioner Gomez answered that the previous proposal was 33 stories and that the developer expects to resubmit largely the same submission but with a greater number of residential.

Commissioner Nelson asked if the proposal is consistent with Allentown's zoning. Commissioner Gomez responded that the project is consistent regarding its height but the City is further reviewing the project. The developer postponed the project at this time.

Ce-Ce Gerlach commented that the area surrounding this proposal is largely residential with very few businesses. Ms. Gerlach provided a video of the surrounding area and stressed that, generally, residents do not want this development to occur. Ms. Gerlach stressed that residents should have a say in the land development process and that the project is generally inconsistent with multiple goals in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*.

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

**ACTION ITEM: City of Easton, Palmer Township and Wilson Borough – Land Use of Regional Significance – Easton Commerce Park**

Ms. Seitz presented a proposal for a 1,006,880-square-foot warehouse at 1525 Wood Avenue. The majority of the proposed building is located in Wilson Borough, with an eastern portion extending into the City of Easton. The northwestern portion of the property is in Palmer Township, but has no proposed development. The 106.2-acre site formerly contained industrial development to the southeast where buildings have been removed, and the western and northern portions of the property are undeveloped, containing woodlands and steep slopes. The site formerly contained a pigment plant operation, a heavy industrial use that has been vacant and underutilized for several years. Warehouse is a permitted-by-right use based on the Zoning District designations within the Wilson Borough and City of Easton jurisdictions. Warehousing is not a permitted use in Palmer Township's jurisdiction.

Ms. Seitz noted that the development does not align with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* because it does not 'match development intensity with sustainable transportation infrastructure capacity'. If the project moves forward as proposed, development impacts should be mitigated to protect the public health, safety and welfare, and to ensure the lowest impact and most sustainable site design in the fiscal interests of the developer, Borough, City and Township.

Ms. Myerov explained that the significant footprint and design of the proposed structure lends itself to more innovative approaches to minimize stormwater runoff and higher energy efficiency. Based on current plans, stormwater is to be captured in a series of large managed release concept (MRC) basins. As proposed, the location of the basins will require that a segment of the unnamed tributary to Bushkill Creek be relocated. The letter encourages the developers to evaluate utilizing green and blue roof technologies to take advantage of multiple potential environmental and building efficiency benefits.

Mr. Hite noted substantial discrepancies between the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) and land development plans regarding what is proposed – the submitted plan set reflects a 1,006,880-square-foot warehouse while the TIS reflects a 221,256-square-foot high cube sort fulfillment center. Inaccurate planning process documents preclude accurate analyses and review of the proposal to determine impacts. The TIS must be updated to match the submitted plan set so that a complete and thorough review of anticipated transportation impacts on the community and region can be done with quality data and planning. Without current and correct information within land development applications, LVPC cannot properly review the proposal from a county planning perspective. Anticipated trip generation can change drastically based on what land use is proposed, as illustrated in the letter.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Gallagher made the motion, and Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen seconded the motion.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Commissioner Repasch asked what the previous vehicle traffic was at its last use. Mr. Hite responded that sometimes a TIS has historical data but since the location has long been abandoned, historical data was not provided.

Commissioner Ghai asked if there were noted concerns about Route 22 and potential effects. Ms. Bradley answered that there can be varying vehicle uses to this facility and it is difficult to determine without adequate information. Several issues relating to Route 22 and its interchanges with tractor trailers were brought up. Commissioner Ghai noted his concern for traffic on Route 22 if the potential traffic generation numbers come to fruition.

Commissioner McGorry expressed his discontent with the proposed project.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen spoke on his expertise of the neighborhood and that potential alternative routes that trucks may take have other serious issues. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen noted that recommendations extending the bike path from the Dixie Cup redevelopment would surely connect to this proposal.

Commissioner McGorry expressed his discontent with the proposed project and potential vehicle generation.

Commissioner Drabenstott commended the LVPC staff for addressing the project's inadequacies. Commissioner Andrew Elliott added that the surrounding streets, especially during rush hour, get congested and the potential for gridlock is real.

Chair Amato asked if this would be the only opportunity for the LVPC to provide comment for this project. Ms. Bradley confirmed it would be unless the developer changes the plan drastically and needs to resubmit. It was noted that the LVPC is regulatory with stormwater.

Brett Webber commented that the plethora of environmental issues on the site cause concern and alternatives to redevelop this site should be proposed. This parcel is a valuable resource to the municipalities and should be something that benefits residents. Ms. Bradley commented that the developer is already marketing the site and it will be interesting to see how the process unfolds.

Commissioner Repasch commented that many warehouses are developed prior to securing an end-user. Commissioner Ghai commented that distinguishing between different warehouse uses can provide more clarity. Ms. Bradley responded that review letters use the legal term for developments such as this and do not deviate from what is listed on the plan.

Mr. Webber asked what authority the LVPC has when a developer does not provide an updated TIS. Ms. Bradley stated that a traffic-study is only required by the LVPC if the municipality requires it. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked if the LVPC is able to add language to recommend the municipality not approve a project without an updated TIS. Ms. Bradley responded that the letter is near its legal extent and the municipalities are asking questions as well.

Craig Beavers chatted that Palmer Township has received an updated TIS regarding this project.

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

***ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet***

Comprehensive Planning Committee Vice Chair John Gallagher presented a summary of the Committee meeting that occurred on Tuesday. The meeting included one zoning ordinance in Forks Township.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Heller 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.

## **TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

### ***INFORMATION ITEM: Transportation Committee Summary***

Transportation Committee Chair Kent Herman summarized the Committee meeting that occurred hours before including the PennDOT bridge projects status report, the Local Technical Assistance Program Municipal Tech Assist Program and the 2024 Youth Bike Summit hosted at Muhlenberg College by Community Bike Works.

### ***ACTION ITEM: Ruhr Street and Hill Street – Street Vacation Petition Review***

Mr. Hite presented a proposed street vacation petition for Hill Street and Ruhr Street that was reviewed for recommendations under Section 304 of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code. The proposed street vacation application was submitted by the City of Allentown on behalf of Jose A. Cartagena, Sr. of 222 South Saint Lucas Street. It is recommended that the petitioner acquire concurrence signatures for the street vacation petition by all affected property owners including the property owners 2143 and 2135 W Fairview Street that were not listed on the petition submitted.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Herman made the motion, and Commissioner Heller 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***

Mr. Dotta presented the Monthly Subdivision Report that featured eight Subdivisions, 28 Development proposals, 17 Stormwater Management reviews, and two Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 55 reviews over 673 acres. 27 of those reviews were in Lehigh County and 28 were in Northampton County. Mr. Dotta added that the LVPC reviewed 733 total residential units, consisting of 221 single-family detached, 23 townhouses, 475 apartments and 14 twins. On the non-residential side, it was presented that the LVPC reviewed a total of 3.67 million square-feet, which included 198,000 square-feet of commercial, 10,000 square-feet retail, 151,000 square-feet public/quasi-public, and 3.2 million square-feet of warehouse.

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 Fullerton Avenue Exit, which recorded 104,670 vehicles. Interstate 78, just east of Route 309, recorded 84,921 and Route 309 near Coopersburg logged 39,952 vehicles.

Next, Mr. Hite presented commercial truck traffic. Route 33 between Newburg Road and State Route 248 recorded 10,629 trucks and Route 22 recorded 11,340 trucks.

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

Mr. Dotta presented the quarterly employment and wages report for both Lehigh and Northampton Counties from The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The report highlighted in Lehigh County an increase of 1.7% in total employment and a 3.6% raise of average weekly wage to \$1,401. In Northampton County, employment increased 0.2% while the average weekly wage rose 3.5% to \$1,147. In comparison, national trends saw employment increase 1.5% and the average weekly wage increase 3.6% to \$1,435. Among the 19 Pennsylvania counties in the BLS report, Lehigh and Northampton counties are fourth and fifth respectively in average weekly wage increase.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### ***ACTION ITEM: LVPC Full Commission Meetings for the Balance of 2024***

Chair Amato notified the Commission that, as part of the June 20 Executive Committee meeting, the Executive Committee discussed overall meeting structure as it relates to the LVPC's new office space, the effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic, equitable access for the community and Commissioners, attendance, comradery, Commissioner mentorship, the rate of change in the region as it relates to the Commissioners' work, costs and logistics. Based on these factors the Executive Committee poses the following recommendation and requests the Full Commission's consensus.

In Quarter 3, virtual meetings will be held on July 25th and August 22nd, both at 7 PM. The September 26th meeting at 7PM will be an in-person only meeting at the offices of the LVPC at 615 Waterfront Drive, Allentown, PA 18102.

In Quarter 4, virtual meetings will be held on October 24th and November 21st, both at 7 PM. The December 19th Annual Meeting will be at 11 AM and in-person only, at the offices of the LVPC.

Chair Amato called for a motion to adopt the new quarterly-based meeting program. Commissioner Kelly made the motion, and Commissioner Drabenstott seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Journalist Jeff Ward asked if the meetings are still expected to be broadcast virtually. Ms. Bradley responded that they can be but the expectation is that Commissioners attend in person and that members of the public can attend in person too.

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

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:** None

## **COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

### ***INFORMATION ITEM: Morning Call Business Cycle Column***

Mr. Assad spoke about the most recent Morning Call column where Becky explains just how often municipals roads crews, staff, board members and elected officials take advantage of Lehigh Valley Government Academy and Training, often during evening hours, on top of their daily jobs and lives. That column can be found at [lvpc.org/news/v](http://lvpc.org/news/v) or at [mcall.com](http://mcall.com).

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

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

Mr. Assad summarized the most recent Plan Lehigh Valley radio show that aired June 3, and took a close look at the benefits of the Green Transportation Infrastructure Project, with guests Susan Myerov and Allison Harvey. That show is streaming at [lvpc.org/news/v](http://lvpc.org/news/v) and at [WDIY.org](http://WDIY.org).

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

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

Mr. Assad presented two grant opportunities, PennDOT National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (NEVI) and the PA Department of Community and Economic Development Multimodal Transportation Fund (MTF), are both available with deadlines to apply in July.

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

### ***INFORMATION ITEM: Local Technical Assistance Program Virtual Classes***



Mr. Hite summarized the Lehigh Valley Government Academy classes this upcoming month. On July 9 there is Trucks on Local Roads: Issues and Solutions. On July 23 another new class is for Drones and the municipal transportation uses that can help with including visual inspections of infrastructure including bridges. Both classes are 8 AM to noon.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:**

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

Submitted by:

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