



# Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Vice Chair

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Treasurer

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Executive Director

## LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

### Minutes from the Thursday, August 22, 2024, Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, August 22, 2024. The meeting was advertised in the Lehigh Valley Press on Wednesday, July 10th, 2024.

LVPC Chair Dr. Chris Amato chaired the meeting.

Mr. Joey Dotta took Roll Call.

#### Members in Attendance:

##### Lehigh County

Ron Beittler, Michael Drabenstott, Bob Elbich, Sunny Ghai, Philip Ginder, Steve Glickman, Kent Herman, John Inglis, Dennis Klusaritz, Richard Molchany, Santo Napoli, Owen O'Neil, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt

##### Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Andrew Elliott, John Gallagher, Judith Haldeman, Darlene Heller, Carl Manges, Steve Melnick, Scott Minnich, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen and Tina Smith.

#### Members Absent:

##### Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Percy Dougherty, Jennifer Gomez, Diane Kelly, Christina Morgan, and Matthew Tuerk.

##### Northampton County

Jessica Cope, Charles Elliott, Ken Kraft, Rachel Leon, Lamont McClure, John McGorry, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, Jr., J. William Reynolds, Grace Crampsie Smith and Jean Versteeg.

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

**Public Present:** Steve Althouse (WFMZ), Craig Beavers, and Jay Bradley.

#### COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Moritz-Chapelliquen spoke as a member of the public to raise awareness of a data tool coming from Pennsylvania Area Youth Survey. One of the data points that was highlighted by Mr. Moritz-Chapelliquen was attachment to community and how it can be used to improve planning outcomes.

#### CHAIR'S REPORT

The Innovation and Collaboration Award will be given to the LVPC at Water Resources Association (WRA) of the Delaware River Basin Annual Awards Gala on September 12 from 5 pm to 9 pm at Fairmont Waterworks in Philadelphia. Chair Amato invited members of the Commission to attend and celebrate.

#### MINUTES

Chair Amato stated that the minutes of the Thursday, July 25, 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 Melnick made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Andrew Elliott seconded the motion.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed. Commissioners Elbich and Schmidt abstained.

## **JOINT ENVIRONMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### ***ACTION ITEM: Slatington Borough – Land Development – Northern Lehigh School District Field Improvements***

Ms. Seitz reminded the Commission that the LVPC serves as the official municipal planning commission for Slatington Borough and because Slatington Borough does not have their own adopted Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), the County SALDO applies. LVPC, as the county planning agency, is responsible for reviewing and administering plans in these cases. Ms. Seitz explained that this review is regulatory and requires a different process than the proposals the LVPC sees on a regular basis, in which we provide advisory comments to the municipality.

Ms. Seitz presented a proposal to renovate existing natural grass baseball and softball fields by stripping the topsoil, installing a subdrainage system, re-grading, and adding new crushed aggregate warning tracks, dugouts, walkways and other improvements on the property located at 1 Bulldog Lane.

The LVPC received this final plan application on June 20, 2024, and the materials submitted included Post Construction Stormwater Management Plans revised June 13, 2024, and Post Construction Stormwater Management Report revised April 24, 2024. This follows a preliminary plan submission that was reviewed by the LVPC Environment Committee and Full Commission earlier this year, with a letter issued on February 22, 2024.

Ms. Myerov noted one outstanding condition of approval, which is to 'Provide documentation that the proposal is compatible with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) requirements, demonstrated through approval by the Lehigh County Conservation District.' All other plan and site design requirements have been resolved.

Chair Amato called for a motion to approve the final plan subject to conditions outlined in the staff review letter. Commissioner Minnich made the motion, and Commissioner Molchany 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 Schmidt abstained.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE**

### ***ACTION ITEM: Slatington Borough – Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Map Update***

Mr. Dotta presented the comprehensive update to the Borough's Zoning Ordinance following the recent adoption of the updated Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan. The proposed Zoning Ordinance and Map align with numerous goals and policies of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* as well as Plan Northern Lehigh. The influence of these plans in the development of the code are apparent in the close correlation between the documents and serve to "coordinate land use decisions across municipal boundaries." The proposal allows a diverse range of housing types in the Suburban Residential, Town Residential and Town Center Zoning Districts. The Borough is encouraged to consider expanding townhouses as a permitted use in the Suburban Residential District to facilitate increased attainable housing opportunities. The LVPC strongly recommends identifying opportunities to permit a greater mix of residential and neighborhood-supportive businesses downtown. The LVPC encourages the Borough to consider alternatives to locating the Industrial (I) Zoning District Along the Lehigh River to 'minimize

environmental impacts of development.’ The creation of a riverfront overlay district could protect the Lehigh River from impacts of development occurring in the proposed industrial-zoned district.

Mr. Hite recommended that the proposed commercial vehicle parking regulations be updated to better align with Pennsylvania State standards, including parking space dimensions, clearance height, and staging spaces for hours of operation compliance. The LVPC recommended adding definitions for electric vehicle charging infrastructure as well.

Ms. Myerov recommends expanding on environmental regulations and considerations in the ordinance, including logging and forestry management and riparian buffer protection. The LVPC encouraged ordinance language that emphasizes planting native trees and deep-rooted native vegetation, and to avoid introducing invasive or non-natives.

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

Ms. Bradley noted that the LVPC was the consultant for *Plan Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan* and continued to coordinate with the zoning ordinance consultant throughout the process. Ms. Bradley thanked the consultant for their job and clarified that the review letter is primarily revisions and small edits to make the zoning ordinances even stronger. Ms. Bradley thanked Lehigh County officials for their support for community planning efforts and their belief in coordinated planning. The magnitude of simultaneous zoning updates was brought up as a significant accomplishment and Ms. Bradley expressed that she’s excited about future community updates.

Commissioner Schmidt asked if the proposed changes would be done by LVPC staff or the consultant. Ms. Bradley answered that the zoning ordinance changes would be made by the consultant. There was a brief discussion regarding locally undesirable land uses and what it means in the context of coordinated zoning under multi-municipal plans. Commissioner Elbich and Chair Amato congratulated the effort.

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

**ACTION ITEM: Slatington Borough – Official Map**

Mr. Dotta presented a proposal to establish the first-ever Borough of Slatington Official Map. Official Maps are implementation tools that support the community’s vision outlined in the comprehensive plan by identifying locations of existing and planned public lands and facilities such as transportation infrastructure, parks and trails, and open space. The LVPC recommends the Borough consider symbolizing existing and future trails to expand and connect regional trail systems and to help the Borough with future Trail Town designation. The LVPC encourages the Borough to identify transportation improvement projects that can be submitted to the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study for inclusion in the Long-Range Transportation plan to support use of transportation funds to maximize available financial resources and support the fiscal health and sustainability of the Borough

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Repasch made the motion, and Commissioner Ginder 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: Washington Township (LC) – Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Map Update**

Ms. Seitz presented a comprehensive update to the Washington Township Zoning Ordinance. Washington Township is another one of the six Northern Lehigh communities working with a single consultant to simultaneously update their zoning ordinances. Zoning designations in the Township are congruent with the adjacent zoning designations of Slatington Borough. The proposed Zoning Ordinance and Map align with numerous goals and policies of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and Plan NL, as well as the *Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code*.

Mr. Hite presented the transportation review which recommended providing a minimum length of parking spaces to right-size transportation infrastructure. The LVPC strongly recommended including Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) parking requirements to comply with federal law and ensure accessibility for all persons.

Ms. Myerov presented the environment review which encouraged the Township to consider expanding environmental terms and definitions, and recommended adding riparian buffer protection criteria within the Environmental Protection Areas Overlay District. It is recommended that environmental protection areas include streams, woodlands and special trees. The LVPC recommended adding language that notes preference for native species over non-native and prohibiting invasive species in all landscaped areas.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Repasch made the motion, and Commissioner Elbich 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: Washington Township (LC) – Official Map**

Ms. Seitz presented Washington Township's Draft Official Map which identifies multimodal connectivity. The LVPC encouraged the Township to identify transportation improvement projects for inclusion in the Long-Range Transportation Plan to support use of transportation funds to maximize available financial resources and support the fiscal health and sustainability of the Township.

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

**ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**ACTION ITEM: South Whitehall Landscapes Plan Review – South Whitehall Township, Lehigh County**

Mr. Martinez presented a review of the Draft South Whitehall Township Landscapes Plan, which was influenced by the update of the Township's 2023 Comprehensive Plan. The plan is intended to dig deeper into the preservation priorities introduced in its comprehensive plan. The draft plan highlights the urgency surrounding resource preservation in the Township, as it historically has been, and continues to be under significant development pressure. Given this pressure, the draft plan "proposes different strategies and actions to realistically control the loss of important open space to development." Mr. Martinez noted that the *South Whitehall Landscapes Plan* is a foundational tool to preserve the agricultural, natural, historic and open-space resources in South Whitehall Township and supports the Township's Comprehensive plan in addition to its many consistencies with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and the *Lehigh County Livable Landscapes Plan*.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Molchany 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: North Whitehall 7-Year Agricultural Security Area (ASA) Review – North Whitehall Township, Lehigh County**

Mr. Martinez presented a review of proposed changes to parcels in North Whitehall Township's ASA program, as part of its mandatory seven-year review. The Township has identified 31 properties, totaling 169.3 acres, to be reviewed due to evidence that these parcels have been changed to residential or other

non-agricultural uses. This determination was made in consultation with the Lehigh County Farmland Preservation Office. The LVPC staff conducted a 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. Staff then requested and received supplemental information to clarify its reasoning for recommending removal of some parcels, which still appeared to be in agriculture use. Mr. Martinez said that it is the LVPC'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 Glickman 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 Klusaritz abstained.

## **TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

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

Transportation Committee Chair Kent Herman summarized the Committee meeting that occurred hours before including the *Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan*, a presentation on the Hill-to-Hill Bridge Rehabilitation project, and an update on various multimodal transportation fund projects.

### ***ACTION ITEM: East Clay Street from North Wall Street to Club Avenue – Street Vacation Petition Review***

Mr. Hite presented a proposed street vacation petition for vacating East Clay Street from North Wall Street to Club Avenue between the parking lot for Union Beverages and the adjacent residential properties to the south. The proposed street vacation application was submitted to the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission by the City of Allentown on behalf of Nikhil Oza equitable owner of 906 Club Avenue d/b/a/ Orpat Club LLC. Mr. Hite noted that East Clay Street, the location petitioned to have rights-of-way vacated, is an unimproved previously plotted street that was never constructed. The location is currently maintained by property owners and is essentially landscaping and unimproved rights of way. The petitioner indicates that the area has not been used for more than 50 years and consists of 12 feet of right of way width and approximately 200 feet in length. The petitioner's property is shown in the blue box, The street vacation petition was not co-signed by the adjoining property owners of 832 Club Avenue and 833 North Wall Street. If the petition is granted by the city, the city should consider sidewalk mobility infrastructure in coordination with requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). There is currently a curb cut access for the rights of way for East Clay Street that is not compliant along Club Avenue at the frontage to the portion of East Clay Street to be vacated.

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.

Chair Amato asked if the two property owners that did not sign off did so because this vacation could potentially affect their property values. Commissioner Herman stated that it could be for a variety of reasons and Mr. Hite added that sometimes it is because the property owners are not aware of the petition. The neighbors will be notified since this petition will go to Allentown City Council.

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

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### ***INFORMATION ITEMS: Activity Reports***

Mr. Dinkel presented the Monthly Traffic Report, which featured a counter on Route 22 between Airport Road and the Fullerton Avenue Exit, which recorded 102,763 vehicles. Interstate 78, just east of Route 309, recorded 86,549 and Route 309 near Coopersburg logged 38,319 vehicles.

Next, Mr. Hite presented commercial truck traffic. Route 33 between Newburg Road and State Route 248 recorded 11,326 trucks and Route 22 recorded 11,132 trucks.

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

Ms. Seitz presented the Monthly Subdivision Report that featured 11 Subdivisions, 31 Development proposals, 15 Stormwater Management reviews, and five Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 62 reviews over 473.7 acres. 36 of those reviews were in Lehigh County and 26 were in Northampton County.

Ms. Seitz added that the LVPC reviewed 861 total residential units, consisting of 21 single-family detached, 230 townhouses, 403 apartments, 201 condos and six twins. On the non-residential side, it was presented that the LVPC reviewed a total of 281,843 square-feet, which included 66,000 square-feet of commercial, 30,000 square-feet of transportation from a parking lot in the City of Bethlehem, a 99,000 square-foot agricultural project in Lynn Township, and an 87,000 square-foot expansion of the Ecopax facility in the City of Bethlehem.

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

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

##### ***INFORMATION ITEM: September Full Commission Meeting In Person Reminder***

Mr. Dotta reminded the Commission that September's Full Commission Meeting will be in person only at LVPC's new office at 615 Waterfront Drive in Allentown. Ms. Bradley briefly discussed parking options for the Commissioners and noted that Transportation Committee chose to hold their meeting that occurs at 5:30 pm hybrid. Ms. Bradley noted that 615 Waterfront Drive sometimes does not show in GPS and that if Commissioners choose to park in the gated area that they will need to get their parking validated so they do not need to pay.

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

##### ***INFORMATION ITEM: Request For Proposals (RFP) Update***

Mr. Greenly presented an update on the current requests for proposals out for various office projects. The RFPs included electronic plan submission system, organizational strategic plan, copier, open end planning, engineering and landscape architecture services, project selection and prioritization system, and Route 22 improvements plan.

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

##### ***EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Housing Supply and Attainability Strategy Kick-Off***

Ms. Bradley briefed the Commission on the kick-off of LVPC's Housing Supply and Attainability Strategy that occurred at the LVPC office earlier in the month. A short history was provided to give context of the importance of the strategy. The project overview of the business plan was discussed and a few of the expected next steps were highlighted.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked if a potential outcome would be draft or template ordinances for municipalities. Ms. Bradley answered that is not the intent of the strategy but there will be resources for municipalities to reference. It was discussed that a product of the Valley's population growth makes drafting regional model ordinances difficult because each community has different needs. The strategy's goal is to identify what type of housing can go where and provide an econometric analysis.

Chair Amato asked if the strategy include cost of public services. Ms. Bradley answered that it will be a component of the strategy and will be included in the broader conversation of housing needs.

#### **COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

##### ***INFORMATION ITEM: LVPC Morning Call Column***

Mr. Assad presented about the most recent Morning Call Column that ran Sunday, July 28, and focused on the many changes the region has been seeing in recent years, but with a special focus on the effort to develop a Lehigh Valley Housing Supply and Attainability Strategy. Becky wrote about the partnership with Lehigh County to determine not only how much housing is needed, but what types, at what price point and where it should go. The column also focused on how that particular issue has become polarizing and the need to have a civil public discourse through this process. That column is now available at LVPC.org and 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 about major changes in the development and transportation landscape across the Lehigh Valley, in the form of bigger and taller buildings and the kinds of large developments that challenge our existing transportation infrastructure. The show featured LVPC Chief Community Planner Jill Seitz. That show is now streaming at LVPC.org and WDIY.org.

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

##### ***INFORMATION ITEM: GBU Embodied Carbon: Alternatives to Construction Today***

Mr. Assad notified the Commission of an upcoming Green Buildings United event on September 6<sup>th</sup> at the ATAS International Inc. headquarters in Allentown. The hybrid event covers topics such as alternative construction materials and methods to reduce carbon emissions in the built environment.

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

##### ***INFORMATION ITEM: Department of Community and Economic Development Multimodal Transportation Fund***

Mr. Assad presented the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program which was created to advance community-centered transportation connection projects and help people get better access to daily needs such as work, education, healthcare, food, nature and recreation. It targets disadvantaged communities and is offering more than \$600 million over the next three years for planning, technical assistance and even construction. The deadline is September 30.

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 August 27 there is Geographic Information System (GIS) Basics, September 4 Curves on Local Roads, September 10 Traffic Signals Basics, and September 11 ADA Transition Plans and Evaluations. All 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 to be held IN Person at the LVPC offices at 615 Waterfront Drive, Suite 201 in Allentown on Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm. Chair Amato then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Molchany made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Elbich seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

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