



Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

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Vice Chair

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Treasurer

BECKY A. BRADLEY, AICP
Executive Director

LEHIGH VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes from the Thursday, September 26, 2024 In-Person 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

Michael Drabensstott, Bob Elbich, Sunny Ghai, Philip Ginder, Steve Glickman, Kent Herman, John Inglis, Dennis Klusaritz, Christina Morgan, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt

Northampton County

Christopher Amato, Andrew Elliott, Charles Elliott, John Gallagher, Judith Haldeman, Darlene Heller, John McGorry, Scott Minnich, Armando Moritz-Chapelliquen and Jean Versteeg.

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Ron Beitler, Percy Dougherty, Jennifer Gomez, Diane Kelly, Richard Molchany, Santo Napoli, Owen O'Neil, and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

Jessica Cope, Ken Kraft, Rachel Leon, Carl Manges, Lamont McClure, Steve Melnick, Edward Nelson, Salvatore Panto, Jr., J. William Reynolds, Grace Crampsie Smith and Tina Smith.

Staff Present: Joey Dotta, Jill Seitz, Scott Greenly, Becky Bradley, Christian Martinez, Corinne Ruggiero, Mackenzie Geisner, Denjam Khadka, Angela Ellis, Evan Gardi, Ben Dinkel, Tracy Oscavich, Hannah Milagio and Matt Assad.

Public Present: Jay Bradley, Mike Siegel, Joann Mertz, and Sue McGorry

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

Mr. Mike Siegel, a part-time Planning Consultant for Lowhill Township, spoke to notify the LVPC that a request has been received to change the Act 537 Plan for Lowhill Township. Mr. Siegel emphasized the importance of the existing plan and need for continued conservation. He said that he was sent on behalf of Lowhill Township to request the LVPC provide comments to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in response to the request to change the Act 537 Plan. Comments need to be received by October 28, 2024. Mr. Siegel stated that Lowhill Township denied the sewer modules two months ago and responses are trying to urge the Township to bring in public water and sewer.

Chair Amato asked if the addition of public water and sewer require mandatory hookups for adjacent residents. There was a brief discussion about the costs associated with connecting with an existing system. Chair Amato followed up to ask how the LVPC can best respond to this request. Ms. Bradley told Mr. Siegel that the LVPC would follow up as soon as possible and that DEP is a respected partner. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked if formal action needed to be taken, and it was decided that it

was not necessary. Commissioner Morgan asked if Ms. Bradley could clarify Mr. Siegel's comments regarding letters in 2022 not matching letters in 2023. Ms. Bradley clarified that both letters stated deficiencies, but the 2022 letters did not specifically state that the project is inconsistent with *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. The 2022 letters still noted the many ways the project fell short in fulfilling the intent of *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*, but the word "inconsistent" was not explicitly stated.

Mr. Siegel asked if the LVPC could send a response to DEP that the developer's request is inconsistent, and Ms. Bradley stated that the LVPC would review what was filed.

Commissioner Glickman brought to the Commission's attention a museum exhibit by the Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society. The exhibit is called Warehouse Valley: A Changing Landscape and more information can be found here (<https://sigalmuseum.org/exhibits/>).

Chair Amato lastly mentioned that there are members of the Commission that are sick and in need of positive support from the rest of the Commission.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Amato welcomed the Commissioners to the new office and led an ice breaker where each Commissioner introduced themselves and detailed their favorite spot in the Lehigh Valley.

MINUTES

Chair Amato stated that the minutes of the Thursday, August 22, 2024, LVPC meeting are attached. Chair Amato asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Commissioner Repasch made a motion to approve the minutes and Commissioner Glickman seconded the motion.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. There were none. The motion passed. Commissioners Charles Elliott and Morgan abstained.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: City of Allentown – Land Use of Regional Significance – Executive Education Academy Charter School Field House Addition

Ms. Seitz presented a proposal to construct a 982-square-foot addition to the Executive Education Academy Charter School Field House, to be used as storage space. The site is located at 555 Union Boulevard.

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

Commissioner Glickman asked why this project qualifies as a Land Use of Regional Significance (LURS) and it was answered that all education facilities are reviewed as a LURS.

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

ACTION ITEM: Lowhill Township – Land Use of Regional Significance – Kernsville Road Industrial

Mr. Dotta presented a proposal to construct a 100,569-square-foot warehouse at 7503 Kernsville Road. The project site was previously reviewed by the LVPC in June 2023. The 2023 proposal was for a 190,960-square-foot warehouse/distribution center and the current proposal reduces the original building square footage by 47%. The scale of the proposed development, over 100,000 square-feet and 45 feet in height, greatly surpasses the scale of surrounding developments. Due to incompatibility with the context of the area and neighboring land uses, lack of transportation and utility infrastructure, and environmental concerns, the development as proposed is found to be inconsistent with the goals and policies outlined in *FutureLV: The Regional Plan*. It is strongly recommended that the developer update the previously submitted Transportation Impact Study with the current proposed size of the facility and impacts to the transportation network.

While the Township recently updated the Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan with Weisenberg, Lynn, Heidelberg, and Washington (Lehigh County) Townships and Slatington Borough and is very close to completing the update of its zoning code and official map, this proposal was submitted to the Township prior to changes. The new plan and anticipated zoning code and official map updates should address incompatible proposals, like this, however, at this time the current codes stand.

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.

Commissioner Elbich stated concerns regarding the intersections surrounding the development that truck traffic would be forced to use. Commissioner Ghai stated concerns regarding the proximity of the proposed development and the nearby daycare. Commissioner Klusaritz seconded Commissioner Ghai's point about noise and the potential to require landscape buffering to mitigate the impact. Chair Amato added that the development raises concerns.

Mr. Siegel added that there are additional concerns like that the daycare pickup times conflict with common delivery times for truck traffic. It was noted that PennDOT has not given the Township their plan yet. Mr. Siegel stated that Dollar General intends to use the same driveway entrance as the proposed warehouse. It was added that there are no climbing lanes along Route 100 and aggravates drivers. There was another request to alleviate traffic timing on the intersection of Route 100 and Kernsville Road.

Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen mentioned the recent warehouse series featured on the news and how it highlights the sometimes-under-appreciated work of the Commission in equipping municipalities to fight warehouse proliferation.

There was a brief discussion of the location of the stormwater management facilities on the plan. Ms. Bradley noted the discrepancy of the timeline of which the plans were submitted to the Township and LVPC. The delay was stated to be a disregard for the public process.

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

ACTION ITEM: Weisenberg Township – Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Map Update

Ms. Seitz presented a comprehensive update to the Weisenberg Township Zoning Ordinance and Map, following the recent adoption of the updated Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, also known as Plan Northern Lehigh. The proposed Zoning Ordinance and Map align with numerous goals and policies of *FutureLV* and Plan Northern Lehigh, including the identified growth and preservation areas of both plans. The comments provided in the letter are recommendations intended to further strengthen the Township's ordinance and maps and support the achievement of the Township's goals as outlined in Plan Northern Lehigh, including considerations for strategically meeting housing needs while ensuring adequate utility and services are provided, freight land use management, and environmental conservation.

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

ACTION ITEM: Weisenberg Township – Official Map

Ms. Seitz presented Weisenberg Township's Draft Official Map which identifies publicly owned lands, which serves to preserve recreational, cultural, historical and scenic assets. The Draft Official Map also identifies multimodal connectivity for bike/walking lane/path, which strengthens sidewalk, bike route and trail infrastructure.

Identifying or specifying features including public parks and recreation areas, transportation improvement projects and preserved farmland areas would further strengthen the Township's Draft Official Map and support goals of Plan Northern Lehigh.

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.

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

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: Act 537 Special Study Update Review - Bangor Borough Sewer Authority and Washington Township Corrective Action Plan

Ms. Ruggiero presented the Bangor Borough Sewer Authority (BBSA) draft of a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address excessive flows at its wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) and hydraulic overload in its collection system, which have led to permit violations and sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). Previous efforts in their 2019 Corrective Action Plan were only partially successful in reducing overload conditions to the WWTP and not successful in eliminating sanitary sewer overflows. This new CAP aims to implement immediate action to reduce flows to their WWTP, establish monitoring protocols and develop a long-term maintenance program. BBSA will conduct inspections for all users including property transfers and rental inspections to prevent illegal connections as well as provide education to the public of the detrimental effects of illegal connections to the sewer system. Additional measures include manhole and sewer main video inspections, a fourth and fifth monitoring point (which includes one at the upcoming Walnut Street Pump Station). To address aging infrastructure and future needs, BBSA has also prepared a Capital Improvements Study for the WWTP.

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

There was a question of considerations the flow from the stream and its effect on infrastructure. Ms. Ruggiero responded that it was not addressed in this capital plan.

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

ACTION ITEM: Act 537 Review – Bethlehem Township Sewage Facilities Plan Update

Ms. Ruggiero presented a Sewage Facilities Plan Update by Bethlehem Township. The purpose of the plan is to address requirements to meet the sanitary sewer needs of the Township for those areas designated for future development or areas not currently served by the collection and conveyance system. Much of the Township is served by public sewer facilities and a small portion of the Township is served by on-lot disposal systems (OLDS). However, this draft Act 537 Plan considers the remaining parcels currently served by OLDS as areas to receive public sanitary sewer service extensions.

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

Chair Amato asked if this would make it compulsory for residents to hook up to public systems rather than existing on-lot systems. Ms. Ruggiero responded that residents will be given the option.

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

ACTION ITEM: Zoning Amendment Well Permitting Ordinance – Upper Mount Bethel Township

Mr. Martinez presented a well permitting ordinance zoning amendment from Upper Mount Bethel Township. The Township’s Well Permitting Ordinance includes provisions that protect the quality and quantity of the water resources of Upper Mount Bethel Township by requiring the permitting and implementing construction standards of new wells and modifications to existing wells, along with administrative provisions to enforce the ordinance. Ordinance is consistent with recommendations in LVPC’s 2002 Water Supply Assessment Report. The LVPC recommends adding the term, “Production Well” to the definitions section and suggests adding a more detailed description of the Well Enforcement Officer’s duties and responsibilities in the Enforcement section (Section H.3).

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the staff comments. Commissioner Minnich 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 Klusaritz abstained.

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Environment Committee Chair Repasch briefed the Commission on the Environment Committee Summary Sheet that featured a review of the Lehigh County Authority – Preliminary Capital Plan (2025-2029).

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the summary sheet. Commissioner Drabenstott made the motion, and Commissioner Andrew Elliott seconded the motion. Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

There was a brief discussion of the expected timeline and the financials of what a project of this scale would cost. Commissioner Repasch referenced a previous Full Commission meeting where Liesel Gross presented information about Kline Island Sewer System.

Chair Amato called for affirmative votes to accept the staff comments. The motion passed. Commissioners Ghai, Herman, Klusaritz and Morgan abstained.

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

INFORMATION ITEM: Happy 70th Birthday to Route 22, the Lehigh Valley Thruway

Mr. Assad presented a brief informational item about the 70th Birthday of Route 22. A few facts were shared about the thruway and a picture was shown from 1954.

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

***INFORMATION ITEM: Project Updates
Human Services Transportation (HST)***

Mr. Dinkel presented an update on the HST. Two weeks prior, human service providers in the Lehigh Valley shared their organizations’ challenges and issues as they related to the transportation needs of seniors and people with disabilities, and opportunities to address them.

At the next workshop, on October 16th, draft policies and strategies will be presented to give attendees the opportunity to comment on and expand the list. Mr. Dinkel said it will help refine the work so it can be presented as a complete draft plan at the 3rd WorkshopLV, scheduled for November 13th. It was mentioned that it’s the intent that LVTS adopt the HST.

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

Eastern Pennsylvania Freight Alliance (EPFA) Freight Infrastructure Plan

Mr. Gardi described the Freight Infrastructure Plan as part of a multi-region collaborative effort. The Eastern PA Freight Alliance consists of five Metropolitan Planning Organizations and extends from the Scranton-Wilkes Barre area all the way down to Lebanon County and all the way across the Lehigh Valley, covering 10 counties and 400 municipalities. Mr. Gardi noted that meetings have been held regularly and a draft plan was sent out for review earlier this week.

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

OLD BUSINESS:

INFORMATION ITEM: 2024 Innovation & Collaboration Award - Government Awardee from the Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin (WRA)

Ms. Bradley recapped the recent awards event held by Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin the week prior. She explained the commission won the award for its protection of the environment, and more recently for its Priority Climate Action Plan. Ms. Bradley thanked everyone involved and handed out the trophy for the Commission to look at.

INFORMATION ITEM: US Environmental Protection Agency, Climate Pollution Reduction Program Milestone: Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Mr. Greenly recapped the Greater Lehigh Valley Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory formal release during a news conference attended by municipal partners, community leaders and members of the media. In addition to a presentation by Becky Bradley and Christian Martinez, County Executive Armstrong and Bethlehem Mayor J. William Reynolds spoke on the importance of regional climate action and how this plan accelerates all the work being done in places like Allentown, Bethlehem, Easton and communities across the region. The GHG inventory is an important step in the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan (CCAP) process and expands on the Lehigh Valley Green House Gas Inventory completed by LVPC in 2022 with the addition of Carbon County, PA, and Warren County, NJ, which are within the Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton PA-NJ Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA).

Mr. Martinez detailed some data from all major emissions sectors. Of the sectors, industrial and transportation account for just under 2/3 of all regional emissions and the inventory is on MSA level. The overwhelming majority of emissions are from Lehigh and Northampton Counties.

Mr. Greenly closed out that the overall timeline started with the Priority Climate Action Plan, then the Greenhouse Gas Inventory, and finally will conclude with the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Ms. Bradley further explained the level of detail required to make a Comprehensive Climate Action Plan and the projects that proceed it. Another key part of the project will be measuring and monitoring greenhouse gas emissions. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked a clarifying question regarding transportation emissions in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Martinez confirmed it counts both industrial buildings and the vehicle emissions that serve it. Mr. Martinez referenced a tool from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Ms. Bradley highlighted the projections if we continue business as usual and the potential detrimental effects. Commissioner Drabenstott inquired about the outcome of the culmination of the three plans. Ms. Bradley responded that the Comprehensive Climate Action Plan will be the policy document of the three and is required by the EPA. There was a general discussion about tying carbon monitoring and land uses. Ms. Bradley emphasized the project importance in helping communities apply for grant funding.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ITEM: Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Dotta notified the Commission that the Plan Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan has entered the 45-day review period and will end on October 28. The Plan highlights common goals and policies for coordinated growth in the Slate Belt while preserving its current character.

Ms. Geisner added that an online map accompanies the Plan and will be available for the municipalities to use to inform land use planning. Ms. Geisner demonstrated the features of the online map. The digital map breaks down the printed static maps and adds important information like community services and infrastructure.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

Ms. Bradley emphasized the pioneering that was required to formulate the maps in the Plan. There was general praise for the LVPC staff. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked if it will be on a municipality's website. Ms. Bradley responded that it would live on the Slate Belt website and can be linked on the municipality's website.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ITEM: River Central Multi-Municipal Zoning Codes and Official Maps

Ms. Seitz gave an update on the five communities of the River Central area which adopted their first-ever multi-municipal comprehensive plan in the fall of last year. The LVPC was the planning consultant guiding the municipalities through the development of that plan, and now those municipalities have all contracted with a single consultant to simultaneously update each community's individual zoning ordinances and create official maps. That effort kicked off just a couple weeks ago with their first official meeting, and we are looking forward to continuing to be a partner at the table supporting the communities the whole way.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ITEM: Northern Lehigh Multi-Municipal Zoning Codes and Official Maps

Ms. Seitz gave another update on PlanNL which was recently adopted by all six communities at the end of 2022. The communities have already been working together with a single consultant to update their zoning ordinances, zoning maps and create new official maps in a coordinated effort. LVPC has been a partner from the beginning of the project, and earlier the third draft ordinance and map were reviewed. For the remaining municipalities, it is anticipated that Lowhill Township will be reviewed next month, and Lynn and Heidelberg will follow the month after that.

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

INFORMATION ITEM: Monthly Activity Reports

Chair Amato stated that the monthly activity reports could be found in the packet and asked for any questions. There were none.

NEW BUSINESS:

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ITEM: U.S. Treasury and Governor's Office of Critical Investment Elective Pay Program

Mr. Assad talked about a meeting with the US Department of Treasury and Governor's Office of Critical Investments about a grant program for some of our municipal, non-profit and public authority partners. US Treasury's Sr. Advisor for Policy David R. Eichenthal, and Philip Ehring from Governor Shapiro's office, asked if the LVPC could fill a room with the kinds of organizations who could take advantage of the Elective Pay Program. With elective pay, tax-exempt and governmental entities that do not owe Federal income taxes are, for the first time, are able to receive a payment equal to the full value of tax credits for building or investing in clean energy projects. This is money from the Inflation Reduction Act and it's not a competitive grant program.

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ITEM: LVPC Website Project

Ms. Beasley updated the Commission about the LVPC website undergoing a complete redo that started taking place early this year. This website rebrand will increase the effectiveness of the work of the

Commission across the board. Ms. Bradley gave a brief history of what has happened and why the website needs updating.

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ITEM: Lehigh Valley Government Academy Education Opportunities Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP)

Mr. Hite briefed the Commission on upcoming training opportunities under the Lehigh Valley Government Academy. There were four Local Technical Assistance Program classes discussed, and the dates and times were shared.

Chair Amato asked for any comments or questions. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen asked if school districts would benefit attending and Mr. Hite answered they absolutely would benefit.

Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute (PMPEI)

Ms. Milagio talked about the three PMPEI courses offered in 2024. Over the two courses that have been completed, 54 participants representing 23 municipalities learned about essential processes in the PA Municipal Planning Code. Since 2014, LVPC has connected nearly 450 people with PMPEI training, 98 of whom have completed at least three courses and become Certified Citizen Planners.

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

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Request For Proposals

Ms. Bradley briefed the Commission on the various requests for proposals that are currently in the works or in the process of being contracted. Ms. Bradley stressed the importance of administratively focusing on the work that needs to be done per requirements of the federal government and the agreed workplan.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Chair Amato notified the Commission that items for communications and public engagement are featured in the meeting packet.

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

ADJOURNMENT:

Chair Amato stated that the next LVPC meeting will be virtual on Thursday, October 24 at 7 pm. Chair Amato then asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Morgan made a motion to adjourn and Commissioner Repasch seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Submitted by:

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