



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, October 24, 2024, In-Person Meeting

The LVPC held a virtual public meeting on Thursday, October 24, 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 Drabenstott, Bob Elbich, Sunny Ghai, Philip Ginder, Steve Glickman, Jennifer Gomez, John Inglis, Richard Molchany, Christina Morgan, Owen O'Neil, Stephen Repasch and Kevin Schmidt

Northampton County

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

Members Absent:

Lehigh County

Phillips Armstrong, Ron Beitler, Percy Dougherty, Kent Herman, Diane Kelly, Dennis Klusaritz, Santo Napoli, and Matthew Tuerk.

Northampton County

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

Staff Present: Joey Dotta, Jill Seitz, Scott Greenly, Becky Bradley, Humaira Nabeela, Samantha Pearson and Matt Assad.

Public Present: Phil Gianficaro (Lehighvalleynews.com), Chris Trachte, Mike Siegel and Charles Dietrich

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

There was none.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Amato welcomed two new members of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission staff. Chief Transportation Planner, Humaira Nabeela, and Director of Development, Samantha Pearson. Each introduced themselves.

MINUTES

Chair Amato stated that the minutes of the Thursday, September 26, 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 Ghai seconded the motion.

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

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: South Whitehall Township – Land Use of Regional Significance - Parkland School District Phase 4

Mr. Dotta presented a proposal to expand a parking lot from 28 to 71 spaces and improve paving at the southern maintenance building at 2619 Stadium Drive. The development is the Parkland School District Operations Center and is adjacent to Orefield Middle School.

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.

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

ACTION ITEM: Comprehensive Planning Committee Summary Sheet

Commissioner Morgan briefed the Commission on the Comprehensive Committee Summary Sheet that featured a review of the Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, Upper Nazareth Township's Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Map Update, and a Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance and Map Update and the Draft Official Map both for Lowhill Township.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the summary sheet. Commissioner Manges made the motion, and Commissioner Charles Elliott 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.

JOINT ENVIRONMENT AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: Lowhill Township – Private Request to Revise Official Act 537 Plan

Ms. Seitz presented a review of a private request to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to amend Lowhill Township's Act 537 Plan related to utilities to serve a development. Private requests such as these are administered under DEP regulations, Title 25 of the Pennsylvania Code, Chapter 71 Section 14. The LVPC was notified and invited to comment on the correspondence received by DEP from the applicant, requesting DEP to order Lowhill Township to revise its Official Sewage Facilities Plan by issuing a resolution of approval for the Sewage Facilities Planning Module submitted by the applicant for the property located at 2951 Betz Court.

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

Chair Amato thanked the LVPC staff for the review and expressed his interest in what the Commission has to say. Commissioner Elbich asked a clarifying question about the presented map on the slideshow presentation and Ms. Seitz confirmed the location of the other proposed warehouses. Commissioner McGorry asked what Lowhill Township thinks about the private request. Ms. Bradley noted that this issue is unique since the developer went directly to the DEP and is novel for the developer to circumvent the public process.

Commissioner Charles Elliott asked if the Commission be kept updated on the status of the disposition of the project. Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen thanked the Township staff for reaching out to the LVPC for this review. Commissioner Glickman thanked the LVPC staff and asked if representatives for the developer were in attendance. There was none.

Ms. Myerov clarified that the LVPC did receive an Act 537 review related to this project earlier in the year.

Commissioner Repasch highlighted the hard work putting together both *FutureLV: The Regional Plan* and *Plan Northern Lehigh*. It was emphasized that those plans are important and projects like this one contrast with years of work from our community.

Mr. Siegel thanked everyone for their comments and said that the Township is against this proposal. He emphasized the importance of *Plan Northern Lehigh*, the plethora of nearby natural resources and that Lowhill Township is the breadbasket of the Lehigh Valley. Lowhill Supervisor Dietrich seconded Mr. Siegel's sentiments and further explained what compelled the developer to submit this request with the State. It was stated that Lowhill will reference LVPC's vote in their response. Commissioner Minnich asked if the letter will be sent to the Township, and it was answered yes. Chair Amato asked if anyone representing the applicant was at the meeting, and there was no reply.

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

ACTION ITEM: Lower Nazareth Township – Land Development - Apartments at Evergreen Farms

Ms. Seitz presented a proposal to construct six garden apartment buildings totaling 144 apartment units and a 2,800-square-foot community center, to be served by on-lot sewer, located on Nazareth Pike (Route 191) and Newburg Road. This 61-acre lot is undeveloped agricultural land. The project site lacks necessary public utility infrastructure to accommodate the scale of the proposal. Public sewer access is not available, resulting in half of the site being used to accommodate septic systems serving the development. Nine primary septic areas are proposed, totaling 101,100 square feet, and five replacement septic areas are proposed, totaling 32,500 square feet. Another potential issue for this development is the presence of sinkholes.

Ms. Bradley noted that the Transportation Impact Study (TIS) is severely inaccurate based on the development plans that were submitted. It is critical that additional development, in an already congested corridor, does not exacerbate existing issues or undo the positive impact of designed, and funded transportation improvements. Any development-related frontage improvements along Nazareth Pike and Newburg Road at access points must be coordinated. In addition, any mitigation and enhancement of the PennDOT project at the intersection of Nazareth Pike and Daniels Drive with Hecktown Road should be considered, Ms. Bradley added. The real cost of the proposed development's impact on the transportation system should be borne by the developer and not the public.

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.

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: Environment Committee Summary Sheet

Environment Committee Chair Repasch briefed the Commission on the Environment Committee Summary Sheet that featured a review of one Delaware River Basin Commission item involving a wastewater treatment plant renewal in Lehigh Township.

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

Commissioner Ghai offered a small clarification of the name of a nearby road.

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

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

ACTION ITEM: Transportation Committee Summary Sheet

Transportation Committee Vice Chair O'Neil briefed the Commission on the Transportation Committee Summary Sheet that featured two reviews for street vacations in the City of Allentown.

Chair Amato called for a motion to accept the summary sheet. Commissioner Molchany made the motion, and Commissioner Moritz-Chapelliquen 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.

OLD BUSINESS:

INFORMATION ITEM: Monthly Activity Reports

Ms. Nabeela presented the Monthly Traffic Report that featured the active continuous traffic counters in operation in the Lehigh Valley at the end of September. The total vehicle traffic and vehicle traffic counts were presented.

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

Mr. Dotta presented the Monthly Subdivision, Land Development, Stormwater, and Municipal Ordinance/Plans Report. In September, the LVPC reviewed eight Subdivisions, 18 Development proposals, 14 Stormwater Management reviews, and two Municipal Ordinances and Maps for a total of 42 reviews over 216 acres. 18 of those reviews were in Lehigh County and 24 were in Northampton County. It was presented that the LVPC reviewed 318 total units of residential and 137,735 square-feet of non-residential.

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

Ms. Seitz presented the report for the first three quarters of Subdivision, Land Development, Stormwater, and Municipal Ordinance/Plans activity. For the first nine months of 2024, the LVPC has reviewed 115 subdivision plans, 262 development proposals, 150 stormwater management reviews and 34 municipal ordinances, maps and plans for a total of 561 reviews; 224 reviews were in Lehigh County, and over 100 more were in Northampton County at 337. Residential proposals have remained strong and have already surpassed last year's total. This continuous growth from residential proposals is driven by demand that continues to rise with population growth while the region works to catch up to a housing shortage. Non-Residential Square footage this year has been lower than recent years, largely because less industrial and warehouse proposals.

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

NEW BUSINESS:

Chair Amato notified the Commission that there is no New Business to report.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Presentations

Ms. Bradley briefed the Commission on the various presentations that the LVPC staff have given in the community. Ms. Bradley highlighted some upcoming speaking arrangements that the Commission is expected to attend in the coming months.

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 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