

The Northern Lehigh Multi-municipal Comprehensive Plan

Update Meeting

March 3, 2020 – 5:30 PM, Lowhill Township Municipal Building

Steering Committee Attendees:

Dawn Didra – Heidelberg Township
Janice Meyers – Heidelberg Township
Steve Bachman – Heidelberg Township
Robb A. Werley – Lowhill Township
Brian Carl – Lowhill & Weisenberg Townships
Brian Dietrich – Lynn Township
Jason Ruff – Slatington Borough
Todd Weidman – Washington Township
Linda Gorgas – Weisenberg Township
Tony Werley – Weisenberg Township

Members of the Public in Attendance: None

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Charles Doyle – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Bethany Vazquez – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Samantha Smith – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Minutes:

Introductions

Steering Committee attendees took roll call.

Courtesy of the Floor

None this month.

2020 Meeting Dates + Location Confirmation Resolutions

Mr. Doyle asked if the Committee had any recommendations for a new May meeting date and a new location for the November meeting due to scheduling conflicts that arose at February's meeting. The Committee agreed to move the May meeting to the following week on May 12th and to move the November meeting to Heidelberg Township. Both meetings will begin at 5:30 pm. Mr. Carl stated that he will put out an advertisement for the changes.

Goals + Visioning Exercise

Mr. Doyle reviewed the draft goals with the Committee based on feedback from the previous meeting. The Committee reviewed the goals as well as the proposed policies and actions, and offered the following comments:

- I. Goal 1: Protect farmlands and promote local farming as a business
 - a. Policy 1 – Preserve farmland through retention and expansion of family farms
 - b. Policy 2 – Support local farmers

Northern Lehigh Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
October 1, 2019

- i. Action 1 – Encourage the purchase of locally-grown products
 - ii. Action 2 – Promote sustainable agritourism
 - 1. Regarding this action, the committee opts for its removal. Ms. Didra offered alternative language stating “Promote new agricultural uses and support farming by encouraging creative new revenue streams that supplement traditional farm revenues”. The Committee agreed to replace action 2 with Ms. Didra’s suggestion.
 - iii. Action 3 – Protect agricultural lands through preservation and easements
 - 1. Mr. Bachman added that zoning should be a part of this action and suggested the action be changed to read “protect agricultural lands through preservation, easements, and zoning”. The Committee agreed.
- II. Goal 2: Balance preservation and development to maintain and enhance the quality of life
 - a. Policy 1 – Provide for growth of the regional tax base in an environmentally responsible manner in consideration of new governmental income
 - i. Action 1 – Encourage reuse of vacant and underutilized properties
 - ii. Action 2 – Promote adaptive reuse of historic buildings
 - b. Policy 2 – Accommodate an adequate supply of housing to meet the needs of all
 - i. Action 1 – Reduce blight to improve safety and accessibility in the region
 - 1. Mr. Doyle suggested that policy 2 be combined with policy 6, and that action 1 be moved under policy 6.
 - c. Policy 3 – Take appropriate administrative actions for resource protection and enhancement
 - i. Conserve and manage natural lands and water resources
 - 1. The Committee opts to make policy 3 and its action as two actions under policy 6.
 - d. Policy 4 – Take appropriate administrative actions for economic and community development
 - i. Manage growth and development to enhance the borough and preserve rural areas and open space
 - 1. The Committee opts to make policy 4 and its action as two actions under policy 6.
 - e. Policy 5 – Adopt an official map within each municipality.
 - i. Mr. Carl questioned if the municipalities could create a joint official map. Mr. Doyle explained that official maps are a complicated process that not all municipalities may want to incur. The Committee agreed to make policy 5 an action under policy 6 and to rewrite the action to read “consider the adoption of an official map within each municipality”.
 - f. Policy 6 – Encourage appropriate development that is consistent within existing patterns and future land use plan
 - i. Action 1 – Adopt land development techniques to protect existing resources
 - 1. LVPC staff will work on merging the comments for Goal 2 including policy mergers and action creation in order to create a cohesive goal.
 - 2. Mr. Ruff asked that a policy be created regarding supporting appropriate development or redevelopment in villages and centers.

Northern Lehigh Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
October 1, 2019

3. Mr. Ruff suggested that Goal 2 also needs a policy pointing to the enhancement of the quality of life using language regarding bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Mr. Doyle and Ms. Smith suggest language such as “encourage active transportation design and spaces”. Ms. Meyers and Mr. Weidman suggest a rewording of Mr. Doyle and Ms. Smith’s suggestion to read “encourage design + Spaces that promote active transportation”. The Committee agrees.
 - ii. Ms. Didra suggested an action be added under policy 6 regarding the support of historical societies. The action would read “Support efforts of either joint or local historical societies and the creation of joint Environmental Advisory Councils”. The Committee agreed.
 - g. Policy 7 – Encourage pedestrian-oriented design and spaces
 - i. Action 1 – Revitalize walkable historic centers
 1. Mr. Carl suggests that policy 7 be moved to Goal 3 and the action under policy 7 be moved to goal 4.
- III. Goal 3: Support recreational opportunities and enhance natural assets such as existing trails, open space and scenic landscapes
- a. Policy 1 – Protect and preserve natural and scenic resources
 - i. Action 1 – Improve resiliency through natural resource enhancement
 - b. Policy 2 – Adopt land development techniques to provide open space
 - i. The Committee decided to make policy 2 an action under policy 1
 - c. Policy 3 – Use natural recourse assets to maximize potential for recreation and ecotourism
 - i. Action 1 – Promote sustainable stewardship of natural lands, water resources and open space
 - ii. Action 2 – Promote trail and greenway planning
 - iii. Action 3 – Preserve scenic corridors, viewsheds and open space
 - iv. Ms. Didra suggested the addition of an action related to educating the public on recreational opportunities. The proposed action read: “Educate residents about existing recreational opportunities by adding information to newsletters and websites”. Mr. Ruff suggested that the action be edited to read “Educate residents about existing recreational opportunities”, since each municipality has its own communication outlet with its residents. The Committee agreed.
- NOTE: Mr. Carl suggested that the LVPC staff try to tie in open space preservation on top of farming, in reference to forestry lands. The LVPC will work on wording for such a policy.
- IV. Goal 4: Preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Northern Lehigh Region
- a. Policy 1 – Protect, preserve and enhance important historic, architectural and cultural resources
 - i. Action 1 – Encourage historic preservation through revitalization
 - b. Policy 2 – Protect the character of boroughs and crossroad villages
 - i. Action 1 – Maintain regional character by preserving priority natural, historic, cultural, scenic and agricultural assets
 - ii. Action 2 – Enhance the character and economic viability of natural, mineral, cultural and historic assets
 - c. Policy 3 – Support cultural and social programs
 - d. Policy 4 – Create public spaces that reflect and enhance local culture

**Northern Lehigh Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
October 1, 2019**

- i. Ms. Didra suggested that the policy read “encourage the creation of...” rather than “create...”. The Committee agreed.
- V. Goal 5: Manage growth through sustainable infrastructure and transportation investments consistent with existing land use patterns
 - a. Mr. Carl suggested that goal 5 only read “manage growth” and that specifics be addressed in the policies and actions. The Committee agreed. After collaboration on potential policies and actions, Ms. Meyers suggested that Goal five read “Manage growth through sustainable infrastructure”. The Committee agreed.
 - b. Policy 1 – Take appropriate actions for transportation enhancements
 - i. Ms. Smith suggested that the policy read “Monitor transportation needs and take appropriate actions for enhancement”. The Committee agreed.
 - ii. Action 1 – Facilitate the movement of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians through improvements to existing infrastructure
 - iii. Action 2 – Increase pedestrian and vehicular connections to improve efficiency
 - 1. Ms. Meyers suggested that the action read “Improve the efficiency of pedestrian and vehicular connection”. The Committee agreed.
 - c. Policy 2 – Provide safe and well-maintained transportation infrastructure network
 - i. The committee agreed to make policy 2 an action under policy 1
 - d. Policy 3 – Encourage smart design through transportation policies and planning
 - i. Action 1 – Advocate for sustainable, long-term transportation funding solutions at the state and federal levels
 - e. Policy 4 – Begin annual capital improvements planning at the municipal level
 - i. The committee agreed to make policy 4 an action under policy 3
 - f. Policy 5 – Coordinate stormwater management strategies
 - i. The committee agreed to make policy 5 an action under policy 3
 - g. Policy 6 – Promote development only in areas with public sewer and water capacity
 - i. The committee agreed to make policy 6 an action under policy 3
 - h. Mr. Carl suggested the addition of a policy related to monitoring public water and sewer, as well as stormwater, management strategies and capacity. The LVPC team will review wording options.
- VI. Goal 6: Strengthen municipal cooperation by promoting unified policy and planning actions
 - a. The Committee agreed to change goal 6 to read “Strengthen stakeholder cooperation by promoting unified policy and planning actions”.
 - b. Policy 1 – Expand collaboration on planning and development between neighboring communities
 - i. Action 1 – Consider preparation of joint zoning ordinances and maps or update individual municipal zoning ordinances and maps
 - ii. Action 2 – Coordinate land use decisions across municipal boundaries
 - c. Policy 2 – Take appropriate planning actions
 - i. Action 1 – Update municipal subdivision and land development ordinances
 - ii. Action 2 – Encourage village, industrial, and commercial areas to be developed through coordinated and attractive development.
 - 1. Ms. Smith suggested the removal of action 2. The committee agreed.
 - d. Policy 3 – Support economic diversity in the region
 - e. Policy 4 – Improve the regional identity through programs and policy

Northern Lehigh Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
October 1, 2019

- f. Mr. Carl suggested the addition of two policies. The first would be the addition of a policy regarding hazard mitigation. The committee agreed and the LVPC will work on wording. The second suggested policy would be regarding school districts. Mr. Carl stated that the policy would read “Coordinate with school districts and monitor school enrollment, educational trends & impact of land developments”. The committee agreed.
- VII. Goal 7: Promote efficiencies that enhance the education system and emergency services
 - a. The Committee agreed to reword goal 7 to read “Promote safer communities through interagency coordination and cooperation”.
 - b. Policy 1 – Enhance community facilities and services to meet the needs of residents in the region.
 - c. Policy 2 – Begin regular dialog with school districts to improve advanced planning
 - i. Action 1 – Promote education that improves social and economic opportunities
 - ii. The Committee agreed to move policy 2 and its action to goal 6 under Mr. Carl’s suggest.
 - d. Policy 3 – Pursue avenues for economic and community development
 - e. Policy 4 – Implement a circulatory system to increase mobility of elderly and the physically impaired.
 - i. The Committee agreed to remove this policy completely.
 - f. Policy 5 – Enhance planning and emergency response efforts among emergency personnel.
 - i. Mr. Carl suggested two actions to be added under policy 5. The first to read “Support and work with emergency response agencies as the face increased demand for services”. The second to read “Prepare for increased costs in emergency service funding & impact to our community”.

Goals + Visioning Document Review

Mr. Doyle stated that the LVPC staff will have the upcoming document deliverables to the Committee by the April meeting.

Adjournment

The Committee decided to cancel the April Steering Committee meeting and move the May steering Committee meeting to May 12th. Mr. Carl stated that he would advertise the meeting changes.

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by LVPC.