

The Northern Lehigh Multimunicipal Comprehensive Plan

Update Meeting

February 4, 2020 – 5:30 PM, Lowhill Township Municipal Building

Steering Committee Attendees:

Dawn Didra – Heidelberg Township
Tony Werley – Weisenberg Township
Brian Dietrich – Lynn Township
Jason Ruff – Slatington Borough
Todd Weidman – Washington Township

Members of the Public in Attendance: Jen Sutweister and Richard Bleiler

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

Mr. Doyle introduced Ms. Smith from LVPC to the committee as the new Planning Partner. Ms. Smith briefly introduced herself to the planning team. Mr. Ruff asked if the LVPC prepared the summary of the goals from the previous multimunicipal plan, as discussed at the end of 2019. Mr. Doyle explained that the Committee will be reviewing the goals later in the agenda.

2020 Meeting Dates + Location Confirmation

Mr. Doyle asked if the Committee had any changes they would like to make to the meeting calendar. Ms. Didra announced that May 5th is the Pennsylvania Association of Township Officials Conference and stated that most if not all of the committee members will be in attendance at the conference. Mr. Doyle stated that the team will need to look at a new date for May and come back to the committee. Ms. Smith also pointed out that November 3rd is Election Day and asked if the meeting location needed to be changed. The Committee agreed that a new location need to be decided for the November meeting.

Issues & Opportunities Paper

Mr. Doyle gave a brief overview of the Issues and Opportunities website with the Committee. After reviewed, Mr. Doyle asked the Committee if they had any changes or corrections they would like to make. Ms. Didra pointed out minor cosmetic corrections to the site. The Committee agreed that after the cosmetic corrections were made that the LVPC was authorized to release the website for public access.

Goals + Visioning

Mr. Doyle reviewed the draft goals and objectives for the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee offered the following comments as they pertain to each goal:

- I. Goal 1: Protect farmlands and promote local farming as a business
 - a. Mr. Ruff shared a concern regarding the inclusivity of the term “farmland” asking if the term fully encompassed the various types of agricultural lands that may consider themselves farms, though their use may communicate a separate categorization. Mr. Doyle explained that the term could be taken as broadly as the Committee would like, and that specifics would come into the zoning regulations of the municipalities. Ms. Sutweister asked the Committee if horse farms would be included in the term “farmland”. Mr. Ruff and Mr. Werley both stated that there was a difference between agriculture and animal husbandry, and equestrian riding/boarding facilities. Mr. Dietrich conferred stating that there is a difference between agritainment and agritourism uses when defined in zoning regulations. The Committee agreed that use of the lands is important to identify. Mr. Doyle stated that later in the planning process the Committee would need to focus on zoning and the definitions of each use. Mr. Weidman stated that for the purposes of this goal, the term “farmland” is general enough that it encompasses all types of farm use. The Committee agreed and opted to keep the goals language as presented.
- II. Goal 2: Balance preservation and development to maintain and enhance the quality of life
 - a. The Committee approved the goal as presented.
- III. Goal 3: Support recreational opportunities and enhance natural assets such as existing trails, open space and scenic landscapes
 - a. Mr. Doyle stated that the purpose of this goal is to maintain what the municipalities already have rather than pursue attempts to obtain or change assets. The Committee agreed with Mr. Doyle and approved the goal as presented.
- IV. Goal 4: Preserve the historical and cultural heritage of the Northern Lehigh Region
 - a. The Committee approved the goal as presented.
- V. Goal 5: Manage growth through sustainable transportation and infrastructure investments consistent with existing land use patterns
 - a. Ms. Sutweister asked the Committee what “sustainable transportation” meant. Mr. Doyle gave a brief explanation of the term. Mr. Ruff suggested that “sustainable transportation” may not be the correct term and instead just keep the term “infrastructure” in the goal to now read “manage growth through infrastructure investments consistent with existing land use patterns”. Ms. Smith suggested that rather than changing the goal, would the Committee entertain the idea of switch the terms “transportation” and “infrastructure” to have the goal read “manage growth through sustainable infrastructure and transportation investments consistent with existing land use patterns”. Ms. Didra conferred with Ms. Smith stating that it is important for the document to be understood by the entire public, not just planners. The Committee agreed to swap the terms to reflect Ms. Smith’s suggestion.
- VI. Goal 6: Strengthen municipal cooperation by promoting unified policy and planning actions
 - a. Mr. Ruff stated that the goal’s expression of strengthening the region is commendable and ensures that the plan operates as it is purposed rather than

leaving room for municipalities to have separate items that do not inevitably join together in unity. The Committee agrees and approves the goal as presented.

- VII. Goal 7: Promote efficiencies that enhance the education system and emergency services
- a. Mr. Ruff stated that goal seven does not seem to fit with the other goals mentioned. Mr. Doyle explained that goal seven stemmed from community concerns regarding decreased volunteerism and its implications to emergency service functions. Ms. Didra suggested that goal seven be separated to individually reflect goals for education and emergency services. Mr. Ruff conferred stating that because of their separate tax districts, the educational system requires a different type of reliance on municipal function. Mr. Doyle suggested that the Committee look at ways to promote opportunities to collaborate with the school districts. Ms. Smith suggested that the goal's wording be changed to state "promote interagency coordination and cooperation" and then the Committee could breakdown specifics when looking at the creation of policies and actions. The Committee agreed.

Mr. Doyle thanked the Committee for their input and continued by stating the importance to committing and maintaining institutional inner circles. Mr. Doyle spoke on the region's communities' passion and engagement levels and the encouragement of the numbers in comparison to other regions in the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Doyle closed the conversation by confirming with the Committee that, after the changes to the goals are made, the website was good for publication. The Committee agreed and asked if a physical copy of the Issues and Opportunities paper would be distributed to the members. Mr. Doyle stated that he would look into that possibility and report back to the Committee.

Adjournment

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by LVPC.