

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT

January 4, 2023 – 7 PM, Virtual Steering Committee Meeting

Steering Committee Attendees:

Bangor:	Steve Reider, Marissa Donnelly, James Kresge
East Bangor:	Jason Huggan
Lower Mount Bethel:	Jen Smethers, Susan Disidore, Sandra Newman
Pen Argyl:	Robin Zmoda, Janell Connolly
Plainfield:	Terry Kleintop, Jane Mellert, Don Moore
Portland:	Lance Prator, Heather Fischer, Stephanie Steele
Roseto:	
Upper Mount Bethel:	David Friedman
Washington:	Justin Huratiak
Wind Gap:	Louise Firestone

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Millie Beahn – Plainfield
Judy Henckel – Upper Mount Bethel
Wesley Smith – Wind Gap

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Becky Bradley – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Marek Tomanek – Northampton County

Roll Call

Ms. Rockwell called roll. All municipalities, except Roseto, were in attendance.

Minutes from the December 7, 2022 Meeting

Ms. Zmoda called for a motion to approve the minutes from the December 7, 2022 meeting. Ms. Newman made the motion. Ms. Mellert seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Old Business

1. Status of Municipal Public Meetings

Public meetings have been held at all municipalities except Plainfield Township, which is yet to be scheduled.

2. Comments/questions received to date

Ms. Bradley discussed the summary of comments and questions received from the public meetings held through January 3, 2023 that were provided in the packet. She said that the Plainfield meeting was not a public meeting but a Township subcommittee meeting and provided a summary of the discussion. From the discussion with the subcommittee, the LVPC agreed to the following:

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- Look into, along with the Township, municipal authorities' capacity and how it is addressed in the Future Land Use Plan.
- Track changes for the next draft.
- Include the Issues and Opportunities report as a data companion to the plan.
- Add more detailed demographic data at the front end of the plan.
- Review the Southwestern Lehigh County (SWL) Comprehensive Plan to see where more detail can be added to the Slate Belt Plan related to the Future Land Use Plan. Ms. Bradley said she will discuss more on this topic later in the meeting.
- Add the existing Roseto and Washington Comprehensive Plans to the website.
- Look into Act 537 Plan update needs.
- Look into solid waste planning.
- Compile different versions of a plan implementation agreement, which is required by the Municipalities Planning Code indicating how communities will work together, and provide them to the steering committee.

Ms. Bradley said implementation agreements are started once the draft plan is done. She has seen adoption of an agreement done both ways. The SWL municipalities adopted one at the same time as adoption of the comprehensive plan. Northern Lehigh and Nazareth Area municipalities adopted the plan first and are now finalizing the agreement. She said there is no right or wrong way to do it. She recommends waiting until the final plan draft is completed. Then the municipalities can start working on the agreement during the 45-day comment period.

Ms. Bradley discussed what went into developing the Slate Belt Future Land Use Plan. She displayed a graphic of the Land-Use Conflict Identification Strategy (LUCIS) that was included in the packet and described the three input layers in the model: Natural Features, Agriculture and Development. The Natural Features are the character-defining areas of the Future Land Use Plan. The Agriculture layer is the Farmland Preservation area and the Development layer is the gray area. The LUCIS graphic will be refined for the Slate Belt Plan since more data is available now. Also included in the packet are relevant sections from the SWL Plan that Plainfield liked, describing how their Future Land Use Plan was developed. The SWL land use categories are similar to those already in the Slate Belt Plan, but we can make the map development process clearer in the final plan.

Ms. Bradley displayed the SWL Future Land Use Plan. She said Plainfield wanted a higher level of detail in the Slate Belt Plan. She said if we go this route, it will take about six weeks. We will have to go parcel by parcel, see how it ties into FutureLV and how it aligns with the various areas. She noted that the SWL Plan does not have a Preservation Buffer. She asked the committee what they wanted to do.

Mr. Moore said it was previously mentioned how the group wanted to be more general with the Future Land Use Plan. He asked if there was a map or was that inferred from meeting discussions. Ms. Bradley said it was over months of showing and discussing a number of data maps. The group decided to keep it general, to keep flexibility. What is important is what the group wants to do now. She wants them to have something they can use. Ms. Zmoda agreed that over many months of meetings, the shape of the intention became more generalized and flexible because there is so much land and the municipalities wanted to maintain their autonomy.

Mr. Kleintop said he looked at all the other multi-municipal plans prepared by the LVPC and thought the SWL Plan was the best of all. Ms. Bradley noted that all the other plans in the draft Slate Belt Plan were part of the Future Land Use Plan and need to be used together. They are

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separate because you cannot read them on one map. The SWL map is not the most readable, which is why we started disaggregating them. Mr. Moore said, on the other hand, you cannot see the details pertaining to development. The Future Land Use Plan could be used to show the development aspect. Ms. Bradley said we could go into more detail on the development side to add more residential, commercial, etc. She asked for committee direction. Mr. Huratiak said he agrees with including more detail on the development side. We need to get to the point where all the municipalities are happy. Ms. Bradley said we could take the current Future Land Use Plan and do pull-outs of the gray areas so you can see the detail. Ms. Newman agreed that would be a good approach. A delay is fine if all are satisfied with the plan. Ms. Bradley said we may find some other areas where we might have to do more work on, too. Mr. Kleintop asked if we go in this direction, will it take a few more months. Ms. Bradley said it could be between 6-8 weeks. She believes it is worth the extra time.

Ms. Zmoda asked for a motion to take the extra 6-8 weeks to revise the Future Land Use Plan with more detailed sections and make sure all municipalities are heard. Mr. Moore asked Ms. Bradley if it was her vision that they would have similar land use categories as the SWL Plan. Ms. Bradley said yes, but with call-outs of the development areas to show more detail. Mr. Moore said the motion could be to modify the Future Land Use Plan to do call-outs of the development areas within the region so that individual land use categories can be depicted. Mr. Huratiak seconded the motion. Ms. Zmoda asked if each municipality will have some input so their special interests can be called out. Ms. Bradley said we will map out what is on the ground now and bring a draft back to them. If we have any questions, we can call them and keep it moving along. Mr. Kleintop asked if 6-8 weeks is enough time. Ms. Bradley said yes, but the issue is the back and forth that the municipalities need. We can call them as we get individual communities done. Mr. Moore asked if there is a possibility then that the LVPC can work individually with municipalities and not have to wait for the monthly meetings. Ms. Bradley said it would be a little of both, since we still need to have the monthly meetings to show everyone else what is happening. Mr. Reider thought that was a good idea because the boroughs are ready to move forward as discussed at the November/December public meetings, but whatever we have to do to get the process done. Ms. Donnelly agreed with Mr. Reider. Ms. Zmoda asked for all those in favor of the motion. All voted in favor of the motion except Ms. Donnelly, who voted no. Mr. Reider said her vote can stand for the Borough.

New Business

1. Project Schedule Update

Ms. Bradley displayed the revised meeting schedule, which is included in the meeting packet.

2. Meeting Schedule

Ms. Bradley said she has a conflict with meeting on the first Wednesday of the month and asked if the group would be willing to discuss possibly moving the meeting day to the first or second Thursday or move the Wednesday meeting to 5 pm. After discussion, Mr. Reider made a motion to move the meeting to the first Thursday of the month at 7 pm. Mr. Moore seconded the motion. Mr. Huggan said he would need to verify the availability of the East Bangor Fire Hall. The motion passed unanimously, with the meeting location to be determined.

Next Steps

Courtesy of the Floor

1. General Issues and Opportunities Discussion

- Known Plan Activity in Slate Belt Communities (December 2022)

Ms. Bradley discussed the three reviews listed in the activity log. She said the Pen Argyl stormwater ordinance update and the Plainfield Grand Central Material Recycling Facility will be presented at the January LVPC meetings. We will provide links to the meetings. She informed the group that we received land development plans for RPL but need to go through them to see if they are accepted for review. We will let them know if the new RPL plans will be reviewed at the meetings as well.

2. Municipal Update

Mr. Kleintop noted the upcoming CRG meeting on February 13, 2023. He believes they are coming in for at least conditional preliminary approval. Mr. Huratiak asked if they received a will serve letter for sewer. Mr. Kleintop said he has not seen anything yet and asked Ms. Zmoda if she could respond. Ms. Zmoda said the Municipal Authority handles requests outside the Borough.

Ms. Newman said she believes the RPL developer has been in front of the Portland Authority and asked if there was any decision on that. Mr. Friedman said they are trying to get water from Portland, but there is nothing concrete yet.

Mr. Moore said when they met with the LVPC last month, he mentioned about getting comments to the LVPC regarding Gilmore's December 5, 2022 review. The Township will try to get something written to the LVPC as soon as they can. He also noted that the Township Solicitor said the plan needed to include a comment that Plainfield has met its fair share of solid waste disposal, is opposed to rezoning to expand solid waste uses and other municipalities within Plan Slate Belt will have to plan for this use. He also said he thinks the Township will also want the Implementation Agreement to be adopted simultaneously with the comprehensive plan.

Adjourn

Ms. Zmoda called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Reider made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Friedman seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

Attachments

- December 7, 2022 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
- Slate Belt Public Meetings – Comments/Questions Received through January 3, 2023
- Plan Slate Belt General Land Use Plan – LUCIS model
- SWL Plan Land Use and Development section
- Moving Towards Adoption Flowchart
- Slate Belt Communities' Activity Log (December 2022)

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.