

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT

March 2, 2023 – 7 PM, Steering Committee Meeting

Steering Committee Attendees:

Bangor:	Steve Reider
East Bangor:	
Lower Mount Bethel:	Jen Smethers, Sandra Newman
Pen Argyl:	Robin Zmoda, Janell Connolly
Plainfield:	Terry Kleintop, Jane Mellert
Portland:	Lance Prator
Roseto:	Cathy Martino, Carl Renna
Upper Mount Bethel:	
Washington:	Justin Huratiak
Wind Gap:	Louise Firestone

Members of the Public in Attendance:

None.

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Dean Severson – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Roll Call

Ms. Rockwell called roll. All municipalities, except East Bangor and Upper Mount Bethel, were in attendance.

Minutes from the February 2, 2023 Meeting

Ms. Zmoda called for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2023 meeting. Mr. Prator made the motion. Mr. Reider seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Old Business

1. Project Schedule Update – Revised

Mr. Severson said the only change to the schedule is the intermunicipal agreement would be adopted at the same time as the plan.

New Business

1. Discussion of Plan text revisions

Mr. Severson said the draft text edits were recently emailed to the municipalities. He walked through the edits with the committee. He said more demographic data and a summary of the big issues in the Slate Belt based on committee comments were added to the Introduction section:

- **Constraints on development.** Ms. Newman commented that the text should be revised to indicate that ag properties are developed, not undeveloped as mentioned in the text. Mr. Severson said the text would be revised.
- **Older population and income disparities in the region.** Mr. Severson noted that municipalities need to make sure growth is directed to where they want it to go.

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- **Housing stock predominantly owner-occupied and aging, especially in the boroughs.**
- **The economic base of the Slate Belt has changed.**
- **The agricultural sector will continue to adapt to economic and demographic forces.**
- **Transportation infrastructure is aging and often incomplete.** Mr. Severson said we are meeting with the municipalities to identify transportation priorities as part of the Long-Range Transportation Plan. We met with the boroughs today and will meet with the townships on March 15.

Additional text edits include infrastructure projects provided by the municipalities and a new action related to broadband. Ms. Zmoda noted that Northampton County created an ad hoc committee and has a survey for residences and businesses on their website to determine the lack of broadband in the County.

Mr. Severson said additional text was included in the introduction portion of the Infrastructure section related to transportation. Mr. Kleintop asked how having a multi-municipal plan benefits the Slate Belt related to obtaining the maximum amount of funding for transportation. Mr. Severson said that PennDOT has put more emphasis on working directly with municipalities when they are working on projects to obtain more input from them. If municipalities are on record saying what they want, it puts PennDOT on notice. Also, we are working with the Lehigh Valley Transportation Study on a Transportation Needs Assessment and will relay concerns to those responsible for funding. Ms. Newman noted several errors in the second to last paragraph. Mr. Severson said corrections will be made to the text.

A list of transportation priorities, which was provided by the municipalities as part of the Issues and Opportunities report, was added to the Infrastructure section. He asked the municipalities to review and update the list if needed.

Mr. Severson noted several corrections to the text that were needed, as well as the new text that was added per Plainfield Township's request that states "Plainfield Township 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." Ms. Connolly asked if the statement was necessary since the MPC says other municipalities would have to take the use. Mr. Huratiak said it just states the Township's position. Mr. Kleintop said their solicitor asked for the language to be added to the plan.

2. Update on land use map revisions

Mr. Severson said the draft mapping was previously emailed to the municipalities. He met with some of the boroughs earlier in the day to discuss the mapping. He said we will meet with the townships on March 15th. The current Future Land Use Plan only has a few land use categories. At previous steering committee meetings, there was discussion on adding greater detail. The current map just shows Development as grey, with no detail. For the draft mapping, we looked at existing land use from county assessment records. In developed areas, the uses will stay the same. We also looked at Borough revitalization plans. We will include inset maps for the areas surrounding the boroughs. Mr. Severson asked the committee to review the maps and provide comments. Mr. Huratiak commented about incorporating scenic routes in the mapping. Mr. Kleintop commented that rural residential, to a large extent, is preserved farmland. Mr. Severson said we would need to look at the count assessment data to see if we can adjust the mapping. Mr. Huratiak noted that looking at the types of farming related to zoning is important. Mr. Severson agreed, noting it would reduce conflicts.

Next Steps

Mr. Severson said the next steps are to finalize the text and map edits. The committee will then need to make the decision to approve the draft plan and send it to the elected officials.

Courtesy of the Floor

1. General Issues and Opportunities Discussion

- Known Plan Activity in Slate Belt Communities (February 2023)

Ms. Rockwell reviewed the plan activity for the month.

2. Municipal Update

None.

Adjourn

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

Attachments

- February 2, 2023 Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
- Moving Towards Adoption Flowchart - Revised
- Slate Belt Communities' Activity Log (February 2023)

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.