

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT

November 2, 2023 – 7 PM, Steering Committee Meeting

Steering Committee Attendees:

Bangor:	James Kresge, Marissa Donnelly
East Bangor:	Jason Huggan
Lower Mount Bethel:	Jen Smethers, Sandra Newman, Susan Disidore
Pen Argyl:	Robin Zmoda, Tyler Kemp
Plainfield:	Terry Kleintop, Jane Mellert
Portland:	Lance Prator, Heather Fischer
Roseto:	Cathy Martino
Upper Mount Bethel:	Dave Friedman
Washington:	Justin Huratiak
Wind Gap:	Louise Firestone

Members of the Public in Attendance:

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

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Becky Bradley – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Roll Call

Ms. Rockwell called the roll. All communities were in attendance.

Minutes from the September 7, 2023, Meeting

Ms. Zmoda called for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 7, 2023, meeting. Mr. Kresge noted he was not in attendance at the September meeting. Mr. Prator made the motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Donnelly seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Prator informed the group that Steve Hurni, a strong advocate for the Slate Belt region and former steering committee member, passed away.

Old Business

1. Plan Adoption

Ms. Bradley reported on comments received during the 45-day comment period. Lehigh Valley Planning Commission staff not involved in the planning effort reviewed the draft plan at the LVPC meeting on October 26. The Monroe County Planning Commission also reviewed the draft plan and provided draft comments, which would be reviewed at their November 14 meeting. Ms. Bradley reviewed the comments from both letters, which were included in the agenda packet.

Ms. Bradley said copies of the Plainfield Township letter and Memorandum from Lower Mount Bethel, Upper Mount Bethel and Plainfield townships were included in the agenda packet. Mr. Huratiak questioned the cost of the zoning ordinance update. He also thought the Future Land Use Plan didn't go far enough; it's too general. He said the purpose of the steering committee was to steer municipalities to the next step – future growth. Ms. Bradley said that the specifics are in the zoning map. She showed him the Southwest Lehigh Future Land Use Plan. The Slate

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Belt detailed inset maps show the same thing. Ms. Zmoda said the comprehensive plan is a guidebook. Each municipality will do their own zoning, which is to be done within two years after plan adoption. Mr. Kleintop said the Plainfield Township Supervisors did not direct the Township Planning Commission to review the draft plan. He asked how it can be advertised for comment without Planning Commission review. Mr. Huratiak said the Supervisors would hear all the public comments. Ms. Bradley also noted there was a lot of detail in the place types section of the plan. The inset maps are not just existing land use maps, they include things like critical corridors as well as future land use overlaid with the more generalized map. Mr. Kleintop said their solicitor did not see the flow from one map to another. Ms. Bradley said that was not accurate based on her conversation with the solicitor. Ms. Mellert noted that the solicitor was satisfied with the language on the landfill.

Ms. Zmoda asked the group what they wanted to do. Mr. Kleintop said the townships thought they would be discussing the letters with the LVPC first. Ms. Zmoda said all the municipalities need to be part of the discussion. Ms. Smethers said the townships feel they have more to lose than the boroughs. She feels sarcasm when they express their feelings. They are just trying to look out for their citizens. Ms. Zmoda said the boroughs feel the same. There are never-ending dilemmas every month. There is no compromise from the townships. Ms. Mellert said they documented their concerns. The Township needs a comprehensive plan. She said they would like a little more detail so they can move forward. Ms. Zmoda asked what the next step is and how much more detail do they want. Ms. Smethers said there are inconsistencies from one map to the next. Maybe they could put together a list and provide it to the LVPC. Ms. Henckel said, from the township meetings, it seems they just need a little more breathing space; don't push the plan right now.

Mr. Friedman said his concern is the Character-Defining Areas. He can't explain it to his board. He thinks the new board should review the plan. Mr. Huratiak said nobody cares in his township. There are other things going on. His hope for the plan is to see smart growth. This is an opportunity to look at zoning for growth potential. The steering committee will be steering 30 years of development. Ms. Bradley said that is what is in your detailed map. If the plan does not get adopted, you can't do coordinated zoning per state law. She said, per Michael Baker, if zoning ordinances are done together, the cost would be \$24,166 per community, but communities can divide it up based on population. It would be \$54,000 separately including an Official Map. She said the counties have been able to work with other municipalities regarding funding. She also said the public hearings and adoption process can be slowed down until after the new year. Mr. Kleintop asked what is in it for the LVPC, having several multi-municipal plans in play. Ms. Bradley said nothing. The counties want municipal plans to be consistent with the county plan, but want municipalities to have what they want, too. Land use has to match transportation plans – they have to be coordinated.

Mr. Kresge said there are five specific points raised in the township memorandum.

- 1) Implementation agreement. He asked where this stands. Ms. Bradley said examples were previously sent to the steering committee in July. The Northern Lehigh agreement is the most current, and the area is most like the Slate Belt area. The draft agreement is included in the agenda packet. She said we would send the committee the Word version of the document. Mr. Kresge asked if we can put a date on this or discuss it tonight. Ms. Zmoda said municipalities needed some time, maybe in December. Ms. Newman said she didn't see how they can get their township to do a good job on this until next year. Mr. Kresge asked if January would work. Mr. Friedman said he thought maybe February to get the new board acclimated. Mr. Kleintop said the solicitor should comment first. Ms. Bradley said they do not

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have to adopt it before the plan. All ten municipalities should work together on this. Mr. Kresge said, based on the discussion, the implementation agreement will be discussed at the February 2024 meeting.

- 2) Zoning coordination costs. Ms. Bradley said she would share a zoning cost worksheet that will show costs based on population and potential county grant money.
- 3) Future Land Use Plan concerns. Mr. Kresge said concerns need to be addressed. He said the townships need to provide a list of specific items to be corrected. Mr. Friedman said the Character-Defining Areas is his concern. Ms. Bradley read the definition in the plan. Mr. Kresge asked Mr. Friedman what he wanted corrected. Mr. Friedman said he wanted some definition regarding development. Ms. Bradley said the development criteria are listed right below the definition, which gives a lot of flexibility and is to be used as a guide. Mr. Friedman also said there is an inconsistency in the map up near Portland. There is a preservation area in the middle of a development area. He couldn't readily find it and would follow up on the location. Mr. Kresge said everyone needs to send a list of corrections.
- 4) Map inconsistencies Mr. Kresge said any map inconsistencies need to be sent to the LVPC.
- 5) Upcoming election. Mr. Kresge said this was already addressed. Plan approval will be pushed until next year.

2. Intermunicipal Agreement Follow-Up Discussion

This item was already addressed and will be discussed at the February 2024 meeting.

New Business

1. Next Meeting

The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for 7 pm on Thursday, December 7, 2023 at the Pen Argyl Borough Hall.

Courtesy of the Floor

Ms. Newman said in the future they should have a roll call vote for things like this. She did not vote for the 45-day comment period to begin at the last meeting because she did not have time to confer with the other Township representatives. Mr. Kresge read from the 2019 Intermunicipal Agreement for the Slate Belt Plan (included in the agenda packet) "...Steering Committee recommendations shall be by unanimous consent of the members present with respect to the content of the plan." He said it's not required if it's not related to the plan. Mr. Kresge made a motion to require a roll call vote for all votes and for votes to be unanimous. Ms. Newman seconded the motion. Ms. Rockwell took a roll call vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

1. General Issues and Opportunities Discussion

- Known Plan Activity in Slate Belt Communities (September - October 2023)

Ms. Bradley reviewed the activity log.

2. Municipal Update

Ms. Henckel informed the group that the PA Department of Environmental Protection will be holding a public meeting on November 13th related to Chapters 105 and 102 for the RPL development at the Bangor Area High School from 6-9 pm. Ms. Bradley said the LVPC is preparing written testimony.

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Adjourn

Ms. Zmoda called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Kresge made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Friedman seconded the motion. Ms. Rockwell took a roll call vote on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Attachments

- September 7, 2023, Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
- Monroe County Planning Commission Draft Plan Comments
- Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Draft Plan Comments
- Plainfield Township Board of Supervisors Letter – 9/15/23
- Plainfield and Lower and Upper Mount Bethel Townships Memorandum – 10/30/23
- Intermunicipal Agreement for the Slate Belt Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan
- Northern Lehigh Draft Intermunicipal Cooperative Implementation Agreement
- Slate Belt Communities' Activity Log (September - October 2023)

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.