

The Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan for the SLATE BELT

March 2, 2022 – 7 PM, Virtual Steering Committee Meeting

Steering Committee Attendees:

Bangor:	James Kresge
East Bangor:	Jason Huggan, Susan Ruggiero
Lower Mount Bethel:	Jennifer Smethers, Sandra Newman
Pen Argyl:	Robin Zmoda, Janell Connolly
Plainfield:	Tom Petrucci, Terry Kleintop
Portland:	Lance Prator, Stephanie Steele
Roseto:	Cathy Martino
Upper Mount Bethel:	Ed Nelson
Washington:	
Wind Gap:	Louise Firestone

Members of the Public in Attendance:

Judith Henckel – Upper Mount Bethel
David Friedman – Upper Mount Bethel
Don Moore – Plainfield
Heather Fischer – Portland
Wesley Smith – Wind Gap

Planning Partners in Attendance:

Tracy Oscavich – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Geoff Reese – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Sue Rockwell – Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
Teresa Mackey – Lehigh valley Planning Commission
Mark Hartney – Northampton County
Steve Reider – Slate Belt Rising

Roll Call

Ms. Rockwell called roll. All municipalities were in attendance except Washington Township.

Minutes from the November 3, 2021, January 5, 2022 and February 2, 2022 Meetings

Mr. Petrucci asked for a motion to approve the minutes for the November 3, 2021, January 5, 2022 and February 2, 2022 meetings. Ms. Zmoda made the motion, and Ms. Newman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

General Issues and Opportunities Discussion

- Known Plan Activity in Slate Belt Communities

Ms. Rockwell reviewed the four plans for February 2022.

Old Business

1. Draft Goals, Policies and Actions

Ms. Rockwell informed the committee that comments on the first draft goals, policies and actions have not been received from four municipalities. Ms. Oscavich said we are in a critical step in the

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process right now and we need to make sure the policies are right as we build the maps, however, this will not be the only opportunity to provide comments.

New Business

1. Plan Map Discussion

Mr. Reese began the presentation of three of the plan maps, including the draft Natural Resources Plan; Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Scenic Plan; and Farmland Preservation Plan. Mr. Reese said there are 12 different elements built into the Natural Resources Plan as well as many sub-elements. He said that a link to the FutureLV Natural Resources Plan was forwarded to the committee on October 20, 2021 as well as the individual elements that are built into the plan. Ms. Mackey brought up the plan and described some of the layers. She then displayed the draft Slate Belt Natural Resources Plan. Mr. Reese said the purpose of the plan is to identify the most significant areas throughout the Slate Belt and identify them in terms of high or medium conservation priority. Not all elements are valued the same within the plan. Certain features might not score as high in overall ranking of natural resources. Other features by themselves score high, such as floodplains. Many features stack on top of each other and combined have high conservation priority. He said the draft plan is consistent with the FutureLV Natural Resources Plan. He explained that the plan can be used to identify areas important to try to conserve through conservation easements. It can also be used in the land development process by ensuring communities and developers know there are significant natural resources on the site, and they should work to preserve those areas as much as possible. The natural Resources Plan is one of the building blocks of the future land use plan.

Ms. Mackey displayed the draft Farmland Preservation Plan. Mr. Reese said this plan is another building block of the future land use plan. The purpose of the plan is to identify, on a relative scale, which areas are more important in terms of high, medium or low preservation priority. The plan was created using the same background data as the FutureLV Farmland Preservation Plan: agricultural easements, agricultural security areas and agricultural land cover as identified through aerial photography. The plan is where we create the value in terms of preservation priority associated with the individual farmlands. Ms. Mackey walked the committee through the process of creating the plan. She said some parcels were removed, including approved final subdivisions/land development, public outdoor recreation lands and non-agricultural portions of some of the parcels. The remaining areas were scored based on the presence of agricultural easements, agricultural security areas, soil capability class I through IV and adjacency to Natural Resources Plan and Park, Recreation and Open Space facilities and lands. The result is the draft plan. Mr. Reese added that the larger polygons tend to score higher as the goal is to accomplish having concentrated areas of agriculture, which is more favorable for preservation into the future. Mr. Kleintop said farmland has the potential to have a negative impact on streams. He asked if we take into consideration how what is required and enforced regarding preserved farms versus how farms not preserved are handled. Ms. Mackey said conservation plans are required for preserved farms, and they must account for any natural resource areas on the farm to protect streams. For non-preserved farms, the Natural Resources Plan shows natural resource areas that cross farmlands where practices can be used to protect stream quality. Mr. Kleintop said that Chapter 25 of the PA Code, Section 102.4 says that tilling operations must have an Erosion and Sedimentation (E&S) Plan to allow for farming. For preserved farms, the conservation plan would be acceptable as the E&S Plan. The Farmland Preservation Department is responsible for those

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farms and inspects them. He believes the responsibility for non-preserved farms falls under the County Conservation District. He believes there are different rules between preserved versus non-preserved farms regarding the responsibility for ensuring E&S plans exist and inspections/enforcement are taking place, resulting in the potential for more negative impacts on streams. He asked how we would take that different policy into consideration. Mr. Reese said through the 102 process, preserved farms are inspected once every other year. For non-preserved farms, enforcement would be through the erosion control requirements of the conservation district. Historically, he believes it was mostly enforced on a complaint-type or priority-type basis. We can take a closer look to see if we can have some reinforcement for non-preserved farms in terms of E&S practices. He said we can follow-up with the Northampton County Conservation District and report back to the committee. He noted that judgements will have to be made about what the communities value most to blend the three maps discussed tonight and the Transportation Plan, which will be presented next month, to create the Future Land Use Plan.

Ms. Mackey presented the draft Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Scenic Plan. She discussed the different elements that make up the plan. She said, based on comments and requests regarding scenic resources, we added the Delaware River Scenic Byway in Lower Mt. Bethel, the National Wild and Scenic River part of the Delaware, Kittatinny Ridge, Minsi Lake and Delaware River Scenic Drive. We also added proposed features from the Plainfield Township Official Map. Mr. Petrucci asked if the Northern Tier Trail can be labeled for future reference. Ms. Mackey said she could see what that looks like since there is some overlapping. Mr. Moore said to the left of the P in Pen Argyl on the map, there is an intersection of dashed green lines where the railroad right-of-way meets Pen Argyl Street. He would like to see a potential connection from the line coming down from the Appalachian Trail on E Street. Ms. Zmoda said there are discussions about a right-of-way behind Pen Argyl Street that could accomplish what they are looking for. Ms. Mackey said that alignments of the proposed trails can change, but she will look at that area and try to make a connection. Mr. Petrucci asked if comments will be accepted in the future. Mr. Reese said these maps will be in the document, and there will be other opportunities to comment on them as we move forward.

2. Lower Mt. Bethel Township Zoning Ordinance Update

Ms. Newman provided a presentation on the Township's Zoning Ordinance Update. The Township will consider the comments received from the LVPC and Plainfield Township over the next month or so. She said the current ordinance dates to 1972, so they had a huge task in updating it. There were no references to telecommunications, impervious cover, detention basins, child and adult daycare, bed and breakfast, campgrounds, medical marijuana, solar energy, among other things. They looked at compatibility with their Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance, Open Space Plan, 2007 Comprehensive Plan, Recreation Plan and Corridor Management Plan as well as FutureLV. She discussed the proposed zoning districts, their purpose and types of uses and new sections added to the ordinance. Ms. Newman discussed other changes to the ordinance. Mr. Kleintop asked if the Township has an Official Map. Ms. Newman said they do not, but they are working on one that will be completed by November. Mr. Kleintop asked how many Slate Belt municipalities have an Official Map. Mr. Reese said only Plainfield Township that we know of.

Next Steps

Mr. Petrucci asked if the draft Transportation Plan will be presented at the April 6, 2022 meeting. Mr. Reese said yes.

Courtesy of the Floor

Mr. Kleintop asked, regarding farms considering or having used Class A or B biosolids in the past, if anyone has tried to incorporate any kind of guidelines in their ordinances related to this issue. Ms. Newman said that Pennsylvania is looking at changing the amount of PFAS contaminant that will be allowed in water. Sludge is a big source of PFAS. The state is proposing a standard that is stricter than the national standard. Municipalities may then have some ability to control sludge distribution. Mr. Kleintop said his other concern was on a current state ruling that allows Class A or B biosolids on preserved farms. There is quite a bit of biosolids being applied in the Slate Belt. He said if farming practices continue to allow that, it will increase the probability of impaired streams by the state. The municipalities become responsible to try to get the stream cleaned up and delisted. Ms. Newman said Lower Mt. Bethel is concerned as well.

Ms. Newman said at the end of the monthly Slate Belt Council of Governments meeting, every member brings up what is happening in their municipality, which is a good way to stay in touch with neighbors. She thinks that there is a lack of ownership and teamwork in the Slate Belt steering committee. She thought the committee could do something similar to develop the communication and cooperation needed to go forward with the plan. Mr. Petrucci said it could be added to the end of the agenda. It could be an update on planning, zoning or things not captured in the monthly activity report. Ms. Oscavich said it could be added to the agenda under courtesy of the floor as a municipal update.

Mr. Kleintop thought it would be a good idea if each municipality started identifying any use that meets the fair share doctrine within their municipality so we would know early on how many of those types of items we might have and which municipalities. Ms. Oscavich thought this should be done later in the process as an after-action item. The comprehensive plan process needs to be completed first. We are still waiting for comments on goals, policies and actions. All municipalities need to be comfortable with them before jumping ahead.

Mr. Petrucci thought it may be time for in-person meetings again and asked if anyone had an issue with that. The committee agreed. The April meeting will be held at the Plainfield Township Volunteer Fire Company Banquet Facility.

Adjourn

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

Attachments

- February 2, 2022 Steering Committee Minutes
- Slate Belt Communities' Activity Log (February 2022)

Minutes prepared and respectfully transmitted by the LVPC.