

**TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH WHITEHALL**

**LEHIGH COUNTY**

**JOINT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS/PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP**

**REGULAR SESSION**

**MINUTES**

**JUNE 16, 2022**

The Joint Board of Commissioners/Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan Workshop was held on the above date in the Township Municipal Building located at 4444 Walbert Avenue, Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania.

Members in attendance:

Diane Kelly, Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission-remote  
Monica Hodges, Board of Commissioners  
David Kennedy, Board of Commissioners  
Michael Wolk, Board of Commissioners

Brian Hite, Vice-Chairman Planning  
Trevor Dombach, Planning Commission  
Timothy Dugan, Planning Commission  
Andrew Flagg, Planning Commission  
David Wilson, Planning Commission

Staff members in attendance:

Herb Bender, Interim Township Manager  
Gregg Adams, Planner  
Robert Emmanuel, Community Development  
Robert Fehnel, IT Projects Manager  
Lynn LaBarre, Permits/Minute Taker  
Chris Kiskeravage, Fire Commissioner

Hannah Clark, AICP, Michael Baker International  
Ashley Eichlin, Associate Landscape Designer, Barry Isett & Associates  
Steven Walck, Facilities Supervisor, Parkland School District

**AGENDA ITEM #1-CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Wilson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He announced that all meetings are electronically monitored.

**AGENDA ITEM #2-PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL/MEETING RULES**

Mr. Wilson led the assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Adams conducted the roll call.

Mr. Wilson introduced staff and other members in attendance.

Mr. Adams read the meeting rules.

### **AGENDA ITEM #3-APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

None at this meeting.

### **AGENDA ITEM #5-COMPREHENSIVE PLANS GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION**

Mr. Adams introduced the timeline for a December 2022 adoption and process review for Workshop 5. All information discussed has been posted to the township website for comments.

Staff received 2 recent comments from the community:

- Marie North, 3025 Victoria Lane, suggested exploring Geothermal and solar energy for our buildings.
- Bill Stanley, 2913 Mauch Chunk Road, submitted several traffic comments for review at the July workshop.

### **COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**2022 Overall Goal**-Promote an effective continuation of opportunities, facilities, and services for parks, recreation, education, public safety and wellness.

The 2009 Comp Plan 3 goals were reviewed. Mr. Hite noted that Goal 1 was accomplished with the expansion of the yard & garden center. This goal could be removed or carried forward.

Mr. Wilson asked how we did with Goals 2 & 3. With respect to Goal 2, there was no significant upgrade since we did not provide a secure and reliable data transmission between Township facilities.

Commissioner Hodges spoke about Nixle system for police communication with the residents. This issue was discussed at a recent Public Safety meeting. Nixle is a public communication while Goal 2 involves township fire companies, well heads, pump stations. Mr. Adams noted that we could add the Nixle system to our list as we work to improve our emergency services.

Commissioner Wolk suggested that the Comp Plan goals are measurable, and he would like to see our future goals written as an action item. Mr. Adams noted that this would be adjusted in the future goals.

### **Working Group Recommendations:**

Mr. Wilson asked about County Hazard Mitigation Plan. Mr. Adams noted that this plan looks at all levels of government. The plans are reviewed along with the steps used to get through an emergency. All of the assets are listed in a very large binder that are needed to get through the emergency.

Mr. Hite reported that it addresses known hazards to a community such as flooding. If the township has this hazard in its plan, there are more grants and opportunities available for assistance. He was very involved in this plan which is completed every 4 years.

Mr. Kiskeravage reported that Jeff Kelly is working on an updated emergency response plan. We contact the county for additional resources. Flooding is one of the biggest concerns in our township.

Commissioner Wolk asked about the working group recommendation "assess fire/EMS/Police service needs and service areas". He commented that this is a very broad recommendation, and we need to have someone to make sure it is done. He suggested using the wording "proactively assess needs and service areas". We want to stay ahead of each development that comes to our township.

Commissioner Kennedy said fire, EMS and police could each be its own category. We need to look for a measurable implementation commented Mr. Adams.

Mr. Dugan asked about shortening the review period in 9. Ms. Clarke responded that it relates to the development review if new schools, community center or expansion of emergency center are needed and how we should prioritize enhancements.

Mr. Wilson asked about items 4 & 5 with respect to the Jeras lands. We need to have more discussions about land preservation especially near the high school being dedicated for a community or swimming facility. This also relates to the transfer of development rights. He said that a workshop should be held with the property owner to get feedback from residents on what they would like to see done with the land.

Mr. Adams noted that to acquire land for community facilities through the subdivision process whether by the official map strengthening SALDO or other negotiations with incentives.

Mr. Dugan said that there needs to be a compromise-the land being donated may not be the best parcel and the most desirable land for the project.

Commissioner Wolk agreed with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Dugan's comments and reiterated that the official township map must be updated. The land development has been proposed and we don't have to wait to make decisions. We need to be proactive.

Commissioner Kelly asked about the working group recommendations and if they were prioritized and was told that they are not.

Commissioner Wolk would prefer goal 6 to move up the list because it has a significant impact on public safety.

Commissioner Kennedy would like to see goals 3, 4 & 6 prioritized.

Commissioner Kelly asked about goal 4 and the definition of community facilities and if this was an indoor recreation center. The definition of community facilities was reviewed.

Commissioner Hodges, who was part of the Community Facilities working group, would like to see goals 3, 4 & 6 moved up on the list.

Mr. Flagg asked if the group agrees in carrying these working group recommendations forward and he would like more focus on goal 7 and having the community buy into the comp plan.

Ms. Clarke said that these are not the only recommendations that we need to consider and there is room to add more items.

Commissioner Wolk noted that our plan will be implementable and measurable. In the end, we will determine if we met the goals. Goal 7 is an essential part of the process for the entire Comp Plan.

Mr. Adams said this also refers to what we do any the Comp Plan and that volunteers do for municipal government, and we must continue to encourage this.

Mr. Dugan does not want to prioritize recommendations.

Mr. Hite looked at some of the recommendations as Park & Recreation items verses the Public Safety items. We can't prioritize these different lists. Public safety is why we live here, and Park & Recreation is an element of why we live here. His priority is goal 6.

Mr. Adams suggested we create subheadings, and we can move specific items under these sub headers.

Commissioner Kelly agreed with Mr. Hite's and Mr. Dugan's recommendations.

Mr. Adams said we do not prioritize the list unless the board wants us to. Once the plan is adopted and the board implements it, they can adjust the recommendations. The plan becomes flexible.

Mr. Wilson agrees that public safety is a top priority. Goals 4 & 5 are also important.

Mr. Dombach said that goals 6 & 7 are very important since that are related to the people. We lack depth and we need people to volunteer. We want the people to be champions of the Comp Plan.

### **Parks & Recreation**

Mr. Adams reviewed the 2009 Comp Plan Park & Recreation goals and recommendations.

Mr. Hite asked if there is a connection to the Ironton Rail Trail and was told that there is not. The Jordan Creek Greenway is the only connection.

Ashley Eichlin, from Barry Isett & Associates, introduced the Township's Park Recreation Open Space & Trail (PROT) Plan. Stephanie Milewski, Project Manager from Barry Isett, joined online. Brian Smith and Lindsay Taylor from Barry Isett are also involved. Ms. Eichlin and her co-workers have been gathering data through a community survey to develop plans. There will be a public meeting on Thursday, June 23 at 7:00 PM to discuss the PROT. The last time our township updated it's PROT was in 2009 through a combined plan with North Whitehall Township. This plan will become a valuable guide for our township to reference. The National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) is an online database that allows municipalities to input information and compare that data with other locations. The planning process being done by the Barry Isett & Associates staff was reviewed. Our township has 26 pocket and community parks (41 plus acres) & open spaces areas (20 plus acres). Her team visited all parks and open space areas and inventoried their current state. The report will include findings under each element. For example, from the NRPA data, townships with 20,000 people have at least one pickleball court but we do not have one. What do people want to see-do we want a pickleball court?

Mr. Wilson asked what pickleball is and was told that it's a game played on a smaller tennis court with smaller paddles and whiffle style ball.

Mr. Hite asked how people get to the township parks and the connections to the parks. Ms. Eichlin will be evaluating the connections and develop some mapping between the parks.

Mr. Dugan asked if this includes the new land south of Route 22 and was told that it does not.

Commissioner Kennedy asked about the cost of the PROT. Ms. Eichlin noted that her team is gathering information at this time and the costs will be estimated later. Commissioner Kennedy would also like to see a study done about the preferences of the township senior population making make sure

that we address demographics. He reminded everyone that this will need to be reviewed in the budget for 2023.

Ms. Eichlin discussed the survey, both physical and online (Survey Monkey version), that is being done by her team. Mr. Kukitz distributed the survey at the Allentown Band concert in May.

Mr. Bender noted that the Kohler Ridge Park has not been approved year and he would like that park to be put under the open space category.

Commissioner Hodges suggested that we visit township senior living facilities to survey their interests.

Mr. Flagg discussed our fixed asset inventory such as soccer fields and how we can make the most of our properties to satisfy the residents.

Mr. Dugan noted that we should determine if the township resources and those of the school district are meeting the needs of the residents. This has been discussed already by the Barry Isett team.

Commissioner Wolk appreciates the use of the NRPA database. It appears that this study is an assessment of the current parks and he reminded everyone that we need to make sure we are thinking about the future community needs and thinking proactively. Working with the study committee, the Barry Isett team is learning more about the community focus.

Ms. Milewski discussed the current status and needs and anticipating how community will grow. We will look at our township in 5, 10, 15 years from now and we analyze costs to show a phasing plan for purchases which can meet the needs of the community.

Mr. Kukitz reviewed the timeline slide in the presentation noting that the on target with their tasks. The steering committee includes Manager Cope, Director Manhardt, Mr. Kukitz, Commissioners Hodges and Kelly and the Barry Isett team. Surveys are informational flyers are being distributed and posted at township parks and events. 150 surveys were distributed to senior population at Allentown Band. Rec desk participants including yoga and Zumba participants will get surveys. The Barry Isett team is reviewing all facilities for their condition and accessibility.

Ms. Milewski noted that the Barry Isett team is studying state land, school facilities, open space areas, private and county parks to show what is near the township and determine if it is something that our township needs to provide or if there is another organization that already provides that service.

Commissioner Kelly asked if the survey includes comments about the township spending monies to increase parks and was told that it does. The survey was distributed at the end of May around Memorial Day and is listed on both the township website and the Park and Recreation Facebook page. There are 35 paper surveys collected already and 26 online surveys completed.

Ms. Eichlin commented that their group's goal is to get 10% of population surveyed.

Mr. Dombach asked if the group could post some survey signage at some of the smaller neighborhood pocket parks. It was suggested to use a yard sign idea for the survey.

Ms. Eichlin reviewed the 2009 Joint Comp Plan and Future LV Goals and noted that the group does not see anything contradicting with these recommendations. They will move forward in their work on the PROT Plan making one small adjustment to continue to develop the Jordan Creek Greenway.

Mr. Bender asked if the plan covers the staff needed for the new parks and he was told that it will address money and man hours.

Public Meeting will be held on Thursday, June 23 at 7:00 PM at the township. Mr. Hite cannot attend and suggested having the meeting on a date other than the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month.

Commissioner Kelly asked about advertising for this public meeting and was told that the survey advertises the meeting. It was suggested to also use flyers at the pocket parks.

Mr. Kukitz has scheduled two social media posts to inform the public about this meeting. He reported that 12 people were at the last meeting and we hope for more at the next one. The summer playground program will receive the meeting update. He will ask the Police to spread this news at their Crime Watch meetings.

## **Schools**

Mr. Adams reviewed the 2009 Comp Plan recommendation for the schools.

Steven Walck, Facilities Supervisor from Parkland School District was present. We will continue our partnership with the township to provide the best facilities for camps and other activities. The future of the Troxell building is unknown. There is a full-size gym, two soccer, two lacrosse fields as well as two "field of dreams" fields.

Mr. Hite asked about the three municipalities using their school facilities. There are two new schools, and the future township growth may determine the need for a new school.

Commissioner Kennedy reported that there is less growth in the northern section of the township due to the need for water and sewer. There is no truth to the rumor of building another high school as there is room for expansion at the current facility. Parkland students have priority to use the school facilities over the township residents. He mentioned that the increased demand leads to the benefit of a community center for our township. A community center would alleviate the use of the school facilities as well as the neighboring Parkland School District townships of North Whitehall and Upper Macungie.

Mr. Adams highlighted the Future LV goals for the schools.

Mr. Dombach asked about aging school infrastructure and was told by Mr. Walck that facilities are being renovated as necessary. The need for space also gets reviewed regularly.

## **Emergency Response**

Mr. Adams introduced the 2009 Comp Plan goals.

Mr. Kiskeravage, Fire Commissioner, noted that the township has excellent volunteer staffing at all the fire stations, and we are doing well as compared to neighboring communities and other county departments. He suggested that we continue using volunteers over paid employees if possible. With respect to community facilities, he would like to review the option of a township owned fire station. His wish list includes building that future facility on donated land. The Woodlawn and Greenawalds stations are located near each other and perhaps one of them could be relocated. The township uses many state programs to support staffing and apparatus needs.

Mr. Hite asked where the best location would be for a new station and Mr. Kiskeravage said the western portion near the municipal building. Tri Clover covers our township emergencies in the north and western areas. Tri Clover covers a specific box system with overlap in both South and North

Whitehall. Because Tri Clover has some daytime coverage issues, Greenawalds and Woodlawn stations are backing them up in a double dispatch routine.

Mr. Dugan asked about the receipt of the fire tax monies. Mr. Kiskeravage reported that this money gives stations a budget. It is not always enough, but the funds have benefited everyone since the fire tax money stays with the stations.

Mr. Wolk suggested developing a tangible, quantified 5-year plan for budget purposes for the fire stations regarding equipment and other resources. In addition, a 5-year plan should be performed for the Police Department with reviews of vehicles, equipment and officers as well as the EMS group.

Mr. Bender has begun to work on a 5-year plan for apparatus. He has met with Chief Dorney for the police department plan. Staff will install software for the fall 2023 budget process.

Mr. Hite asked if the live-in fire station program has been successful. Cetronia's live-in program has received a safer grant for support. Greenawalds also received a safer grant to help with daily staffing needs. Woodlawn is the last of the community-based volunteer fire companies. It would take a lot of work to convert this building to live-in facility. If we move Woodlawn, we may lose the neighborhood volunteers at that station.

Mr. Dugan asked if the emergency response 2009 Comp Plan recommendations were met.

Mr. Kiskeravage reported that we have great volunteer base to support the stations. The police department does not keep impounded vehicles at a township lot because the towing companies move them offsite. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) located at the Cetronia Ambulance Building and is activated as needed for flooding issues and other emergencies.

Commissioner Wolk led a discussion about the establishment of another fire station. During last year's budget discussions, Barry Search spoke with Commissioner Wolk and suggested that the township locate a new station near the municipal building. There was a discussion about forming a team to evaluate what is best for the township and what we need for the future of our fire companies.

Mr. Kiskeravage stated that "200 years of tradition unimpeded by progress" is a hurdle to jump over as we look to the future. He will find a representative from each fire station along with the Township Manager to discuss a possible new station.

Mr. Bender mentioned that a 2014 study was done regarding the fire station apparatus which may provide some ideas for our study group. Mr. Kiskeravage will review that 2014 report.

Mr. Hite asked for the fire station zone map information which can be used for future land use discussions. Mr. Kiskeravage will email it to Mr. Adams. (Greenawalds is Station 11; Woodlawn is Station 32; Cetronia is Station 3; Tri-clover is Station 26) For example, if Woodlawn is the first station called to an emergency it is noted as 32-1. Travel locations from fire stations is very important.

Commissioner Hodges asked about staffing and equipment for a new fire station. She suggested a developer offering financial support to the fire program. Mr. Kiskeravage said that equipment from one station could be moved to the new station.

Commissioner Wolk suggested using township staff, fire station representatives and outsiders with different skillsets on the committee to review a new fire station location. Financial analysis will need to be completed. Mr. Kiskeravage will work with the Pennsylvania Career Fire Chiefs Association.

**Public Engagement Goals**

Ms. Clarke discussed the proposed timeline for the next 6 months with the goal of adoption by year end. The website will continue to be used to solicit public comments. When we have the draft Comp Plan, there will be a 45-day public comment period in Mid-September. The Comp Plan Community Roadshow will visit different township locations to meet people and promote the plan.

Mr. Hite asked if anything could slow our schedule. Ms. Clarke said that staff will continue to forward all public comment to the BOC and Planning Commission and present a draft document to the everyone, and nothing should be slowed down.

Commissioner Wolk spoke with Managers Cope and Bender as well as Director Manhardt, but he is looking for deliverables from staff to produce chapters. Ms. Clarke said this will be produced during next few months. Commissioner Wolk is concerned with progress in the short term and not waiting until the end of the year.

Commissioner Hodges said it is important to document our communication with residents to see who responded.

Mr. Wilson asked about the number of online attendees tonight and was told that there were 5.

**Courtesy of the floor**

Mr. Adams reported that the Agenda at the July Planning Commission Meeting will include Allentown Dunkin and zoning ordinance service pack 2C.

Mr. Wilson requested a motion to adjourn at 9:12 p.m. Mr. Hite seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**ADOPTED THIS DATE:**

**ATTEST:**

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**Secretary**

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**Chairman**