

TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH WHITEHALL

LEHIGH COUNTY

JOINT BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS/PLANNING COMMISSION WORKSHOP

REGULAR SESSION

MINUTES

JULY 12, 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, President of the Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission member
Monica Hodges, Board of Commissioners

David Wilson, Chairman of Planning Commission
Brian Hite, Vice-Chairman Planning Commission
Trevor Dombach, Planning Commission
Timothy Dugan, Planning Commission
Mark Leuthe, Planning Commission

Staff members in attendance:

David Manhardt, Director of Community Development
Gregg Adams, Planner
Herb Bender, Interim Township Manager
Chief Glen Dorney, Police Department
Chris Stroehler, Long-Range Planner
Lynn LaBarre, Permits/Minute Taker

Hannah Clark, AICP, Michael Baker International Planner

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

June 7, 2022 Minutes-Commissioner Kelly noted that Mr. Wilson is Chairman of the Planning Commission. In addition, Mr. Wilson and Mr. Dombach made 2 minor word changes. Mr. Dombach moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Kelly seconded the motion and it passed 7-0 with corrections being made.

June 16, 2022 Minutes-Commissioner Kelly noted that Mr. Wilson is Chairman of the Planning Commission. Commissioner Kelly moved to approve the minutes. Mr. Hite seconded the motion and it passed 7-0 with the correction being made.

AGENDA ITEM #5-COMPREHENSIVE PLANS GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION

Director Manhardt introduced new staff member Mr. Stroehler, who will assist in the completion and implementation of the Comp Plan. Mr. Stroehler has experience with grant writing, environmental planning and open space issues. Chris reported that he worked with the township on the Jordan Creek Greenway project with his previous employer, Wildlands Conservancy.

Director Manhardt reviewed the timeline and deliverables for the upcoming Comp Plan Workshops. Tonight, staff will present a draft of housing and community facilities. As goals and strategy drafts are approved, the information is posted to the website. With respect to public engagement, staff has focused on public engagement to form working groups who made recommendations to the Planning Commission. Now through the workshops, the Comp Plan is put together which will go back out to the public for their comments. After the land use plans, the modeling will be presented prior to the draft.

Mr. Wilson thanked staff for providing this schedule noting that the website summary educates the public. Director Manhardt noted that there is a new comment from Marie North for Resource Protection which must be reviewed. In addition, Mr. Spiegel prepared a document regarding transportation and the Route 309 corridor.

Director Manhardt presented **2022 Housing Overall Goal** which is to “Maintain and strengthen the identity of SWT neighborhoods”. The 6 housing strategies were reviewed. Staff had no “call outs”.

Commissioner Kelly reminded staff to review design standards with adjoining neighborhoods and street trees, sidewalks, and lighting.

Director Manhardt reviewed 7 housing implementation steps including transfer of development rights. Developing planning area-based guidelines will be tied to neighborhoods. Ideas in one area such as Greenawalds will not be used in another area such as the Jordan Valley.

Commissioner Hodges asked how adaptive reuse is encouraged. Director Manhardt said zoning could allow for additional uses if it is an adaptive reuse. For example, there may be the possibility of an historic building in a residential zone having a home-based business while a non-historic structure may not have this option.

Commissioner Kelly asked if an historic residential building could be used for a home-based business. Mr. Adams reported that in the current historic resource ordinance this option is permitted. The home can be on the national registry, or the BOC could determine it is historic. A Bed & Breakfast home or art gallery are examples that may fall under this category and not be out of character in a neighborhood.

Mr. Leuthe gave an example of a hotel being converted into apartments (multiple hotels along Hamilton Blvd.) in an area where there are too many hotels. There is a shift in office space as more businesses locate in the city. In addition, as internet sales increase, we may see more vacant retail businesses.

Mr. Adams noted that there are a number of areas in the township that are ripe for mixed use and change of use. We are looking to improve the commercial centers. We need incentives to be creative in our reuses.

Ms. Clarke added that this application of (TDR) transfer development rights that can be used in the areas that have shifted in uses.

Director Manhardt noted that the reuse of properties may have changed due to economics. Some of these issues will be implemented through zoning.

Commissioner Kelly asked about using the Lehigh Valley Department of Economic Development to attract new businesses into the township for any vacant facilities.

Director Manhardt noted that the idea of using the economic development group to actively pursue businesses to locate in our township could be put into the Comp Plan. He is volunteering to recruit breweries for the township.

Mr. Adams presented the **2022 Community Facilities Overall Goal** which is to “Promote an effective continuation of opportunities, facilities and services for parks, recreation, education, public safety, and wellness”. There were 2 strategies discussed that are separated into park & recreation and emergency services categories. There were 7 implementation steps for community facilities.

Mr. Hite asked what BOE represented and was told that it is for Board of Education or Parkland School District. The agreement with the school district uses the BOE term. There was a discussion about the Field of Dreams partnership and the facility at the former Troxell Building.

Commissioner Kelly asked about the strategy involving the land acquisition for community facilities and could this be done for each development.

Mr. Adams reported that SALDO requires open space dedication or fees in place of that open space on all projects. We have been trying to keep the township out of the maintenance and have the HOA maintain the open space. SALDO can be revaluated to perhaps include emergency facilities.

Mr. Wilson said that he has seen a large development build a park, but the developer will still maintain the park and will allow the township to come in if needed.

Commissioner Hodges asked if a developer could donate a piece of emergency equipment.

Director Manhardt said that the fiscal impact model includes emergency services. If the township needs to increase the police force due to the growth from a development, the model provides us the ability to evaluate.

Mr. Leuthe noted that it may not be legal to ask any developer for anything other than what is designated by the traffic impact or recreation fees. The fire companies are staffed with volunteers, but the township provides the equipment. A portion of the fees may be available for emergency equipment-another question to ask the legal department.

Mr. Wilson said that it may not be appropriate to dedicate land but in place of that, emergency equipment funds for the township to procure for the truck.

Mr. Adams reported that the township has been successful in the past in negotiating items in a development. The MPC is straightforward on what you can use open space fees for. We may be able to ask for items, but we can't require items.

Director Manhardt noted that in other states there is a concept called "concurrency" and a developer may be required to build a fire house to support development.

Mr. Wilson said that the give and take and working with the developer is key. Negotiation must be completed within the boundaries of the law.

Mr. Dugan asked about increasing township volunteers.

Director Manhardt said that this topic came from working group discussions. We should publicize any vacancies on boards. Mr. Dugan suggested that staff reword the implementation.

Mr. Hite said that we should create awareness about our volunteer fire department. Mr. Adams noted that the volunteerism topic was discussed at the last meeting. We can expand our pool of volunteers by pooling our resources.

Mr. Dombach suggested that we strengthen our social media outreach. The Parks & Rec and Police Departments have their sources, but we could do more.

Mr. Bender reported that the township is looking into using Nixle as a link to residents.

Commissioner Kelly asked about the staffing level implementation. Mr. Adams noted that this staffing applies to all departments at the township.

Ms. Clarke suggested a third-party evaluation of service levels-emergency services. In addition, the application of a capital improvement plan with community facilities could be done.

Mr. Adams noted that a call out explains a trend or a concept. For example, the changes in the agriculture industry during past 20 years-30 years will give the reader background information allows them to understand better the implementation items.

F. TRAFFIC/TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Jeopardy was hosted by Mr. Stroehler with Mr. Adams awarding candy prizes for all correct answers.

Director Manhardt wanted the group to think about jurisdictional limitations while playing Jeopardy. The Comp Plan can support future township development and growth. The top 3 - 5 priorities were discussed by each member:

Mr. Dombach likes multi municipal planning and working with other townships. Also, traffic impact fees are important to him as well as putting our projects on the LVPC TIP program. He asked about more frequent updates to the Comp Plan and putting a schedule in place for reports.

Director Manhardt noted that we could use periodic and/or reexamination reports (used in New Jersey) to check the Comp Plan progress. Many of the implementation items are multi-year items.

Mr. Leuthe said he is not in favor of amending a zoning map with respect to traffic related intensity of permitted uses. He used the Jeras land as an example that must work with both PennDOT and the township. We must plan for it. Traffic impact fees are expensive to implement with engineering and study costs; however, it will pay for itself.

Director Manhardt said we need to look at the entity that can require improvements for future traffic impacts. Existing issues can be addressed by the township or PennDOT work is done through the TIP. Most improvements come through the development such as the Ridge Farm. With respect to zoning, where can improvements be made and where does it make sense to do improvements.

Mr. Hite said that all items have merit; however, he is focused on safety and noted that we should get our projects on the TIP. In addition, he is a fan of the capital improvements plan to help with budgeting. Act 209 can be hard to implement, and it is costly. There was a discussion about whether or not we have to use the township engineer for this study. The LVPC is conducting a workshop on Act 209. Funds for frontage improvements may not be used the way traffic impact fees are used. Both Upper Macungie and Whitehall have these.

Mr. Wilson would appreciate a plan in place to show what we can and cannot do. The capital improvements plan is key. He is a member of his HOA that supports 330 units. An engineer has done the inventory of roads, storm sewer, and other infrastructure and the cost of maintenance was listed. Roads are re-coded, and the storm sewer will be inspected. This is good piece of mind for the residents. Transportation plan for the township and the Official Map to show connections is important for future developers.

Mr. Hite noted that the map starts the clock for negotiation. This is free advice for engineers and can help with transportation connectivity. For example, there is no way to drive from Cetronia to Allentown Wegmans because the streets are not connected.

Mr. Dugan asked about PennDOT, Township and County owned infrastructure. The County owns the two covered bridges at Covered Bridge Park. There was a discussion about how current the township is with inspections on the aging infrastructure. Multi-municipal planning is important to Mr. Dugan including the volume of traffic from increased development both within our township and from

neighboring municipalities. Stormwater infrastructure must be maintained as we see trees and plants growing out of drains. This creates roadway hazards. Can we leverage onto PennDOT to maintain the storm drains? They usually ask our township to maintain the drains. Director Manhardt noted that the state has regulations we must follow with stormwater maintenance which includes vacuuming inlets.

Mr. Hite mentioned that the township performed inspections on all bridges under 20 feet. Director Manhardt said there was bridge issue and Pidcock inspected them all. The bridge near Werley's Market will be replaced. The bridge at Cedar Crest Blvd. and Parkway Road was recently replaced. State has regulations on stormwater that we must follow-vacuum inlets.

Commissioner Kelly thanked everyone for their comments. The official map is something we have but it needs to be updated as part of the Comp Plan. In addition, she would like to create & implement a capital improvements plan to support developments. Multi municipal planning must be explored to analyze benefits from our neighboring municipalities. She appreciated the conversation we had about the Act 209 traffic impact fees should be analyzed for costs and return of this program and the benefit to taxpayers.

Commissioner Hodges noted that safety areas and high crash sections are important to her. We must look to the future; however, we must first take care of what we have now. Involving multi municipalities will help our township. Capital improvements are key to show what we can afford.

David Burke, 1436 Buck Trail, had comments regarding a traffic study and coordinating future land use to road networks and the ability to absorb change. He stated that 55% of Cedar Crest Blvd's 15 intersections are congested. 93% of those 15 intersections are over capacity and have extended congestion. The traffic study found that Cedar Crest Blvd will be like a parking lot.

Commissioner Kelly commented on this information and suggested that it be integrated into our plan. We cannot ignore these measurable impacts.

Director Manhardt stated that the Cedar Crest Blvd information was compiled by Keystone Engineering as a traffic model. We should direct development where future improvements can be required to help improve areas that are severely impacted by traffic. This is a PennDOT road so it must follow their guidelines. We will be going back to the model once we get through the land use discussion focusing on geographies. We must figure out where and what types of development will be done.

Commissioner Kelly said that this work must connect to the capital improvements plan even though PennDOT is responsible for helping with Cedar Crest Blvd. So many of our township roads connect to this road which will be a township expense. We must be sensible and responsible to our taxpayers as we move forward with possible improvements.

Director Manhardt said providing a model and requiring traffic impact studies will give us more information to help the boards make educated decisions.

Mr. Adams noted that staff will consider all 12 working group recommendations as we move forward including the one to increase citizen education around transportation. We appreciate everyone commenting on their most important recommendations.

Mr. Wilson asked about Cedar Crest Blvd and if the traffic information should be placed on the official map. Does this create an opportunity for future funding as well as something that can be communicated to the developer?

Director Manhardt reminded everyone that the model is the tool, and we could add a connector on the north side of Cedar Crest Blvd and review those results.

Mr. Leuthe cited a successful result from working with the developer. The widening of Walbert Avenue and addition of turning lanes for the Rutz Farm project helped with pinch points on the roadway and improved stormwater. Developer gave up extra to widen the road. Kay Builders has ability to really widen Cedar Crest Blvd, which may be the key to improved traffic flow. The railroad trestle on Cedar Crest Blvd will be another obstacle but there are ways to mitigate it. There was a discussion about the improved stormwater following the Rutz Farm project.

There was a discussion about incorporating speed and crash data into the Comp Plan. Mr. Hite noted that during 2020 & 2021 the crash data in the Route 309 & Tilghman Street (an area which will soon be improved) areas increased significantly. Driver behavior dictates accidents but if we can do something about the design, we must try to correct it.

Chief Dorney reported that data is key, and his department has worked with Cedar Crest College developing heat maps to show where we should enforce to get compliance. He thanked Mr. Hite for helping the police department retrieve this data. Safety is the number one priority and speed boards are used to calm traffic throughout the township.

Mr. Hite suggested putting more tools in the toolbox to support the police. In addition, there are grants available to cover the police wish list.

Director Manhardt said that a municipal traffic safety plan could be done. Mr. Hite suggested making it a Parkland wide plan including Upper Macungie and North Whitehall Townships.

Chief Dorney said that as a first-class township boarding the third-class city and the largest city in the state, we need to have support. There is a continual problem with dirt bikes on public roads. Our police department has met with legislatures to have laws implemented to include first class townships, but we were not successful.

Mr. Hite said that we must document what safety features we have. Our public works department should have an inventory of signage and perhaps PennDOT can assist with those that are missing on state roadways.

Commissioner Kelly has seen speed bumps in other townships and suggested using some. Director Manhardt reported that a traffic calming policy draft was presented to the previous BOC and the plan included speed bumps. The local technical assistant helped with this policy document. Transportation multi-modal concepts could be integrated into this policy.

Mr. Dombach said his priority is promoting safe routes to schools and playgrounds. Some neighborhoods do not have cross walks to get to parks and they should be connecting the more developed parts of township to improve walkability. Director Manhardt reported that the sidewalk gaps and the deferral policy is being reviewed.

Commissioner Kelly said that state law mandates traffic must stop for the pedestrian crosswalk signs. She asked if the township could add these signs to our list. Staff can investigate prioritizing the need for crosswalk signage. PennDOT must be involved with signage on state roads. Grants can be obtained to cover some of this signage.

Mr. Leuthe suggested adding flashing lights to the crosswalk on Hamilton Blvd like what is used in Ocean City, MD. In addition, the crosswalks on Walbert Avenue could also use some lights to assist those who walk to the Target shopping center.

Mr. Wilson said that these additions could be placed in the capital improvements plan for budget purposes. We may need to conduct traffic studies and we must work with PennDOT with flashing lights and beacons on both township and state roads.

Director Manhardt noted that measuring pedestrian traffic is difficult to do. We will focus on connectivity and multi modal topics. The LVPC did a walk roll plan to review specific areas. We cannot wait for pedestrian accident information but must be proactive with traffic improvement plans.

Commissioner Kelly suggested improving the design and safety features of the LANTA bus stops. Director Manhardt has been working with LANTA. There was an attempt to put a shelter at Weis; however, there were utility and elevation issues. It is important to review the frequent bus stops and review pedestrian circulation at those stops. After a person gets off the bus, how do they get to work? Mr. Wilson reported that LANTA has limited funding. Mr. Hite noted that the biggest detriment is acquiring the ROW to install them. In addition, they must be ADA accessible to the shelter. Ridge Farm will have a LANTA bus stop. There was a discussion about the bus stop being one mile from the new warehouse and many people must travel on the roadway to get to their work destination.

Public Engagement-Ms. Clarke reported that the Comp Plan will be introduced in September to the public. We will also share information at National Night Out on August 2, Parkland School open houses and through the website and on social media. Commissioner Kelly asked about the schools that staff will visit. We will visit the elementary schools, but we may go to the high or middle schools also.

AGENDA ITEM #10 – ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Wilson requested a motion to adjourn at 9:00 p.m. Commissioner Kelly made the motion, Mr. Dugan seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

ADOPTED THIS DATE:

ATTEST:

Secretary

Chairman