

**TOWNSHIP OF SOUTH WHITEHALL**

**LEHIGH COUNTY**

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

**REGULAR SESSION**

**MINUTES**

**NOVEMBER 8, 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 Kennedy, Board of Commissioners

Brian Hite, Vice-Chairman Planning Commission  
Trevor Dombach, Planning Commission  
Timothy Dugan, Planning Commission

Staff members in attendance:

David Manhardt, Director of Community Development  
Gregg Adams, Planner  
Herb Bender, Township Operations Manager-Remote  
Chris Stroehler, Long Range Planner  
Lynn LaBarre, Permits/Minute Taker

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

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

Mr. Adams conducted the roll call.

Mr. Hite introduced staff and other members in attendance.

Mr. Adams read the meeting rules.

Mr. Hite asked if there was any staff online and was told that Mr. Bender was present.

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

**October 11, 2022, Minutes**-Mr. Dugan mentioned that he was not the one who made the comment about any significant changes for the 45 day-period. Commissioner Kelly moved to approve the minutes with the change made. Mr. Dombach seconded the approval.

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

Director Manhardt noted that staff spent additional time discussing uses and met individually with board members. Tonight's goal is to finalize land use and review the implementation phase.

There was a lengthy discussion about when to have the public comment period and if it should take place during the Christmas holiday. Commissioner Kelly suggested opening the public comment period from mid-December until January 2023. Mr. Hite agreed with Commissioner Kelly and that timeline. Commissioner Kennedy asked if the review period could go longer than the 45-day period and Mr. Adams reported that the MPC requires a 45-day public comment period. Mr. Dugan noted that a longer review period may be a benefit. Mr. Adams commented that if the board members approve the draft, it could be posted to the website, and public comments could be accepted. Mr. Adams also noted that the township could have an official opening as per MPC requirements. Director Manhardt prefers to begin the comment period following the December workshop. In addition, staff is coordinating a public meeting/open house to discuss both the Comp Plan and the Park & Recreation Plan. Commissioner Hodges would like to see the Comp Plan review done later in the year into 2023. Director Manhardt noted that the review period minimum is 45 days, but it could be 60 days. Mr. Stroehler said the review could be announced at the December Planning Commission meeting with the 45-day review going until the end of January 2023.

Director Manhardt noted that discussions about modeling are more appropriate at a zoning change as opposed to a land use review. More discussion will take place at the December workshop.

Commissioner Kelly thanked staff for meeting with the board members. Shen noted that with zoning the verbiage is consistent with the comp plan. Director Manhardt said that we have made the land use plan flexible with the place types. Zoning is consistent and it will have to work with this board and future boards as they make changes. Mr. Hite asked about zoning and if the model is updated at that point. Director Manhardt said that models will be used more in the future to get an idea of the zoning impact. Mr. Hite asked who has access to the model and Director Manhardt is still working on these details. Transportation model with PennDOT depends on staff for feedback. PennDOT is looking at 6 counties while we are only working on one municipality.

Mr. Stroehler shared the MP codes as well as the purpose of the land use plan which is the vision of all elements put together. The land use plan gives us justification for future zoning changes. Commissioner Kelly questioned a developer disagreeing with the comp plan and subsequently a zoning change commenting that if we are broad in the land use map does this create a potential conflict in the future. Mr. Stroehler noted that place types will help establish the tone for what is recommended in a development. Director Manhardt said that if the township makes a recommendation for a zoning change that is not consistent with the comp plan, we will strive to be consistent between zoning and the plan. Commissioner Kelly asked how we will communicate to the residents the difference between the comp plan and zoning.

Mr. Strohler thanked the board members for their individual discussions. Director Manhardt noted they will add a summary page. Mr. Adams said this is ongoing public education and a one-on-one discussion may be done with landowners. Commissioner Kelly reported the questions can be addressed during a Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Adams could establish a Podcast or talk show to address questions. Mr. Hite believes that realtors and individuals wanting to sell their land will ask questions. Mr. Strohler said that large landowners will be contacted. Commissioner Kelly asked about the land use, conservation subdivision and the transition from very dense to less dense and how will we communicate to the public what this land use includes. Commissioner Kennedy reminded everyone that utilities and infrastructure in specific areas will support the development that can be done in that region.

Mr. Strohler said we will try to simplify the process. He shared the 12 land use place types. Commissioner Kelly suggested changing the wording on the goal page. Mr. Dugan asked if the word should be development or land use in strategy 2 and if it should correspond to current proposed and approved plans. Mr. Strohler said that the map is a snapshot in time. Mr. Adams reminded everyone that Ridge Farm is not there yet; however, the land use map shows the potential location of that development.

There was a discussion about the Jordan Valley land use. Mr. Dugan asked about incentives and how this will be interpreted. Mr. Strohler noted that we don't want to list incentives yet and we can give some examples but not give all details. Some of the incentives are done through zoning. Director Manhardt wants to balance property rights through incentives. Commissioner Kelly wants to protect steep slopes, woodlands, and wetlands. These areas would fall under the natural area land use types. Incentives apply to land uses and with the natural areas there are no incentives, and these land use types are protected by ordinances. Mr. Adams discussed how the average resident understand these concepts noting that if a person loses his rites, he may gain some incentives. Mr. Dombach asked if there are incentives in SALDO and was told that there are, and staff is looking to add more. Mr. Dugan suggested keeping crossroad villages in the Jordan Valley which will assist with traffic planning.

Mr. Strohler reviewed a conservation-based subdivision example showing the development of an 85-acre site. Mr. Hite suggested removing the road names on the conservation-based subdivision map to avoid confusion over the location of these streets. Mr. Strohler noted that there are not a lot of local examples for this land use and this one was from Chester County. Mr. Dombach asked if there was a commercial option for conservation-based subdivision and was told that there is. There are not a lot of local commercial options. Commissioner Hodges questioned the zoning for conservation-based subdivision and was told that it is currently rural residential. Homes are being clustered and natural resources are being preserved in the conservation-based subdivision land use. Director Manhardt noted that conservation-based subdivision can be made a use in the use schedule. Allowable uses are shown in the zoning portal. In addition, we could also put a conservation-based overlay on the land. The easiest way is to add this use to the use schedules in the zoning ordinance. Mr. Adams noted that we currently have something similar which is referred to as lot averaging. Mr. Hite asked if residential is allowed in all land uses and was told that some level of residential is used in all land uses.

Mr. Strohler said that the rural residential land use fills in the gaps in the Jordan Valley. With this use, we could have larger lot residential developments. Director Manhardt said that are different types of agriculture from a pig farm which may not be good next to residential area; however, a winery may be better next to a residential development. Community supported agriculture with a farm stand can be put next to a rural residential area.

Neighborhood residential land use covers most of the township. There are several place types that can be used in these land uses.

Neighborhood corridor is a newer concept which was highlighted by Mr. Stroehler showing roadways that connect the residential regions to the business districts. The idea is to promote the transition area or the corridor. Director Manhardt said that they serve as the focal point of the neighborhood. Banners, special streetscape can be used in these gateways as they are the focal point of a neighborhood. Mr. Stroehler spoke about some examples including Walbert Avenue, Cedar Crest Blvd. and Broadway having areas that are both residential and commercial. The corridor preserves the balance of the two land use types. Commissioner Kelly appreciates having more pedestrian access on the corridor; however, there is a concern due to the volume of traffic. Questions to consider are how we protect pedestrians on the street and how do we preserve the historic structures in the corridor. Director Manhardt discussed "ped shed" analysis and how far a pedestrian can walk unobstructed. We often use a quarter mile. When we look at rezoning, we can look at it on a lot-by-lot basis. Another questions we need to address includes sidewalk deferrals. During the implementation phase, prioritization of sidewalk deferrals will be reviewed in the transportation plan. Director Manhardt noted that these corridors are priority pedestrian corridors. Commissioner Kelly asked about partnering with PennDOT for safer ways to cross Walbert Avenue. The corridor concept in the Comp plan that we can use as we discuss projects with PennDOT and LANTA. Commissioner Kelly noted that there may be grant assistance for a resident to install sidewalk. Mr. Stroehler said that we continue to identify where we need help in the transportation plan. Commissioner Kelly asked about township road corridors and if there is any financial impact to township roadwork in these areas. Mr. Stroehler reported that there will be an impact; however, the neighborhood corridor land use is focusing on development and the active transportation plan, staff will look at how we will implement and fund the plan. Mr. Hite mentioned the Route 309 betterment project and asked why the Orefield region is not considered a neighborhood corridor. Director Manhardt noted that staff called the Orefield region a crossroads village. We use neighborhood corridors with existing local neighborhood residential properties. There is multimodal in the Orefield area and the active transportation plan will help. The sewage plant at the Orefield Middle School may expand in the future. Mr. Stroehler reported that the neighborhood corridor land use was built off neighborhood commercial properties. Mr. Dombach asked about the area near Tilghman and Parkway as a neighborhood corridor and was told that it is listed it as a business district. The active transportation plan could benefit the Parkway School. Mr. Stroehler reported that just because something is not in a neighborhood corridor, it does not mean that we will not focus on multi modal, accessibility, and pedestrian safety standpoints. Director Manhardt reported that when we review the active transportation, we will identify draws such as school, church, library, and business district and we look at connectivity to those areas and identify sidewalks and gaps as part of that plan.

The business district has a regional draw with good connections to larger roadways and employee opportunities. Some areas may benefit from redevelopment and rehabilitation.

Industrial land use was reviewed. There could be conservation-based subdivision in this land use as well as light and heavy industrial uses. We talked about truck routes with this land use as well as agricultural ideas. Director Manhardt reviewed the map and said we may remove part of Ridgeview and make it neighborhood residential with the Bulldog side staying industrial.

Mr. Dugan asked if staff compared the existing land use to the proposed or future land use. Mr. Stroehler noted that there's not a lot of change in the general concepts of residential land use. Now we are showing themes on the map such as the Jordan Valley land use. Director Manhardt said that a big

difference is agriculture as a new land use category, and we will try to preserve this land. We are looking at what is on the ground now. Mr. Adams said there is a great difference between the current land use, future land use map, future zoning, and the actual use of the property. Director Manhardt used "painting" as an example for rezoning a property. The pallet is the land use, and the paints are the place types for the change. Mr. Hite said that he struggles with the neighborhood corridor concept and how this would be implemented. The zoning districts are compatible with each other. Mr. Strohler noted that along Walbert Avenue corridor there are at least six different zoning districts. This allows for street scaping and pedestrian connectivity ideas. Director Manhardt said this identifies the future land use to open the book for future zoning changes. Mr. Hite asked about adding other corridors to the land use map including the area near the Lehigh County fields along Broadway. He doesn't want us to limit any neighborhoods with the transportation plan. Director Manhardt does not see commercial and residential along Parkway but he does sees Parkway as a key area in the active transportation plan.

Commissioner Kelly reviewed several areas that she has concerns with. She noted that it is difficult to cross Parkway at Dylan Drive. She wants to make sure that we look at the entire township as we consider transportation concerns in the neighborhood corridors. In addition, the area along Walbert Avenue near Sims Market has done a good job at adapting commercial properties. There is no sidewalk along Broadway at the 3501 Grille; therefore, how do we add sidewalks and not cause an issue. Mr. Strohler noted that one of the implementation items includes the active transportation plan and Parkway will be discussed in this plan. The concept of neighborhood corridor is not to promote more of something. It will assist with zoning to review parking requirements and the fact we want to encourage more walkability and less traffic connection. Director Manhardt noted that some implementation items may trigger a change in zoning and to focus on design standards. There was a discussion about Walbert Avenue being designated as a neighborhood corridor. There is the proposed restaurant at the Regency which adds a commercial component. Mr. Strohler said that the township does not have a Main Street; however, Walbert Avenue is the closest roadway to being a main street. This is a gateway and there is the potential for possible street scaping along Walbert Avenue. Mr. Dombach said that he originally is from Lititz and they have a Main Street. Commissioner Kennedy calls Walbert Avenue a bypass for Route 22. Commissioner Kelly calls Walbert Avenue a busy congested corridor. Mr. Adams said that everyone has their own concept of Main Street which he sees as a walkable visual street. Mr. Hite asked if we should save the neighborhood corridor for the active transportation plan. There was a discussion about Tilghman Street as a Main Street but the wide roadway is a business district. Director Manhardt said the Walbert Avenue corridor connects the township office to other regions. Commissioner Kelly suggested more discussion about the location of the township "Main Street" and perhaps only focus on the area near the township building. Mr. Strohler said suggested that the goal of the neighborhood corridor category is integration of residential and locally serving commercial and how we pay attention to this area in zoning and transportation planning. We have many corridors to preserve and improve in the township. Director Manhardt noted that neighborhood commercial is appropriate in some roadways, and we are using neighborhood corridors to address a different focus of development. Mr. Adams commented that there are at least four zoning categories along Walbert Avenue east of Cedar Crest Blvd. which is a unique characteristic along that corridor. Commissioner Kennedy mentioned that he never thought of Walbert Avenue as a Main Street; however, he likes the flexibility of the plan. Our township may not prefer another project like Ridge Farm, and we must move forward with projects. Commissioner Hodges would appreciate a nice design standard along a corridor (Hometown Hero's) with traffic calming and crosswalks. Mr. Adams said that this Comp Plan does not restrict the board to specific projects. The flexible plan will be reviewed on a periodic basis and the board will have absolute control over future developments. We are giving you all the tools you need to accomplish the work.

Director Manhardt reported that we did not finish all items on tonight's agenda. We need to review implementation through some email correspondence. Commissioner Kennedy offered to attend the November Planning Commission meeting if the comp plan is on the agenda. Director Manhardt said we will email the updated implementation items to the boards. Mr. Strohler noted that funding sources are identified on the implementation list only if funding is needed to start that implementation item and that many of these items may occur at the same time. For example, the Active Transportation Plan and Transportation Plan have separate priorities but will likely be part of the same planning effort. Director Manhardt noted that there is some overlap; however, we must work through how we are going to roll out the implementation items. Mr. Strohler asked the board members to reach out to him with any questions on these items. Mr. Hite asked if Ms. Clarke was still assisting us with the comp plan and was told that she was volunteering with the polls this evening but continues to help put the plan together and will assist with the public comment period. There was another request for examples of neighborhood corridors and if staff could provide this information to board members. Dublin PA has done some redevelopment along a state roadway which can be compared to Walbert Avenue.

**AGENDA ITEM #10 – ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chairman Hite requested a motion to adjourn at 9:22 p.m. Commissioner Kelly made the motion, Mr. Hite seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**ADOPTED THIS DATE:**

**ATTEST:**

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**Secretary**

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**Chairman**