

**Lower Saucon Township
Economic Development Task Force**

Date: January 29, 2014
Time: 7:30 p.m.
Location: Council Meeting Room

Attendees:

Donna Louder
Craig Kologie
Dennis Dougherty
Karen Beyer
Charles Moretz
Andrew Warner
Lou Mahlman
Trish Lauden
Mary Banonis
Jay McLaughlin
Chris Shelbo
Mark Ironside
Joe Graziano
Steve Zaharakis
Mark Walters

Dave Willard
Judy Stern Goldstein
Jack Cahalan

Jack Cahalan welcomed the Task Force volunteers to the Township and introduced Dave Willard and Judy Goldstein.

Dave Willard thanked the invitees for volunteering to participate in the Task Force process. He explained his role as Council Liaison, Judy's contribution to the Task Force process, and the staff's participation in the process. He asked the volunteers to introduce themselves.

Dave showed a video that was just released today by the Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation promoting the Lehigh Valley for business development.

Dave went through his Power Point presentation:

- Article done by the Morning Call on January 25, 2014 describing the efforts of the Township to form the Economic Development Task Force
- Goals of the Task Force
 - Attract and retain an appropriate mix of businesses to the Township
 - Increase the Township's tax base
 - Increase employment opportunities within the Township
- Role of the Task Force
 - Represent the community in studying economic development in LST
 - Identify goals, strategies, and plans to attract and retain an appropriate mix of businesses
 - Appoint a Working Group of 7 members to provide a report and recommendations prior to the 2015 Township budget deliberations (October 2014)

- 2014 Time Table
 - Full Task Force
 - January – Background data and analysis
 - February – Tour and review of existing conditions and analysis
 - March – Review demographic analysis and brainstorm
 - Working Group
(7 members to be appointed by Council)
 - April – Develop the Vision
 - May – Develop Goals and Objectives
 - June – Finalize Goals and Objectives
 - July – Develop Action Plan and recommendations
 - August – Review Draft Plan and finalize Action Plan
 - September – Final recommendation from Working Group/Task Force
 - October – Present final plan and recommendation to Township Council
- Next Steps
 - Establish date for bus tour (Saturday morning in February). Dave said this has been changed to March 1st.
 - Establish date and time for March brainstorming meeting
- Wrap-up
 - Questions and Answers
 - Open Discussion
 - Distribute background data and analysis
 - Adjournment

Judy went over her presentation:

- Existing Zoning Districts in Township
- Overview Map Showing Non-residential Zoning Districts in Township (Sections A, B, C & D) with photographs of each of the businesses
- Section A – Non-Residential Districts Existing Land Uses
- Section B – Non-Residential Districts Existing Land Uses
- Section C – Non-Residential Districts Existing Land Uses
- Section D – Non-Residential Districts Existing Land Uses
- Property Information for Land Use Study

Judy advised that this information was on the CD handed out to everyone. She recommended that everyone review the Township and LVPC Comprehensive Plans which are available on-line.

Comments:

- Karen Beyer asked if the Zoning Commission was willing to reclassify some of the zoning districts in the Township that are classified as residential for something else?
- Craig Kologie said that while the maps might give one the impression that there are large areas of undeveloped land in the Township, once you overlay the constraints of our zoning such as the steep slopes and woodlands, etc. 100 acres suddenly becomes 20 acres. We should be looking at both the opportunities and the barriers to develop in the Township.
- Judy said that those are excellent points and we should get there as we go through the process and you develop a common language and vision.
- Dave said that one of charges from the mission of the Economic Development Task Force was to identify economic development issues, problems, challenges, and opportunities affecting the Township. The decision about whether the zoning would be changed would be up to the Council to decide based on the recommendations of this group.

- Dave read the remaining charge of the Task Force from the resolution:
 - Recommend plans and programs for the promotion of business development in the Township.
 - Make recommendations for the optimal use of land for the purposes of business development within the Township.
 - Recommend methods to encourage reinvestment in unused or underused commercial structures in the Township.
 - Provide a report with these findings and recommendations to the Township no later than October 1, 2014.
- Dave said he received an email from Sam Donato, the manager at the IESI Landfill who could not attend tonight. He read what Mr. Donato said in his email as he made several good recommendations:
 - The Morning Call article on economic development covered a lot of real issues and was a good starting point.
 - On properties that are sitting vacant or undeveloped, we should set up meetings with the property development companies or rental agents to get an update on what they are working on and how the Township can help. It's a lot easier to fill a vacant property that to develop one.
 - Reach out to the Majestic Development Company to see what they are doing to market their property as they have been expanding their warehouses
 - Review the website and look at the cost of a website to target developers in our region and other states
 - Does the Township have the ability to offer tax incentives to attract developers?
- Steve Zaharakis said that as he understands it Step 1 is to identify the type of assets we have. He thinks that Step 2 should be to look at the type of improvements and implementations that have been productive and if we had a set of examples like that it would aid us in the brainstorming and we would not have to re-invent the wheel.
- Craig Kologie said what we are trying to do is sell the Township and market what we have and we need to create that list of properties that are available and the examples of what people have done to re-use a property. He thought it was a great idea to look at what other people have done and was successful.
- Judy said that it's important to develop the common vision of where you want to be before we start giving you too many roadmaps to go everywhere because there are so many directions to go in. Some communities want to be the next leader in research and development; some want to be the next Fed Ex warehouse mecca; someone wants to be a strip center and shopping malls; someone wants to eco-tourism; someone wants to be cultural. Right now there does not seem to be a direction as to what the non-residential development should be and we have a lot of resources. She stated that she would be more useful if she gave that information to you after you decided in what direction you wanted to go.
- Karen Beyer said that her concern is the transportation infrastructure. If we are going to attract business to the Township her concern is whether there is a transportation infrastructure to support that? Mrs. Beyer also wondered if the group could get together before the next session and exchange some ideas about this data?
- Dave said that they would set it up so that the group could communicate with each other by email between meetings.
- Dave said that regarding the examples, Mike Keller from the LVEDC is here and could be a resource to us. Also, Jeff Parks from Arts Quest has offered to come and address the group. He said it amazed him that with all of the expansion of health care facilities in the Lehigh Valley, the Township does not have one of these facilities.
- Dave said he was thinking that the March meeting will be fairly lengthy and should be at night. We are thinking of breakfast meetings once we get down to a smaller working group. He asked how many could make a meeting in March? The majority of the group said they were okay with that. March 26th would be the day and the meeting would start at 7 p.m.
- Steve Zaharakis wondered if Lehigh University who is a big property owner in the Township and has probably already done some planning would be able to help us out with their ideas?
- Mark Ironside from Lehigh said that he could bring some of the master plans that they have done for their facilities to the next meeting.

- Judy urged everyone to look at the maps and see where the infrastructure (roads, public water & sewer) was located in the Township. Infrastructure or the lack of it has a lot to do with the development pattern in the Township.
- Dave said to recap with what we have so far. The bus trip will be on Saturday, March 1st and will leave here at 8:00 a.m. The next meeting date will be here on Wednesday March 26th at 7:00 p.m. That will be the brainstorming session. Karen suggested that we come up with your top 5 priorities so we will give that some structure and ask you for input on that. We will also prepare a roster of the members.
- Charles Moretz said that he was concerned about the fees and expenses and rules and regulations that businesses have to contend and pay in the Township to build or expand on their properties.
- Andrew Warner said he developed the 2,500 sq. ft. Embassy Bank building in the Township and it was much more expensive and took much more time than it took him to develop a 25,000 sq. ft. building in Quakertown. He said that he has called engineers who told him that they will not work on projects in Lower Saucon because of the hassles they face. He feels that there has to be some give to work with businesses.