

**Lower Saucon Township
Economic Development Task Force**

Date: March 26, 2014
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Council Meeting Room

Attendees:

Donna Louder
Craig Kologie
Karen Beyer
Charles Moretz
Lou Mahlman
Trish Lauden
Mary Banonis
Jay McLaughlin
Mark Ironside
Joe Graziano
Steve Zaharakis
Mark Walters
Sam Donato
Jay McLaughlin
Dave Spirk
Mike Lieberman
Sean McIntyre

Dave Willard
Judy Stern Goldstein
Jack Cahalan

Dave Willard welcomed the Task Force members to the meeting.

Judy Goldstein led the group in a brainstorming session which produced the following answers to the four questions that were distributed before the meeting:

1. Brainstorming

- a. What do you currently like the most about Lower Saucon Township?
 - Township is not overly developed
 - Location in proximity to develop/redevelop of industrial areas
 - Highway network/proximity to Rt. 78, I80, Rt. 33, Rt. 309, Rt. 22, PA Turnpike
 - High income levels
 - Schools/universities
 - Safe place to live
 - Beautiful area
 - Rich history of manufacturing and entrepreneurship
 - Diverse areas with appropriate zoning
 - Pass-thru traffic/commuters
 - Not many failed community projects

- In middle of NE corridor
- Good health care facilities
- Accessibility- central to everything in Lehigh Valley
- SRT (Saucon Rail Trail)
- Level of community services
- Fiscal health of Lower Saucon Township

b. What do you currently like least about Lower Saucon Township?

- Potholes – transportation infrastructure
- Taxes
- Traffic (Rt. 78/Rt. 412, Lehigh/Stabler Arena, Rt. 378)
- No “branding” for LST
- Lack of vision/5-10 year plan
- Over regulation-impediments to business coming to Township
- Reputation for not being business-friendly
- Lack of infrastructure
- Lack of responsiveness/guidance to business
- No KPI (Key Performance Indicator) for successful approvals
- Not using land at highest and best value
- Stormwater run-off/flooding areas
- Lack of developable land available based on current ordinances

c. What do you want to see in the future?

- Medical professionals/facilities to meet needs of the community
- Measured, smart growth that includes light-commercial (i.e. retail – light manufacturing)
- Implement the plan developed by task force – don’t just say it – need to do the work. Don’t want it bogged down in Council
- See LST become known as reasonable/fair to developers
- Focus on vacant areas with zoning and infrastructure for development/ redevelopment already in place
- Make sure development does not impact value of existing homes
- Township needs to be engaged and pro-active with the business community
- Need to maintain the character/flavor of the community and what makes it special
- Need to capitalize on existing commercial/non-residential areas (Applebutter Rd. Corridor)
- See (sensible) zoning changes made quickly/immediately
- Create a 5-10 year plan and solicit subsidies to attract businesses noted in the plan (incentives)
- Create incentives for new businesses to come to the Township
- Technology growth- develop infrastructure for high tech businesses
- Adult-independent living that is affordable
- Market/promote the types of businesses/projects identifies in the “plan.” Need to “rebrand” and make the changes known

- Improve the 378 streetscape
- d. What do you not want to see in the future?
- Don't become too lax in enforcing regulations (need balance)
 - Don't become too over-regulated (need balance)
 - Don't let anyone community dominate decision-making or change
 - Don't go for short-term gains with long term losses

2. Updates

Dave introduced Diane Donaher, the new Northampton County Director of Community and Economic Development who spoke about the assistance that her department could provide to the Task Force.

Dave pointed out to the group that the Township created a page on the website: <http://www.lowersaucontownship.org/economictaskforce.html> that will serve as the repository for all of the documents that we will be handing out during the Task Force process.

Following a short break, Dave introduced Sam Donato from the IESI Bethlehem Landfill, the major business in the Township. Sam spoke about and displayed a photograph to show the number of industrial businesses that are located along the Applebutter Road corridor. He also provided information about the taxes and host fees that IESI has paid to the Township and school district.

Dave handed out information about the LERTA zone that encompasses the LVIP and Majestic sites that are located off of Commerce Center Boulevard and pointed out that the portion of the Majestic site that is in the Township where the data center was proposed is in the LERTA zone. Judy pointed out that the SVSD has a much larger piece of the LERTA zone, some of which is located outside the Township in the City of Bethlehem portion of this site.

Dave said that we printed out some of the materials that were received from the LVEDC and they are on the back table. They provided a list of all the successful projects in the Lehigh Valley and the Jay Garner study that they had done for the entire region. Dave said we asked them to show us case studies of “how it’s done” and they gave a list of “what’s been done” so he is going to press them for more materials.

Dave said that he and Mark Ironside had spoken and Mark has requested to be on the April agenda with additional folks from Lehigh to do a comprehensive presentation on Lehigh University’s master plan.

3. Next Steps and Timetable

- a. Appointment of Seven Member Working Group – Dave pointed out that the resolution that established the Task Force calls for a seven member working group and that we were pleasantly surprised that we got close to 20 volunteers who were willing to serve. Dave asked the group if they thought it was feasible to work as a group through the process including writing and delivering recommendations in a report? The group unanimously agreed that they would continue to work together for the next six months and deliver the report. Dave said that he would report this back to the Township Council. The group recommended that Dave act in the role of the Chair for the group which he accepted. Sam Donato suggested that the group set up committees to work on the various subjects that will go into the report.
- b. Thumbnail profiles of Task Force Members on Website – Dave handed out the list of the members with the brief biographical information about each of you that we got from your applications and ask that they look it over and let staff know if it is acceptable to put a little thumbnail like this on the Economic Development Task Force page on the Township website.

- c. Future Meeting Dates – Dave said we handed out a list of potential dates for future meetings. The group has a choice of either breakfast or evening meetings. This room is available for either morning or evening meetings on the 2nd Monday and the last Wednesday of the month. Dave asked for a show of hands on a preference for morning or evening meetings. The group was unanimously in favor of evening meetings. Dave asked for a show of hands on either Mondays or Wednesdays and a majority favored Wednesday meetings. Dave said okay then it will be the last Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m.
- d. Presentation of Final Report to Council – Dave said that Council’s 2nd meeting of the month in October is October 15th so that will be when our report will be presented to them.

4. Other Comments

- Karen Beyer suggested that the group identify the economic development drivers in the Township and then the group should break into small working groups around those drivers.
- Craig Kologie asked if there was an outline of what the report would look like. Judy said that she did submit one to the Township early on. Dave said that we will get that out to everyone. Dave said that maybe we can have a workshop separate from this process around some of these topics that are coming to us from outside groups.
- Lou Mahlman said that he could provide information about the Township budget to anyone who was interested.
- Judy said that the documents that she provided to date will all become part of the final report. The hard part in this process will be to get the group to define the vision for the future and then once that’s established they will develop the action plan to get to the vision. The brainstorming tonight will hopefully help the group reach this vision. There was a discussion about the difference between vision and mission statements. To become something is a vision. Judy gave some examples of visions that other communities had agreed on. A mission statement would be to: work together to develop the vision for the future economic redevelopment of Lower Saucon Township.

The meeting concluded at 9:40 p.m.