

**Lower Saucon Township
Economic Development Task Force**

Date: April 23, 2014
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Location: Council Meeting Room

Attendees:

Donna Louder
Craig Kologie
Charles Moretz
Lou Mahlman
Jay McLaughlin
Mark Ironside
Steve Zaharakis
Mark Walters
Sam Donato

Dave Willard
Judy Stern Goldstein
Jack Cahalan

Dave Willard welcomed the Task Force members to the meeting.

1. Lehigh University Master Plan

Mark Ironside introduced Van Dobson, the Associate Vice-President of Facilities at Lehigh University. Van provided a Power Point slide presentation on the University's Master Plan which was produced in 2012. He reviewed the plans for the renovation and re-purposing of buildings on the Asa Packer and Mountaintop campuses. He showed slides of the new athletic buildings planned for the Goodman Campus. He displayed an aerial map showing the properties that the University acquired on the new Stabler Campus in Upper Saucon Township.

2. Updates

a. Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) Process – Rezoning

Dave said that the Applebutter Road zoning ordinance amendment which would allow the IESI Landfill to expand if it was passed by the Council is not really a topic for discussion by the Task Force as the MPC process is already underway. Judy said that the process that is underway is not hearings on the expansion of the landfill but hearings on a zoning amendment that would expand the LI district and would permit additional landfill as one of the uses. It was not about IESI - it was about a text amendment and it has gone through several hearings at the Planning Commission and then the formal hearing process with Council. There was significant public comment at those hearings which are now closed. There has not yet been any vote on the amendment; Council would need to advertise if they plan on taking that vote. Therefore, there has been no decision. A question came up at a previous Task Force meeting whether this group should comment on this and she wanted to point out that the hearings are closed and to be part of those hearings as a group is not possible. Dave said that the Task Force is welcome to comment on this and he would urge all of you to come to the Council meeting when this appears on the agenda. All of the documents pertaining to this process and minutes of the meetings are on the Township website.

b. Lower Saucon Township Revenue Breakdown

Dave said that in response to the comments that Lou made about the type of financial information he could provide we asked the Director of Finance to produce the chart that we are distributing. It shows the Township revenues for the past year. The revenue totals \$9.4 million dollars and primarily comes from taxes on our residents and from the landfill tipping fees. Steve said that he looked at the report from the viewpoint of which of these items can the Task Force actually effect by our activity? There was a short Q & A discussion about several of the revenue items. Steve said that from his analysis he did not see where the Task Force could have much of an impact on any of these revenue items. Sam said he felt that the Task Force could take some incremental steps to “move the needle” economically and that there are limited opportunities for commercial development in the Township and that possibly more residential development could be encouraged. Craig said that residential development does not usually carry its own weight due to its impact on school taxes. Dave said that he appreciated everyone’s comments but he felt it was too early in this process to go to the numbers as we are still at a higher level. Jay said that the landfill did a compilation of the commercial property in the Township and combined they have a valuation of approximately \$20 million dollars and the landfill makes up about \$4 million of that total value.

c. Attendance/Voting Privileges

Dave said that we had some discussion with the Council and he asked for their guidance on attendance requirements and voting privileges. The guidance from the Council was that the members should attend at least 2/3rds, or 6 of the 9 Task Force meetings, in order to be eligible to vote on the final report. Also, he discussed with Sam today that IESI has two representatives attending the meetings and he asked that when it comes time for a vote that they pick one person to cast that vote. They have agreed to that.

d. Additional Information

Dave said that you had asked what the final report was going to look like so we gave you an outline that was prepared by Judy at Boucher & James that describes the process we have been following and will continue through to the final report. If anybody has any other suggestions please let us know.

3. Creating the Vision

Dave said that as a starting point for this discussion, Sam Donato had submitted a draft mission statement after our last meeting which he handed out to the group. The statement reads, “To develop opportunities through managed growth that reflects the Township’s heritage.” Dave said that his idea of a vision statement is – if we do this, what will things look like in 3, 5, 10 years as a result.

- Judy said that she felt that this was a good start and that from this you would develop a series of goals with measurable objectives. The words managed growth and Township heritage resonate with a lot of the planning work that has been done previously with the comprehensive plan.
- Craig said his statement would be “to develop a stronger tax revenue stream from the commercial sector without sacrificing Lower Saucon’s natural features and quality of life in order to stabilize the tax burden carried by taxpayers in order to meet the anticipated revenue streams for the future”.
- Craig said that he had an additional statement which was “to acknowledge the important contribution of Lower Saucon’s business community to our economic sustainability and to develop and maintain a strong and lasting relationship between Township government and the commercial sector”.

- Steve said that some of the keywords that he would add are: “future”, “business partnership”, “growth”, and “standard of living”.
- Donna said she would add “neighborhood compatibility”.
- Mark Ironside said that he found a township on the internet that used the terms “to ensure that natural areas and resources are passed along to future generations”.
- Steve asked what was the purpose that Council had in getting this group together? Dave said that the problem was that we have one large business in the Township and a lot of smaller businesses and the question was: is that the proper balance we should have now and into the future, or should we look to develop more business in the Township? Is there something we should be doing as a Township or Council to create more business opportunities in the Township?
- Steve said that that answer has a statement “create more business opportunities in the Township”.
- Steve said our goal is “to maximize the utilization of the resources that we have”. Craig said “within certain boundaries”.
- Steve said our goal should be to get a high tech company with a low environmental footprint with high earning workers.
- Sam cited the success of the Majestic company in nearby Bethlehem in attracting business and said we need to find out how they are doing that.
- Mark Ironside said we should be looking at “increasing economic activity through certain kinds of business ventures”.
- Judy said that one of the things that might work would be to provide incubator office space.
- Steve said that we should look into getting grants so that we can to have funding to attract businesses. He suggested that Seidersville Hall should be upgraded and used as incubator space for start-up companies.
- Dave read Craig’s email which said that “it is expected that the Economic Development Task Force should develop short term commercial revitalization and long-term small business expansion and local ownership new enterprise strategies keeping with the above mission/vision statement, whatever we agree upon. This Task Force shall improve communication between the Township and the business community, debate economic development policy for the Township seeking to develop a consensus and promote economic growth”. Dave said that statement describes the short-term and long-term direction that the Task Force should take.
- Mark Walters said that he felt that the Township should be doing something to help out the existing businesses in the Township that have a potential for growth.
- Mark Ironside said that we should add “to help existing businesses grow and develop while exploring new opportunities”.
- Jay said that the vision statement should say something about the relationship of the Township with Lehigh University. Judy it should mention “institutions” in general.
- Sam said that we should bring in Tony Ianelli from the Chamber. Dave said that we can invite Tony along with Don Cunningham from the LVEDC and Jeff Parks from Arts Quest to a future meeting.
- There was a short discussion on what the definition of “heritage” was.
- Dave asked Judy to type the following onto the Word document: **“to support existing businesses and institutions while developing future opportunities through managed growth that reflects the Township’s heritage.”** Everyone agreed that that was very good mission statement. Ron Horiszny suggested that it say Lower Saucon Township or the Task Force. The group agreed to add **“Lower Saucon Township will support.”**

4. Other Comments

Dave asked if there was any public comment. There was none.

The next meeting will be on Monday, May 12th at 7:00 p.m. Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.