

I. OPENING

CALL TO ORDER: The Planning Commission Workshop of Lower Saucon Township was called to order on Tuesday, July 1, 2008, 4:00 P.M., at 3700 Old Philadelphia Pike, Bethlehem, PA, with Mr. John Landis, Chair, presiding.

ROLL CALL: Present: John Landis, Chair; Fran LaBuda, Secretary; John Noble, John Lychak, Tom Maxfield; Dan Miller, Engineer from Hanover Engineering; Chris Garges, Zoning Officer; Judy Stern Goldstein, Planner from Boucher & James, Jack Cahalan and Stacey Ogur from Boucher & James.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. PUBLIC COMMENT/CITIZEN AGENDA ITEMS

None

III. BUSINESS ITEMS

Mr. Landis said this is the workshop session for the multi municipal comprehensive plan. This will be between Lower Saucon Township and Hellertown Borough. Last night, AJ Schwarz said there were three key issues to the plan. One of them was the development of the Borough of Hellertown; municipal services boundary; and transportation. Those all will have an effect. A question was asked last night about transportation – how much had been done in terms of traffic. The answer was some, but not a lot, it depended on what the actual development plan was. There was a public meeting last night on this plan. Traffic flow is a big impact for this plan.

Ms. Stern Goldstein said with the goals, this is a global issue. What this plan is missing is any teeth from an environmental point of view. Most of what Lower Saucon Township (LST) has been doing when we arrived in Lower Saucon in 2004, has been based on environmentally sound land use planning decisions. That's a great step that LST has been doing. There is nothing in this comp plan that deals with this at all. The environmental issues are one sentence paragraphs and we need this comp plan to really beef up those issues that talk about the existing conditions and the delicate balance of the environmental resources within the township and the region as that sets up the ground work for the environmental protection standards that are already in your ordinance and the whole way the township has been looking at the land use patterns and the preservation of the areas with the resource protection. It knits in with the open space plan, your priorities for open space acquisition, the issues we are dealing with greenways plan, they all knit together. Unless the comp plan embraces that, we've lost all opportunity of going forward.

Mr. Landis said as an output of this meeting, we probably need to give the consultants some direction. Ms. Stern Goldstein said you could make specific recommendation, but she thinks you need to give input and feedback. We need to have the minutes transcribed and get to Carolyn by the next meeting. Each issue should be summarized or reach some consensus or lack of consensus so she knows where you are going. Mr. Landis said the environmental issues have not been addressed in the goals and in the text of the document. Mr. Maxfield said his problem is exactly with that as No. 6 "encourage in fill". They talked about in fill and commercial areas, but the way the goal is stated, it sounds that we are encouraging in fill everywhere, but that's what we are discouraging. Ms. Stern Goldstein said instead of in fill, use "adaptive use or redevelopment of existing buildings/structures or lots". Most of this was really in the context of Hellertown Borough. It can apply to LST like along 378. We do have some properties which can be re-developed. Mr. Maxfield said we need to state this is a commercially based goal.

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Someone said it could be residential. Ms. Stern Goldstein said on Philadelphia Pike, there is some adaptive use of the residential properties. Mr. Maxfield said are we going to encourage them not to use in fill? Ms. Stern Goldstein said change the word or define it more. Mr. Landis said in fill is a confusing word as it can mean redevelopment as well. Ms. Stern Goldstein said we need them to qualify that statement more. If in fill does bother someone, there are a lot of other phrases. Mr. Maxfield said reading through this, it's scary. Out in the green areas, that statement should be coupled with the one that is missing and continue on our program of conservation and preserving. Ms. Stern Goldstein said that's the one that needs to be balanced initiatives in No. 1 and 2 and managed growth...we need to recognize, highlight and celebrate the environmental resource protection and conservation efforts and encourage more of that in conjunction of managing areas that are best suited for growth, yet preserve and enhance those areas best suited for preservation. That's part of the balance, but what's coming out is more of the nuts and bolts of balancing economic issues in the Borough of Hellertown. It shouldn't be Hellertown needs this, LST needs this...it needs to be the community...the community needs resource protection.

Mr. Landis said Hellertown is going to also go through this and then we will bring both groups together. Ms. Stern Goldstein said you are going to make your recommendations, then Hellertown Planning Commission is going to make their recommendations, then it will go to the governing bodies who give it to the consultant. No one can guarantee that any of your comments will be implemented, so don't be insulted or offended as part of the process, so give as much as you can. This is like an update to your comprehensive plan. You are now part of a multi municipal comprehensive plan. If you are part of a multi municipal, there are great opportunities there for you. Stacey said in terms of zoning, it requires that each municipality has to address the possible uses in their area. By having a joint plan, you can share those. Ms. Stern Goldstein said if LST, Hellertown and the school district embrace this, there are so many great opportunities, but they aren't even touched in this yet.

Mr. LaBuda said Hellertown is land locked, they have no place to go. Mr. Landis said they represent the denser development and if we're in with them, we don't have to have that denser development. Mr. Maxfield said we also have some things they don't have. Mr. LaBuda said there are ten pages in there that are from Hellertown. We never addressed our last comprehensive plan. That's all down the drain. Mr. Landis said we addressed it with new zoning ordinances. Ms. Stern Goldstein said in 2004, the resource protection ordinances, that was the first thing on board that we did, to fulfill the goals and objectives of your comprehensive plan. Mr. Landis said after we did that plan, the consultants came back with updates. Ms. Stern Goldstein said you have also done the open space plan. One of the action items of the EAC was to have an open space plan. You have made great leaps in responding to the prior comp plan. Mr. Landis said by adopting it, you are not changing anything until you change the ordinances, but you've got the blue print. Ms. Stern Goldstein said in the last few years, it requires that a comprehensive plan and the zoning be consistent. If your new comprehensive plan that says something that is not generally consistent, that means the zoning needs to be changed to become generally consistent. Mr. LaBuda said there is nothing in there about the school district, how are they incorporated. Mr. Maxfield said any money the school district doesn't have to spend, we don't have to give it to them. Mr. Landis said the bodies that are going to approve this plan are the Hellertown, Lower Saucon bodies and the school district. The school district needs to approve it if they are part of it. The school district can't make land use decisions, but by being part of this group, they can actively participate. Ms. Stern Goldstein said if the school district says no, they would just not be party to it or if Hellertown or LST said no, they are just removed from it. Mr. Landis said if Hellertown says no, how can we adopt a plan? Ms. Stern Goldstein said it would not be multi municipal anymore. Becoming part of a multi municipal plan, it's not something any municipality takes lightly.

Mr. Landis said does anybody have any thoughts about their concept about having a greenway which connects? He thinks it's a great idea and good for transportation...an alternate mode for transportation. Mr. Maxfield said the greenway area needs to connect to the watershed area. It's following Polk Valley Run. It's got to go into the watershed area in Hellertown. Mr. Maxfield will draw it on the map. Hellertown Reservoir should be listed on there also. Mr. Lychak said doesn't Bethlehem want to connect

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with Hellertown? Mr. Cahalan said there's an issue with Norfolk Southern as they own that by the Wendy's. That's locked up.

Mr. Cahalan said if we open up our end and Bethlehem opens up their end, there will be some pressure there. There will be a bike lane on 412. There are going to be seven lanes and one has to include the bike lane. He explained where the greenway would go in Hellertown, Lower Saucon and Bethlehem. Mr. LaBuda said how many traffic problems do we have with the greenway? Mr. Maxfield said Lower Saucon Road, Easton Road and Bergey's. Ms. Stern Goldstein said a greenway can cross roads. Mr. Landis said there are places that you go long distances without crossing a road. Ms. Stern Goldstein said the intersections, if you treat them properly, that would be an opportunity to announce the greenway and the trail and celebrate the intersections and have people know there are opportunities to access the trail. Often times in greenways, when the land has been acquired, then bike paths, pedestrian trails can lead from hub to hub. Mr. Maxfield said there are some existing greenways that are not on the map. Ms. Stern Goldstein said to mark that on the map.

Mr. Landis asked if there were any comments on the bike path? If you can put in the kind of walking trail or bike path along the canal that's removed from the road, as it's dangerous to have someone riding on Wassergass Road. Ms. Stern Goldstein said there are two kinds of bikers, the recreational biker or the true cyclist, and the true cyclist is not going to use a path where people are recreating as they are going a different speed.

Mr. Landis said in the Wassergass area, they are talking about a village and right now, he meant to look it up, he doesn't know if it's a zoned village center or not. There's a little bit of it that was. Bergstresser's is there. That's what the village center is now. They show this in a rather large area, which he thinks if Hellertown is a hub, why are you creating a sub hub. He has no problem with it being a trail head and having it limited with what's being there. Ms. Stern Goldstein said that's a gesture to the historical nature of a village center, and LST as a group, you have to decide if it's worth sort of preserving that village and the era that is no longer there or just ignore it. They are making great strides to show there was a village there. You can go into Bergstresser's and buy hot dogs, sandwiches; they used to sell gas there. Right now, it's more like it was ten or twenty years ago. The preservation of that store makes sense to him. The enlargement of the area does not. Ms. Stern Goldstein said does it make sense to have any other services that could augment the store? The answer was no. The message is thanks for including the village of Wassergass, but it's really a part of an area where we see it as a resource protection of conservation area as opposed to a development or village area. Mr. Landis said there are no public services there. On the map, there are existing land use and there is also future land use. They are calling Wassergass Village for future land use. That's what you disagree with, so let them know and let's mark it up. You are okay with the trail head, but not okay with the concept of the village in Wassergass (for future land use). If you take this recommendation out, then you don't have it if you need it for the future so keep your options open.

Mr. Noble said if you see the spokes coming off of Easton Road, and feeding into the areas of Lower Saucon, across from the Giant Center, it's all retail. If you push some of the retail out the end of Hellertown, you can get it in an area that has actual land developed with parking, and you can do village centers, and do phenomenal development down there. You have parking down there. You have the corridor between Leithsville and Hellertown which isn't addressed, but he thinks that's a retail corridor. In Hellertown, they are going to end up getting rid of the on street parking. Ms. Stern Goldstein said it's going to be really hard to eliminate the on street parking. It might be on the one side, but not on the other. There's going to be a major change. Mr. Noble said it would be nice to have two retail corridors. Fifteen to twenty years down the road, yes, we need it. Mr. Lychak said how is that going to not increase traffic. Mr. Noble said with dealing with uses within the community, you could consider more bypass retail. You do it along 412, but your customer base is not the Lehigh Valley customer base, it's the people driving by everyday that need a service. Ms. Stern Goldstein said it's people driving by there to and from work. Mr. Noble said, if we as a township want to see the Main Street corridor of Hellertown do good, we'd have to jump in with a financial contribution to make it viable. To make it viable is to acquire real estate behind

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the stores, eliminate some on street parking as when you look at other stores; they all have parking behind their stores. We want to see it happen. Mr. Noble said LST would like to see a Hellertown corridor and combine the two township's goals. Ms. Stern Goldstein said she believes downtown Hellertown was one specific plan to be done as one of the action items. Mr. Noble said they are a action item and you look at who is responsible, it's not LST. The action item had two things, and LST is not in it. Hellertown is in it and he doesn't believes they have the financial ability to do a retail corridor that is viable to service LST. You can't park, it's very difficult. The future traffic is going to be brutal in a few years. Ms. Stern Goldstein said a suggestion to the consultant would be to bring LST to the table in looking at downtown Hellertown and the inner relationships between commercial properties adjacent to Hellertown. Mr. Noble said the corridor has to be managed by both Hellertown and LST. Ms. Stern Goldstein said this is something that is right for so many grants. It's multi municipal. You suggest the specific goals of the plan. You do that plan later and suggest the need for it. Mr. LaBuda said does this subject come under? Ms. Stern Goldstein said land use, economic development. Mr. Noble said they are saying Water Street and the 412 intersection, should expand into a retail center. Ms. Stern Goldstein said Doylestown is striving today because of the bypass. It was good for Doylestown, but it's a county seat. The people are coming there during the day, all day and every day. Mr. Landis said he doesn't know if he would agree with further development down the line. Ms. Stern Goldstein said John Noble had great suggestions for modifying the recommendations. The downtown manager was a great idea. Mr. Landis said it seems Hellertown wanted to really revitalize its Main Street business. Mr. Noble said you might have to put in some offices in downtown Hellertown. Ms. Stern Goldstein said the space in the center of town is so valuable that they are not going to put offices there. We have a lot of class A office space south of town and those people can use the goods and services in Hellertown on their lunch breaks. Mr. Noble said there is some great opportunity. Across from the Giant, you have a huge parcel over there. That corridor should be a commercial corridor. Mr. Landis said we've expressed that point. Mr. Noble said the consensus is the whole stretch from Leithsville to I78 should be looked at which fits into their recommendation C, economic development, and you are asking for that whole area to be expanded.

Mr. Landis said municipal services boundary is the next major issue. It's too large. His opinion is it's at places where it shouldn't be. Mr. Maxfield said AJ explained that everything is flowing down from the ridge. Mr. Landis said it's not like it's a gradual slope, it goes up. Mr. Maxfield said the only utility out there is a water line. Mr. Landis said to add all of this area, what are you trying to do. Then it ruins the greenway. Mr. Maxfield said they purposely stopped the sewer going up Polk Valley Road as there was only one failing system. He doesn't see doing any kind of expansion here. Mr. Miller said they are in the process of doing an Act 537 update. Even so, it would be a big gap. Mr. Landis said you could change the boundary of this and not be site specific. Mr. Lychak said what about Upper Saucon Township, don't they have sewer in this area? Spring Valley Road? The new development? Someone said he believes it's all public water and sewer. Mr. Maxfield said he'll write down "stop at Ringhoffer and stop at I-78" on the map. Pertaining to the golf course, Ms. Stern Goldstein said if you could regard it as open space, it makes great sense.

Mr. Landis said is there any other direction we want to give to them? Ms. Stern Goldstein said the benefits to both communities if they do a multi municipal zoning map or ordinance, you don't have to provide for each and every use within the municipalities. Hellertown's use is they have lack of land available and they have to provide for a variety of residential and non residential uses. If they were a partner with LST, some of those uses could be in LST, like the landfill. In the Newtown area, Wrightstown Township has the quarries and Newtown Township has most of the commercial, Wakefield Township has the large parcels and the horse farms. Everyone did something. Newtown is benefiting because they have more of the office and commercial. Together they are one. You have strength in numbers and in sharing those land uses. The multi municipal comprehensive plan is the first step in this. You would still have your own Planning Commission and a joint Planning Commission. If you are going to have joint zoning, each municipality would adopt the joint zoning ordinance. Mr. LaBuda said they don't have the kind of area we have, so how could you implement this as we have a lot of RA's. Ms. Stern Goldstein said the Newtown Joint Zoning ordinance is big. Wakefield does not have any RA zoning, but it appears in the zoning

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ordinance, it appears on the map, but they just don't have it. They could adopt the same map and not include the sections that don't apply to them, but it just makes sense to adopt it. Mr. LaBuda said would zoning be part of this package? Ms. Stern Goldstein said it could, but there are some that don't do joint zoning and there are some that do the whole thing. You don't need to do it together.

Mr. Landis said the other thing we haven't discussed is the 378 corridor of coming up with a site specific plan of how that would be developed unless you would develop a site specific plan on how to develop 378. Ms. Stern Goldstein said that's what she would suggest. Mr. Landis said there should be a site specific plan for Leithsville and for 378.

Mr. LaBuda said for the next meeting, what are the subjects that are going to come up? Mr. Landis said Caroline will get this information and look over the minutes.

Ms. Stern Goldstein said one thing that didn't come up was Lehigh University and the impact. Lehigh is a great potential for good healthy economic impact on the community and we need to recognize that and create more partnerships. There are also opportunities to use the facilities at Lehigh more than we do. They do hold a lot of land and they will grow and expand. There are some great opportunities and need to be discussed in the comp plan as they are out there.

Mr. Landis said on the municipal service boundary, we don't want to provide service other than along the road. We don't want to provide it coming down the slope, so we need to modify that. The road below that is Seidersville Road, and we don't want it on the north side of Seidersville Road.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT/CITIZEN NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Nothing

VII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: Mr. Lychak moved for adjournment. The time was 7:00 PM.

SECOND BY: Mr. LaBuda

Mr. Landis asked if anyone in the audience had any questions or comments? No one raised their hand.

Submitted by:

Mr. John Landis
Chair