

SAUCON VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Date: February 13, 2008
Time: 6:38 p.m.
Location: Lower Saucon Township

A. Call to Order - 6:38 p.m. Ed Inghrim, Chair

B. Roll Call - Present: Ed Inghrim, Mayor Fluck (NO QUORUM); Jack Cahalan, Charlie Luthar.
Guests: George Howey, Bill Wichert, Express-Times; Jennie McKenna, Gail Nolf

C. Council Of Governments

1. Approval of the minutes of the January 9, 2008 meeting of the Saucon Valley Partnership was tabled as there was no quorum.
2. Treasurer's Report - Approval of the Treasurers Report and Checking Account Report was tabled as there was no quorum. Approval of a bill in the amount of \$1,310.59 from EPD for services for the month of January, 2008 was tabled as there was no quorum.

D. Citizens On Agenda Items - Michelle Moser Deegan, who is the Director of the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium (LVRC), which is located at Muhlenberg College, was present to give an overview of their role. The LVRC is essentially a Lehigh Valley "think tank" that addresses "quality of life" issues in this region. They have an advisory board comprised of members of the non-profit and business community, higher educational institutions, local and state government representatives, and a representative from the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges (LVAIC). They are funded by their colleges, local corporations, and they have received funding through Bob Freeman and Steve Samuelson. Faculty from the colleges in the Lehigh Valley have been working for the past three years putting this together. They are focusing on two (2) priority functions: a community based information system and research studies. Michelle went on to their website at www.lehighvalleyresearch.org which they hope to launch in May. Their Community Based Information System will pull together all publicly held data such as crime, education, economic data, etc. in one area. They are collecting this data at the state, county and local level. The information will be available to the public to download either as reports or with maps. They hope to collect data as far back as 1950. They want to provide a Lehigh Valley Status Report each year which will show any changes in these quality of life indicators from year to year. They are going to use the data that they collect as the basis for a research study on the socio-economic impact of gambling on the Lehigh Valley. They have a unique opportunity for this research of doing a "pre-test" before the casino opens and then they will do "post-testing" once the slot machines are there. They are going to be looking at changes in crime; measurements of health and mental health; land use and traffic flow issues; measures of the economy. Substance abuse will be measured as well. Jennie McKenna said that the Borough would be interested in tracking the increases in emergency services calls as a result of the casino traffic. They are currently writing a grant proposal for funding to do a research study on gangs in the Lehigh Valley. Michelle said that currently because Pennsylvania does not have a statewide definition of what is a gang, every jurisdiction defines it differently. This makes it difficult to collect data. She understands that there is a bill in the state legislature that contains a definition of what a gang is. They will be looking at how in-migration versus home-grown population impacts on the growth of gangs in this area. Michelle said that in her opinion they cannot come up with an action plan on gangs until they understand the motivation behind gangs. Jennie asked if we look on your website, how will we know where you got the data? Michele said that on their charts, maps, etc., it will indicate the source at the bottom in the metadata section. Michelle said that from visiting with the various COGs, municipalities she has come to realize that there is data that these groups collect (for example, how many business

permits we give out) that we are not required to share with the county or state, but yet, if they could collect it from all of the municipalities in the Lehigh Valley it would be rich, useful information. Michelle said that she has a two-page survey form that she is giving out to the municipalities in Lehigh and Northampton Counties and to the COGs which asks you to check-off if you have the data, if you share the data, and with whom do you share the data. This will give them a sense of what data is available and since they do not want to have to continually ask 62 municipalities for data, it will tell them where they can access it. The Lehigh Valley Economic Development Corporation (LVEDC) Latino Economic Task Force has just hired the LVRC to do conduct a study of the Latino public school population to determine how Latino school children fare compared to other races and ethnic groups. Ed asked if any of the students working for the LVRC would be available to work for the COG. Michele said they could be, possibly either undergraduate or undergraduate.

E. Citizens On Non-Agenda Items - None

F. Work Session - Saucon Valley Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

Jack stated that Carolyn will not be coming tonight and EPD is still looking to get feedback from all of the Steering Committee members on the priority list in the Internal Working Draft Document. Ed said that he was hoping to hand out the revised version of the action plan that has been given an additional 4th column for any comments or notes that the individual wants to offer. Ed said that EPD right now does not feel comfortable with the action plan as it has not had enough feedback from all of the members of the Steering Committee. Ed said that he wanted to encourage those members who have not submitted comments yet to utilize this form and submit their comments to Charlie or Jack. Jack said that EPD has expressed to him that they are not comfortable moving forward with the Comprehensive Plan until they have sign-off by 100% of the Steering Committee on this draft action plan. Ed said that you don't have to provide your name on the document but you should identify if you are from the township, borough or the school district.

G. Brief Reports and Discussion Items

1. **Casino Related Issues** - Jack gave a brief background on the proposal that Hellertown, Freemansburg Boroughs and Lower Saucon Township had put together to give to the Northampton County Executive for the distribution of the casino impacts funds to the five (5) priority municipalities. Jack advised that the County Gambling Impacts Committee, which Mr. Stoffa had created to study the impacts from the casino coming to Bethlehem in 2009, had recommended to us that we come back to them with sign-offs by all five (5) of the priority municipalities. Jack, Charlie, and the manager from Freemansburg met with the managers from Hanover and Bethlehem Townships and went over our proposal for the distribution of the priority municipality funding. We were glad to see in the paper this morning that Hanover Township has agreed to support our proposal. Jack handed out copies of notes from the County Gambling Impacts Committee meeting he attended on February 11, 2008 and stated that a Commissioner from Bethlehem Township attended a portion of the meeting and commented that their township does support our distribution proposal and is willing to work with the other priority municipalities. Jack said that the municipalities will be adopting a resolution at one of their next meetings to support our distribution proposal and we will send those resolutions back to the County. Hopefully, the County Gambling Impacts Committee will then recommend to the County Council that our proposal be adopted. The Committee has two legal questions that they have to get an opinion on: what is the definition of a "priority municipality", and whether our proposal meets the definition of a "grant application". Once that is done and the County selects an authority to distribute the host funds, this process will be in place. Jack said that the Chair of the County Gambling Impacts Committee mentioned at this meeting that since the casino

is only going to be opened in 2009 for a portion of that year, they anticipate that they will only receive approximately \$500,000 in host fees. He feels that this money should be divided up equally and distributed to the five (5) priority municipalities without any need for a grant application from us.

2. **Regional Policing** - Jack stated that the Township reviewed the draft Regional Police Study report that was presented to us on January 14th by the DCED representatives and we did find some minor errors in terms of staffing, equipment, budget, etc. That information will we forwarded to DCED. The Township also sent a letter to the Borough asking them to do the same as we feel that there is information in the report as a final document that has a lot of value to us in terms of the police operations in the Township. Jennie said that she has been advocating perfecting the study since it has a lot of value and the taxpayers paid for that study through DCED and it's money wasted if we don't complete it. The consolidation of the two police forces is a whole other topic.
3. **Polk Valley Road Intersection Enhancements** - Jack stated that the traffic signal application package has been submitted to PennDOT and we are waiting to hear back from them so there is no update. Charlie said that the Walnut Street intersection improvement is slowly moving forward; the utility poles have been moved and they placed the order with Modern Concrete for the catch basins so they could be starting work by the first week in March.
4. **Joint Enterprise Zone with City of Bethlehem** - no update. The City of Bethlehem has submitted their renewal application and when that it approved they intend on amending it to add Hellertown, Freemansburg and Lower Saucon Township.
5. **Hellertown - Lower Saucon Compost Center** - Charlie said that the Compost Center did very well last year with over 3,000 visits. The Christmas tree drop-off in January was busy and we have a tentative re-opening date for this year of April 18, 2008. Charlie said that we rented a unit to mulch the material that was dropped off so far. Jennie mentioned a PADEP news release that came out today (Jack had made copies of it for the meeting) which listed the grant awards that the State is making to the various counties to pay a portion of the salaries and expenses of County Recycling Coordinators. For example, Lehigh County received \$48,224. Northampton County is not listed as they do not have a recycling coordinator. Jennie said that it was her thought that the Partnership should write to the County and say we would support the County having a Recycling Coordinator and what a Recycling Coordinator could do for us. Jack said that we have been working with Lori Sywensky at Northampton County who is covering for this position. We will bring this issue back at the next meeting.
6. **Tax Reassessment** - Ed said this issue is on hold because there are some members on the school board have reservations about doing point-of-sale appeals of assessments and because of the slowdown in the housing market. Gail said she had concerns about the point-of-sale appeals because it may tax people out of their homes. Ed said that the problem was created because the politicians avoided doing reassessments for ten years or more. Jack pointed out that the proposed bill (HB 1550) to consolidate EIT collections at the county level failed to get out of committee. We received a letter from a group representing independent tax collectors in the state urging us to support HB 1458 rather than HB 1550.
7. **Fire Analysis Study** - Jack stated that they were really glad to report that all four (4) of the Township fire companies have agreed to participate in the Fire Services Task Force concept. Dewey Fire Company will also be involved in this process. We have sent a letter to DCED asking them to come back and talk to the fire group and Councils about the next steps in this process.
8. **Proposed Leithsville Sewer** - Charlie said that the Lower Saucon Authority is still in the process of answering questions that the Borough Council had about the proposed route for the sewer line. They may be coming back before Borough Council in March.
9. **COG Website** - no update.

H. **Other** - Jennie mentioned the Hazard Mitigation funding. Charlie said that the Borough received a notice from Bob Mateff at Northampton County asking them to submit documentation on the projects that we had submitted to the Hazard Mitigation list last year. Hellertown is the only municipality in Northampton County that has three (3) high priority projects. They all involve the Hellertown Borough Authority projects and the Authority is to vote tonight to commit the matching funds to go forward with these projects, which could total around \$135,000. One of them deals with the removal of the pumping station at the Spring Hill Shopping Center, which will assume that the Leithsville sewer line will be place to hook up a gravity line to. Jennie also extended an invitation for SVP members to attend the PSAB regional MECAP meeting that will be held on February 27th at the Grist Mill in Hellertown. The topic will be a panel discussion on "Public & Private Partnerships". The March meeting of this group on March 26th will be held in Freemansburg and will deal with asset management.

I. **Events Calendar** - no update

J. **Adjournment** - The meeting ended at 8: 10 p.m.

The next meeting of the Saucon Valley Partnership will be held on March 12, 2007 @ 7:00 p.m. at the Saucon Valley School District.