

SAUCON VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Date: Wednesday, May 11, 2011
Time: 7:06 PM
Location: Lower Saucon Township

- A. **Meeting Called To Order** – The meeting was called to order by Priscilla deLeon.
- B. **Roll Call** – Priscilla deLeon, Glenn Kern, John Bate, Ed Inghrim, Jack Cahalan and Cathy Kichline.
From Northampton County: John Stoffa, County Executive and Kim Schaeffer
- C. **Council of Governments**
1. **Minutes of the April Meeting** – Motion by Glenn for approval of the April 9, 2011 minutes; second by Ed. All in favor.
 2. **Treasurer's Report** – Jack said the balance as of April 30, 2011 is \$15,347.45. We have received all of the dues from our members, including Northampton County. There were no expenses out of the account during the month. In the checking account, the balance as of April 30, 2011 is \$3,870.97. There are no receipts for this account. Motion by Ed for approval of the Treasurer's report; second by John. All in favor.
 3. **Approval to pay bills (if any)** – Jack said there were no bills.
- D. **Northampton County 2011 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding – Kim Schaffer**

Ms. Kim Schaffer said she is the Community Development Block Coordinator for Northampton County. She wanted to let you know they have opened the funding process for their 2011 CDBG grants. They haven't received their final allocation from HUD, which is a Federal grant. Congress had delayed this as they didn't know what they were going to do with the 2011 budget. They haven't done their final allocation, but expect to have \$1.3 million to allocate during this program year. Hellertown has received these funds before. The CDBG program is known for its flexibility. There's a wide range of activities that the funds can be spent on. They have opened the applications to the boroughs and the townships within the County and the non-profits that serve residents. The cities of Easton and Bethlehem have their own funding. She will run through a couple of examples of projects that you can think about. The thing to keep in mind is projects have to primarily benefit people who have low to moderate incomes. For a single person, it's about \$39,000.00 and that amount increases as the household size goes up. In Hellertown, they've done several years of curb cut projects. Other townships and boroughs have done housing rehabilitation, either for renters or homeowners who meet the income requirement. Street reconstruction projects are very popular. They've had sanitary sewer and water projects and storm water. They can do public service type projects. For example, in this current 2010 program year, they've been able to fund Catholic charities because they are doing a project that helps older citizens and residents of the township's and boroughs and they can also do economic development type of projects. If you go to their website, www.northamptoncounty.org and click on County Government and Community and Economic Development, you'll see the complete application packet that is there. In the packet, you'll see the questions we ask you about and you will see eligible activities. You'll see what it takes to qualify and you will see the deadlines. If you think you will be applying for a project, they ask that you let them know and give them a notice of intent to apply by Friday, May 20th. The actual applications are due by June 10th. This way they can get the applications into HUD on time. She said if you want to talk about certain projects, or have any questions, we can do that.

Priscilla asked how does a non-profit organization then do the low to moderate income criteria, how does that happen? Kim said in most cases, non-profits would qualify under the public service types of activities. We do have a limit. HUD limits the amount of funding and there's a percentage of funding they can spend

on public type services. It is something they can do. There are four ways a project can qualify serving people with low incomes. The public service project or non-profit would typically serve only people who HUD will let them fund who are generally people with low incomes or people who are disabled, seniors, people who are homeless, people who are illiterate. A non-profit can do a type of project in which individual people would come and have their individual incomes qualified before they could be served by the County. That's what Catholic Charities are doing. Jack asked what specific services are the Catholic Charities providing? Kim said they haven't started their project yet. They just sent them their notice to proceed this week. They will be working with seniors to make sure they have food and transportation and assistance to transition. Ed said the Meals on Wheels from Northampton County lost a lot of money from the State, would they be a likely agency that might apply? Kim said if you wanted to give her a call, they could certainly talk about it. Ed said those are low income people. Kim said she's trying to think if there would be any difficulties, so just give her a call. Cathy asked if there is any historic preservation aspect in the CDBG? Kim said it's a possibility. It's not something that is done very frequently. There are one or two ways under economic development that they could do that if you are interested. Priscilla said they benefited from two CDBG grants in the past, with the Hellertown Water Alliance and Steel City, and some of the people qualified for that. They can't always benefit from the grant because of the income level. Glenn asked about park projects, for example, in Steel City. Is there anything that needs to be done in Steel City? Jack said they have a plan for the upgrade to that park. They do have the funding and it's supposed to be done next year. They got a grant from the County Open Space Fund to defray some of the construction costs. Glenn said what about handicapped access at Lutz-Franklin? Jack said they could always do that. The only thing is no one technically lives at the Lutz-Franklin schoolhouse. How do you get around that? Kim said that's one specific project type that she should have mentioned that is very popular. They can do other types of ADA accessibility project, and in most cases, HUD lets them presume the beneficiaries do have disabilities and therefore are low income. Yes, they have a 2010 project in Walnutport, which they will be helping them to turn the restrooms at Borough Hall to meet ADA requirements and then in the park pavilion as well. They can do park projects. In Freemansburg, they are doing their Cambria Park right now. It's a park that serves lower income communities. If you want to speak to her about ADA, just give her a call. Priscilla said there is a ramp at the side of the schoolhouse. Glenn asked how are they handling the restrooms for ADA? Jack said they put in a grant for the composting toilets, so that will also be ADA. Jack said he will send everyone Kim's information tomorrow. Priscilla said she wishes our residents could benefit from it. Mr. Stoffa asked has the allocation gone down? Kim said yes, the allocation has really gone down. The CDBG program was cut by 16%. They do have a new section on the application this year to ask people to talk about how their municipality and their project specifically will be meeting several federal and county priorities. HUD has a new emphasis on Fair Housing. We're asking people to think about how obviously there is segregation within Northampton County when you look at our cities like Easton, and the outlying areas. They are looking at fair housing, portable housing and environmental sustainability. There are some priorities they are taking into account. Priscilla said if they make it past the Notice of Intent and your screening process, will it be funded then or do they have to still go through and fill out an application? Kim said you still have to fill out the application. We wanted to be able to say yes, go ahead, if it would meet the eligibility requirements.

E. Saucon Valley Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan

1. EPA Sustainable Communities Building Blocks Program Grant for Zoning Audits – update

Cathy said they are still trying to coordinate a date for the EPA Sustainable Communities Building Blocks conference. They want to get moving on it as it's a wonderful opportunity to showcase the two municipalities and use them as an example as building blocks that can be provided to the community. They are having a problem coming up with dates. When she spoke with Holly on Friday, dates were

given and Cathy is waiting for Holly to get back with a date. Jack said if it's a day and a half conference, he doesn't see how it's going to accomplish the zoning audits that we wanted to do of each of our ordinances which we were planning on doing as a first step to joint zones. This is a good conference but it seems more focused on economic redevelopment in Hellertown. Cathy said it is. It's more focused on commercial buildings. Their thought is opening it up to the region and using Hellertown as an example. It's also like a working session or conference for the rest of the region. Priscilla asked if a day and a half is too short? Jack said they estimated it would take six months to do a zoning audit for less money. It involves reviewing each of the ordinances; going through them for any inconsistencies or any other types of issues that need to be looked at. Cathy said they have provided them with their zoning maps. Jack said he sees they reached out to Mike Kaiser at LVPC. We'll see what happens. Priscilla asked that the SVP be updated.

F. Brief Reports and Discussion Items

- 1. Casino Impacts Funding/County Gaming Authority – update** – Priscilla said that for the Hellertown Borough and Lower Saucon Township applications Jack and Cathy attended the meeting on April 24th. They have 23 projects in the uncommitted grant applications from communities that applied. The grants total of \$1,287,643.00. The Authority is going through a budget review trying to anticipate how much money they need to keep in uncommitted portion so they can pay for their expenses for next year and the year after. She doesn't know what that number is going to be, but it will be discussed at their next meeting. They will have about \$650,000.00 to \$700,000.00 to award. It's going to be a tough decision. That leaves us approximately \$600,000.00 short depending what number you use. Eliminations will be made by the five votes. That should happen at the next meeting on May 23rd. She wishes everyone good luck. She passed around the grant criteria with the points and the matrix to score the applications. The second part was the actual application which mimicked the grant criteria. The municipalities filled in the applications. What they are going to try to do at the next meeting is revise the first restricted application and criteria and try to learn from what could have been made better in the application to strengthen it and make it easier to understand. Hopefully the reviewed documents will be approved at the next meeting; and hopefully, we can set a date for when the applications have to be in. You can submit applications for the restricted money which as to prove impact. Cathy asked if Priscilla knew how much money would be available? Priscilla said they get paid quarterly and didn't get the money yet for April, so she doesn't know the answer right now. John B. said how much of this application is going to change? Priscilla said when she says changes, she means the language is going to be easier to understand. John said at the last meeting there was confusion over the scoring. Has there been any direction in the way the point system is going to go, the five points when you are applying? Priscilla said that's one of the areas that need to be revised. Just because you have the boxes filled in with words, that doesn't mean they are acceptable words. Someone has to go through and look at them and see if they really meet the criteria. The resolution should spell out the projects. That was the other debate. Should it be a resolution or should it be a debate? It doesn't matter, a motion is a motion. It doesn't have to be on a fancy paper. It could be minutes on a piece of paper. Those boxes have to match the words that are in that application and if you didn't provide the correct documentation, then when they get to rate your project, it's a zero. The firm that did the 2006 traffic study, if you lived in Bucks County and had to come to the casino, how would you get there and get to I-78. You'd have to go 412 or 378. John said they are seeing it's the off hours they are getting hit with the traffic. Forget 7 AM or 5 PM, you can't drive on 378. Their trucks are having problems at 2:00 PM. It's a different kind of problem. Now with the hotel opening up and Steel Stacks, it's going to get worse. Priscilla said Stephanie has been great trying to figure this all out. She's been trying to figure it out. She doesn't know what else to do. The other thing that happened and she tried to get the date for the uncommitted money postponed as October 15th overlapped with the restricted funds. Some got funded, some didn't, and some were impact applications. They got thrown

in the uncommitted part, which shouldn't have. John said some of them are hung up on who you are and not realizing emergency services across the board have the same need. It's not that any service is making money on this deal; it's the community making money. They are an agency taking care of the community. He's seeing some of the agencies around here are hiring people to do videos for these grant presentations. They are spending like \$5,000.00 in order to ask for \$100,000.00, which means we are going to have to step our game up. They shouldn't have to be doing this. Jack said what makes it more embarrassing is Lehigh County gets a share of the casino revenue and they literally hand out checks to Salisbury Township and Fountain Hill the next week. John B. said speaking for all the EMS services in the area, just this community alone is \$32,000.00 in salaries a month and that's what they have to clear to stay afloat, and they are a small group compared to a Bethlehem Township or an Easton. Medicaid funds are going lower and lower. He thinks it should be easier to submit grants. John S. said that Bob Pfenning's statement that they had to be competitive is in people's heads now. Someone said at what point in time are the Gaming Committee members going to realize they should just split the money evenly. It's going to happen sooner or later. Priscilla said she doesn't think so, you haven't watched the videos. She gets criticized for asking questions. She's still going to do what she does. She doesn't know if the County meetings are run this way, but on the comment period for public input, she tried to get each agenda item opened for the public. That's how we do it at Lower Saucon, and it works perfect. How do you know just looking at an agenda what to say at the beginning of the meeting when you haven't heard any discussion? She doesn't know how you get public input that way. All she can say is just keep doing what they are doing. John B. said we are prepared with our presentations and we'll just do what we can. Priscilla said you have to explain these things. Dewey Fire Company is this. You are more than welcome to come to the meetings. She wants it to be fair to everyone. John S. said there is more money available than five years ago. How do you get it is the question. Priscilla said it's not low to moderate. That's another thing that bothers her when a municipality says they are low income because that's not a criteria. That's not in the document.

2. Joint COG Projects

- a. Saucon Rail Trail – Jack said they opened on May 7th and it went off very well. There are hundreds of people out on the trail. Priscilla said there were people everywhere. Cathy said it's a great resource. Jack said the Farmer's Market on Sunday was at capacity. They ran out of everything. People are starting to go into the downtown Hellertown areas. The first lemonade stand opened down the trail in Upper Saucon. Priscilla said the Hellertown-Lower Saucon Chamber talked about publicity for the restaurants. They put together a restaurant guide, which could maybe put at the kiosks. We need to really think about that. People would love to know about the nature trail at the Heller Homestead. We need to showcase what our community has to offer. Cathy said Steve was going to prepare a map with bike-friendly businesses and someone is doing a borough map and identifying all the businesses on the map. Kim asked if it is going to connect to Bethlehem. Jack said from Bachman Street up to Saucon Park, that track is owned by Norfolk Southern and part of it is under lease to the concrete plant behind Wendy's. He thinks once the Bethlehem Greenway gets around to Saucon Park and ours is open, everyone is going to be pushing to get that open. John B. said there's one big issue – the High Street Bridge. Jack said whatever they put there, DCNR is insisting they put a through passage for an eventual trail. This way you can still get through that. That could take some time. Norfolk Southern is not easy to deal with. Priscilla said we should be talking to the D&L trail and ask them to include our trail as we are tributary to the Lehigh. Jack said there is actually a group called PA Trail Network, and they are having meetings where they are trying to connect from Riegelsville all the way down to the Appalachian Trail at the end of PA. Originally they were going to come cross country, but at a meeting, they convinced them to use the D&L route and then our trail system to get down into Bucks County. That's something they are working on also. He thinks it's going to happen, it's just

a matter of people saying why isn't this open until they get something done. Priscilla said there are some people who would love to see the trains come back also. She's excited about the rail trail. John B. said on May 8th they had an almost near-catastrophic issue on the trail already. It happened behind Neighbors, and 9-1-1 responded. A couple of issues they found going out there, once they gained entrance into the trail, they can't turn around. They have to continue down to the next gate. There's just not enough room. It's something they have to discuss for the other end of Bachman Street so they can get out. One of the problems with the people walking on the trail, they are not going to know where they are. When you see the number of people out there, you need something simple like maybe a mile marker every couple of feet. Putting up some kind of indicator, it would be given to the County to the 9-1-1 center and the person could give them a number from the trail. Emergency services would then know the general location to go in. If somebody doesn't know where they are, they are going to be running up and down the trail looking for them. In order to better protect the public, he really thinks that either this group or the two communities should do something. It's simple. He talked to Lower Saucon's Fire Chief and they are both in the same mindset. On the incident on May 8th, the people were from the Woodfields and knew exactly where they were and were able to get the units in. His fear is someone comes up from Upper Saucon and has no idea where they are. Another idea would be at each intersection of a roadway, put the name of the road on the trail like you would at a regular street crossing. The child who got hurt on May 8th is still in the IC unit and it could have been worse. This is something we have to move forward on. We have a lot of people walking on this trail. Jack showed two logos that the graphic designer put together. All they have to do is put a mile marker or a half mile marker on it. John B. said you can take the word mile off and just put the number on it. Jack said he was also thinking of the bicyclists and the runners, they want to know how far they have gone. They can do something pretty simple out of wood or metal. Priscilla said shouldn't we put Lower Saucon or Hellertown under it. Jack said they can work on that with Public Works.

- b. **Peer Recreation Study Committee** – Jack said our DCNR peer consultant Samantha came down with a medical issue. She was out picking up logs and tore her heart muscle. She had chest pains and had to undergo triple by-pass surgery. She is recuperating at home from heart surgery and she said she doesn't know how long it's going to be until she gets back on her feet. Cathy said she did a lot of work in a short period of time. Jack said we are not going to have a May meeting, but she may be able to travel by June. Samantha did gather a lot of information.

3. **Roads & Traffic**

- a. **Polk Valley Road/412 Intersection HOP Application** – Jack said he was asked to get a copy of the drawing from the Township Engineer. All this contains are the changes that we reported at the previous two meetings. The stop bar has been moved more towards the signal, about 8 feet, and they did that by moving the crosswalk to the other side of the signal mast. What that did was move the stop bar further, which was done to alleviate the two cars which could be stopped at the entrance to McDonalds. In addition, down to the left, there's a sign with a "J" on it and in the legend it's a "Do Not Block Driveway" sign so the cars don't block the entrance or the exits. On the corner, where Lucky Lou's Auto Body is located, there was extra footage there that Jim Milot was able to reclaim in the turning radius. That has been discussed with Mr. Iaratola. Jim Milot also met with Mr. Iaratola to discuss these changes and had a meeting out there with the PennDOT representative. Mr. Iaratola is okay with those changes. Jim Milot got verbal permission from PennDOT that these changes were okay. The Solicitors are meeting and reviewing some of the issues as far as the property. Mike Corriere is doing research on the shopping center side and Linc Treadwell is looking at the corner of Mr. Iaratola's business. They are not making any changes to Mr. McIntyre's property. They are planning to make changes with Mr. Iaratola and the shopping

center, so they would meet with those two individuals. Priscilla said it is what it is now and we asked PennDOT to look at it and did research on it for years.

- b. **Joint Enterprise Zone with City of Bethlehem – update** – Cathy said she has a call in to Beka at the City and is waiting for her return call.
- c. **Saucon Valley Compost Center – update** – Cathy said this past weekend they had 270 visitors. Jack said they resolved the issue about the commercial people coming to the compost center. The other question was is the mulch available to non-residents, and at this point, it's not. Cathy said they are going to seek some grant funding for a piece of equipment. Glenn asked how they were addressing the commercial? Jack said they have to show some proof that they are working for a resident.
- d. **Act 32 EIT Tax Collection Districts – update** – Ed said most of the municipalities and boroughs, all 47 of them have passed their resolutions. They are moving forward. The training sessions have been taking place at the municipalities and boroughs. Priscilla said she was at the PSATs conference and there were several conversations of how this is really going to cost us more money. There are a lot of people who are unhappy. Ed said this is going to cost us a lot of money.
- e. **Fire Services – update** – Jack said nothing new. They are working to get the draft plan out in June so the fire companies can review it and discuss it with their members. Some of them are going to take votes as to whether they want to continue to work on the consolidation. Priscilla said at the PSATs conference, she attended the Fire Services seminar, and Rob Brady was there. Jack said they've been in touch with Rob. He met with the group back last year and Jack's been keeping him up-to-date.
- f. **Library Task Force – update** – Jack said this is going great. They've had several meetings and have four committees that they've broken up and the committees are doing work between the monthly meetings gathering information on subjects like technology, financial, building and demographic committees. They are pulling together information. It's a very productive meeting. There are residents coming to the meetings that are for and against any kind of consolidation, so they are the ears of the community. They've still got more work to do, but it's going pretty well. No decisions have been made of the Township leaving Bethlehem, but there are changes in the air and the Bethlehem library has been getting creative like everyone else does when budgets are cut.
- g. **Leithsville Act 537 Plan – update** – Jack said he has no update. Gar Davidson has been very busy with some issues like line breaks, and they have to come up with another plan and when they do, they will share it with the Township and Borough.
- h. **Other Issues**
 - Ed said for the third year in a row, Saucon Valley School District has passed the budget and there is no tax increase. They have a group of people on the school board that recognize you can control spending in a school district, you just have to have the will. You have to dig in there and understand how the process works.

G. County Report – John Stoffa

- He said on assessment appeals, people continue to come in and now they have condo associations coming in. It's a huge industry and they disagree with the County and they go to Court and they win. That means lower taxes for the school district, municipalities and the county. We probably should do reassessment, but there's no support to do that.

- He said they have two murder trials going on right now. He was talking to the Sheriff today, and all they are doing is court work. When you have a murder case, they bring people in from all over the state as murder witnesses. Some of these people are so bad, you don't use the van. You use a car. It's more complicated than people think.
- He said next month they are going to be opening the Wayne Grube Park in Allen Township. It's named after Wayne Grube, who was on County Council and passed away two years ago. It's a 50-acre park of 250 acres which they got when Allentown State Hospital was sold and there was farmland out there. Two hundred will stay in some farming and forestry. They put \$11 million into that over the last three years. It's been done quietly and gets very little publicity. They will be dedicating it next Monday.
- He said they are always looking for volunteers to serve on boards, commissions and authorities. Right now their big weakness is in farmland preservation. They need two farmers who make 50% of their income from farming. They can't find two people in 300,000 people to serve on the board. They did an interesting thing this past year, Moore and Plainfield Township passed an EIT of 40% for open space. They mixed it with County money to go to the State. Moore put in \$1 million and will get \$1,350,000.00 back. By mixing that million with us, they made \$350,000.00. Plainfield put in \$750,000.00 and the got like \$275,000.00 back. They will be putting almost \$5 to \$6 million in farmland preservation. It's the most money they have ever done. In the seven years, Northampton County has only increased taxes one time, which he is very proud of.
- He said next Tuesday, most of you will vote whether to continue to have Gracedale or not. It's been a tough battle for him and a tough decision. He has said the only way to save Gracedale is to sell it. It runs roughly a \$7 million deficit a year which is a mill in tax. You mentioned 2% decrease in Medicaid, that's just going to get worse. That \$750,000.00 less for us. With 67 counties in PA, 37 have gotten rid of their nursing homes. If it were under private ownership, it would get \$4 million more reimbursement than the County government can get. He thinks the petition is going to be successful and they are going to be ordered to keep Gracedale. That's going to mean disappointment. It has 725 beds. They can't get over 606 people in it. It's an old facility. Every time they want to do something, they have to call someone to take the lead paint and asbestos out. It needs about \$15 million in capital upgrades for the roof, the parking lot, and he could go on and on. If they have to hold Gracedale, he will be proposing a tax increase. He doesn't think County Council is going to pass a tax increase, so that means they are going to have to do some serious slashing of the budget. That's a reality of what's going on. Jack said if it's successful and you can't sell it, how long is that binding? John said it would be binding for five years. If the people speak and they want to keep it, as long as he's in office, he's not going to challenge that decision. They had five potential buyers. These are the problems they had. He asked one potential buyer if they purchased Gracedale, what would be the first thing they would do? They said they would put \$4 million into decorations. They would enhance the technology. Sixty-five percent of our beds are four people in a room. You have two TV's for four people. In a modern nursing home, you'd have four screens for four people. Then anyone can watch what they wanted to. They have not kept up with what they should have. The government doesn't do a good job. The big problem is they told their staff, if you take people from Asia, California and Texas, and they still can't fill it. That's about 120 beds down and that's a lot of money. It's going to be costing about \$7 million this year and he doesn't know what it's going to cost next year in just capital needs of the facility. Ed said the opponents have done a good sales good job. John S. said he doesn't have money to send taxpayers literature. It basically was a poor house, and then in the 50's and 60's, it became a nursing home because of money and reimbursement from the government. It would be for people who are poor, for people who are homeless, someone kicked in the head by a horse with a brain injury, so it became a nursing home. It's inspected all the time. It's a constant battle just to keep it licensed.

- He thanked them for their interest in COG's and said they are terrific for taking the extra time to do this. It's a great place to live.

H. Citizens Commenting on Non-Agenda Items – None

I. Events Calendar

<http://sauconvalleycalendar.blogspot.com>

- Priscilla said on May 25th from 5 pm to 7 pm from the Lower Saucon Chamber, business spotlight networking event at Sagra Bistro at 620 Main Street in Hellertown. It's \$8.00 a person and you have to pre-register. There will be light appetizers and non-alcoholic beverages provided, cash bar.
- Priscilla said they had History Day on May 7th. Three of the historic organizations held events, the Hellertown Historical Society Grist Mill; the Heller Homestead – Saucon Valley Conservancy; and Lower Saucon Historical Society - Lutz-Franklin Schoolhouse. It was a great day. At the Heller Homestead was the young artist's exhibit.
- Jack said they are finalizing the plans for Community Day on August 20th. It will all be at Dimmick Park from 10 am to 8 pm. They have selected the two businesses that are going to be honored in the Township which are the Mary Ellen Convalescent Home and the Hero Electric.

J. Adjournment – Motion to adjourn by John. Second by Glenn. All in favor. The time was 8:37 PM.

K. Next meeting: June 8 - Saucon Valley School District; July – No Meeting; August 10 – Lower Saucon Township