

## SAUCON VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Date: Wednesday, September 8, 2010  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Location: Saucon Valley School District

- A. **Call to Order:** The Saucon Valley Partnership meeting was called to order by Chair John Bate at 7:03 PM on September 8, 2010 at the Saucon Valley School District.
- B. **Roll Call: Present:** John Bate, Gail Nolf, Mayor Fluck, Glenn Kern, Priscilla deLeon, Ed Inghrim, Jack Cahalan, and Charlie Luthar. **Guests:** Joe Hoffman, Bob Frey, Dave Spirk, Tom Harp from the County and two guests from DCNR, Lorne Possinger and Mark Palerino.

C. **Council of Governments**

1. **Minutes of the August meeting** – Motion by Ed, second by Mayor Fluck to accept the July minutes. All in favor.
2. **Treasurer's Report** – Jack said the checking account statement that was emailed to everyone is \$2.00 off as a bank service charge came in. The balance as of August 31, 2010 is \$3,870.42. The only payment out of that was a \$2.00 charge to Wachovia Bank for a service charge. For the Treasurer's report, the balance as of August 31, 2010 was \$12,520.26. There was a receipt from the SV School District for \$1,000.00 for dues. There were no expenses out of that account. Motion by Glenn, second by Ed for approval of the August Checking Account and Treasurer's report. All in favor.
3. **Approval to pay bills (if any):** Jack said there were no bills.

D. **Saucon Valley Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan**

1. **Mark Palerino, DCNR Bureau of Recreation** – Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Grant Application – Charlie said Mark has come in from Harrisburg and Lorne Possinger is our Northeast Region representative for DCNR. They appreciate both of you coming here and the group has a lot of enthusiasm for recreation plans and working together cooperatively. There was a recreation board for Saucon Valley region back in the 80s, which the Mayor was on. In 1986 it evaporated because insurance was one of the issues. There were various attempts since then to do something. Ed said there were a number of facilities in Hellertown and Lower Saucon that he thought perhaps we could share with the Township, school district, and Borough and vice-versa. He thought it would be more efficient if we actually began to coordinate scheduling of the various organizations here. It would save taxpayers money. Charlie said that led to the first meeting of Joint Recreation Study Committee at the end of October. The enthusiasm is there and it's a Comprehensive Plan goal of ours and the school district and Township have always cooperated in these efforts. Jack said Joe Hoffman is here who is helping us out with a grant application for DCNR.

Mark said he is going to run through the elements of what a peer study is. He has a report he wants to reference, which is their Multi-Municipal Cooperation book. He knows one of the discussion topics are the facilities and asked what other discussion topics they wanted to talk about. Jack said the group meeting tonight is the Saucon Valley Partnership, a Council of Governments organization that was formed in 2004. They meet on a monthly basis and have representatives from the school district, the Borough and the Township. We discuss regional issues and look for ways that we can save the taxpayers' money by working cooperatively on projects, joint purchasing, and whatever else they can do. Charlie said Bob might want to add something as we in the Recreation Committee talked about the scheduling of the sports. Bob said they are assessing what they have, the teams that play, what each field might be. There could be fields in the

community that could lend to playing areas, practice fields, etc. They are looking at the inventory they have for each sport. Mark said he can reference the book on page 97, it has regional agencies, populations, funding levels, things like that. These are organizations that are working together on programming, facilities, special events; they are all a little different. That's exactly what is perfect for the scenario right now, a peer study. One question he had was in cooperation, what are the other things you are doing already, regional or in cooperation? Jack said they have a joint yard waste facility that they started four years ago and is working out very successfully. When they were developing and starting the comprehensive plan, they were attempting at that time to do a police consolidation study which didn't get finalized. Fire services are being looked at on a regional basis. The fire companies are working together in the Township and Borough to explore regional opportunities. They have Public Works from the Township and the Borough that work together on projects. One of them was to pave some of the parking lots at the school district and it saved the school district a considerable amount of money. Charlie said the Rail Trail is another thing and it's an eight mile stretch they leased from SEPTA that goes from Hellertown to Upper Saucon Township and it has an opportunity to connect with Bethlehem's greenway at the High Street Bridge. There are also other natural resources around that they'd like to work together on. Hellertown is blessed with 34 acres from an old iron works. That has the potential for passive recreation use. We've both done open space plans. They've done a Dimmick Park study on what the plan should look like. Besides the sports, there are other things to look at. Mark said not everyone is into sports and you have to have other opportunities to go and sit and relax, whether it's a park bench, or something else. That's their recreation. When he sits down and talks, he always says we need to look at opportunities for all ages from cradle to grave. Charlie said he forgot to mention the swimming pool. The Borough has a very nice swimming pool and they are partnering with Lower Saucon Township on fees for people attending the pool and there's a lot of room for growth there as well. They talked about a feasibility study at one point because it is a beautiful facility. Jack said they do a joint Community Day every year. They also do a Halloween Parade, together as well as other annual events done jointly by the Borough, Township and the school district. Mark said DCNR is all about partnerships. These days with grants, the monies that are coming out are tighter than ever. They are looking for where people are working together and collaborating. By you coming together, and going through this peer study, on any future grant applications that would come into them they would have to take a harder look at those and say this is something that we want to fund as they are working together. It's not a guarantee of any kind, but it's something that gives them a little bit of a microscope on certain projects. There's no one size fits all approach here. Every community is different in what they are trying to accomplish and what they have to offer. What is cooperation? There are many pieces to that: common goals, respecting each other and communication and the motivational piece which a lot of that seems to be here in this room right now. Currently, there are 57 area-wide and regional agencies across the state. The book shows those partnerships in the back. It gives contact information if you want to call one of them and ask them how they are making it work. He has a 2006 version, so it is four years old and some of the contacts may have changed. There are a lot of good success stories in here – cooperation and action. The author, Sue Landes, is the Recreation Director for Lancaster and she's been there for a number of years. Jack said she worked on our open space plan with Upper Saucon Township. Mark said then you had one of the best and most knowledgeable recreational professionals. Mark said these grants will enable you to look at pooling resources to avoid duplication and increase services, and you will have a greater capacity to implement regional recreation planning initiatives. An approved partnership with the school district, this is pretty big. In some communities, it's a struggle to get the school district in a room with a municipality. It's great to see you working together, you don't find that everywhere. In that partnership, the cooperation, eliminating duplication, your services are more efficient. Parks are not surrounded by walls. We shop and go to church and that's how we should look at all our services, at least recreation wise. It becomes more of an issue now for sports in fall, spring, summer, all around for baseball and soccer and it becomes more challenging to get a field. What this peer study does is provides a neutral party to talk about regional ownership and management options, someone who is not from the community. Someone that knows and lives recreation and has the job on a daily basis really understands it and can come in with a different perspective and give you guidance to move

forward. DCNR and peers have experience in inter-regional management of parks and providing recreational programs. He'd like to go around the room and talk about what your goals or thoughts are on what this could be. Lorne said one thing that you might want to add is you talked about facilities, programs; what about efficiencies in operations and maintenance. Jack said he's sure that would be welcome. Gail said she's representing the municipality of Hellertown. They have a tremendous system of recreation in Hellertown and Lower Saucon and the school district and the community is very tight. She was thinking about how the more municipalities involved the better it is. What works for them is Hellertown, Lower Saucon and the school district. They have a very strong commitment to their youth in this community. She thinks passive recreation is very important and does believe it is important as there are people in the community who want to protect that. Those individuals aren't here tonight, but her personal goal in participating in this and being excited about it is to continue to foster that cooperation. She also thinks it is exciting that we have the school district involved. That cooperation is key and they bought into it. To provide an opportunity for the users of recreation to have some type of organized resource so that we aren't over using some fields and under using other fields and that we are providing opportunities for everyone who needs recreation. One of the problems we face in this community is inside gym space. We have volleyball competing with basketball and basketball is a very popular sport in this community. The young kids play, the high school plays and there are stresses on school facilities. We actually lost some inside gym facilities within the past year. We had a middle school that was turned into an extended care facility and we have a school that is basically obsolete and we can no longer use that. We need some creative thinking to organize and understand what we have and to be able to fund additional facilities and make them available for use by all of our citizens. The one thing we don't have is a central community center. For instance, Forks Township has a community center. We do not have something like that and it would be an awesome addition to this community. The school that is not functional is the old Reinhard School. It served the community until the late 90's and then it was closed. We are working on taking that down and it would be a nice place for a community center. Lorne said he was a recreation director before he came to DCNR in an old school. Gail said the location is awesome, but the building isn't. John said one of the things Bob has looked at is when a field has to go down for maintenance, it becomes a scheduling nightmare. We need to form this committee in case we have to take a field down or we have a field that's being overused. Right now, we are pulling from each other and don't have a direction, so when something like that happens, Bob is looking for places to go. Youth sports are looking for places to go. Gail said wrestling is in there too, and she doesn't want to overlook them. They are in competition with basketball for the same indoor gym. John said an example is in the middle of August, baseball decided to move their youth baseball, 10 and 12 year old girls to a fall sport. They were going to use the girl's field and during that time, there is a football field in their outfield. The passive parks are going to play a big role in this. The dog park is a recreation spot that is going on all the time. He loves it up there with his dogs. Bob said it would be nice to have a community center and have everything flow from there. It would be nice to have more indoor space. Everyone wants to come in, in the wintertime. Its one thing to schedule it, but it's another thing to maintain it. The field needs to get a rest also. We should take a look at all the groups we have and what is feasible and what is not. Mark said in your parks, are there pavilions there that people can rent? Jack said yes. Some of the parks in the township are not being used as they are in remote parts of the township. You need to get the word out what's available. Mark said aside from the school facilities, who is scheduling those in the municipalities? Jack said the Township does the scheduling for its fields. John said each individual sport has its own President and they do their own scheduling and sign user agreements with the Borough. They have a lot of different entities. John said the youth sports groups in Hellertown spend a lot of money on their fields. With the user agreement, usually there are some rental fees and a set amount of money. If you put money into the field, you don't pay out. They do their own backstops and their own line painting, run their own snack bars, and build their own buildings. It's a lot of different individuals doing the same job. Jack said the Township does their own maintenance and the school district does their own maintenance. We have varying degrees of the way it's supervised. Mark said do you purchase materials separately? Jack said yes. The level of maintenance is different on some of the fields. The school has standards they follow and the Township has a maintenance policy they follow and

some of the different sports, it depends on the usage and participation and their finances as to what they can do. Charlie said some organizations like Little League contribute so much back into the fields that they haven't paid a fee for ten years. Mark said if he called in to have a birthday party in the Borough and your pavilions are full, would you tell me I could go to the Township? Charlie said they never thought of doing that. Gail said we need to see outside of the box. Charlie said their Borough Authority also has 600 acres of watershed property and there is a pavilion in the center of it that is rented out and also available. Priscilla said there should be resources on our website for the residents. Mark said what if he just moved into the area and he wants his son to play baseball, he's 12, how do I find out about that? John said there are flyers that go through the school and there's a sign that goes in front of Borough Hall that says when sign-ups take place. Lorne said does the school district get calls about all kinds of things, and do you know where to direct them? Gail said there are a lot of people involved in our youth sports programs and you can call Saucon Valley High School and ask Bob. Lorne said if you were able to put the peer study together and have someone organize all that information and have someone talk to you on how you can put all that information out there in an effective way. The thought that occurred to him when you were talking about renting the pavilions was that he goes into a lot of municipalities and the secretaries are always busy collecting sewer and garbage bills, and now she's answering the phone about scheduling the pavilion. Dave said everyone here, we have well intentioned people here who want to strengthen our communities. No question about it. How we deal with each other is great. There's no real problem, but there's no formal agreement. This is just a beginning. Hopefully, it's the beginning of looking together at the financial impact. It saves all of us who are taxpayers here money. The school district has the biggest impact, then the Township and the Borough. The sky is the limit for something like this and just to get started; it's going to move onto great things. As far as building the community, it's closer to the cradle that we want to get to these kids as one day those kids are going to grow up and sit around the table like this as adults, and say how do we strengthen our community even more. Our parents, our grandparents, did these things for years and years. All this is good; it's how to keep moving forward. A circuit rider is going to be big for us, to really tell us what we can do and which direction we can go. He has noticed looking at the list in the Appendix J; they are all municipalities and the school district. They are in the same situation, all the same people, all the same children going to the same school. It's just a natural thing. He firmly believes they will be on this Appendix J one day. Jack said you mentioned the term regional ownership and management option, and we want to approach this carefully as there will be some concerns about that, from the elected officials or even the residents saying who is going to run or own the parks. Who is going to maintain them? How's it going to be done? Are you going to bring in outside groups to play on them? All those questions are going to come up and we need answers to all of them. Mark said at the end of the day, you are going to make that decision as to what stays in and what stays out. In some cases, the facility will always stay within the municipalities and school district and the programming will be run and operated by the commission or group or the COG with a recreational component, however you decide to set that up. In some cases, municipalities just want to take care of my park and maintain it. We find they want to hold on to the facilities, and if the commission falls apart, it would always go back to the municipality. There will always be an agreement of some kind. Lorne said sometimes the regional organization that is put together is so successful that the municipalities do want that commission to have a large piece of property and have park development on there, trails, pavilions and it's shared by the municipalities that came together to make that purchase and form that commission in the first place. It's different everywhere. Ed said this community is unique in that it's two municipalities and a school district. They are joined at the hip by the school district. He doesn't think we are going to have any issues in terms of ownership. The Township and Borough did a lot of in-kind work for the school district already like paving our parking lot. It saved the taxpayers a lot of money. Just getting some kind of formal agreement between the school and the two communities in terms of where they want to go would be a major step forward. Mark asked what the population was of the area? Jack said 10,000 in the Township and 5,600 in the Borough. Mark said that's the magic number to form such a commission. No. 5, peer study, they recommend the first step, a DCNR application, and it is not competitive and it can be submitted anytime during the year. It is a \$10,000 maximum and they require 10% or \$1,000 match for the project. Lorne said they already

passed the resolutions and authorized that amount of spending, so they are all at that point. Mark said peer studies, at one point they were saying they could take up to 12 months, and that's only when they only get inter-governmental agreements. It seems when they get to the 10 months, 11, 12 and 13, and it goes back and forth, back and forth. This will have to be discussed with the consultant that is selected for this study. An intergovernmental agreement is something you might not have to do if it is tied to the COG. We have a good example in the Centre Region, same thing; they have the COG and a recreational component of that. We'll talk about that more. Lorne said up in Stroudsburg, East Stroudsburg and Stroud Township formed a Stroud Region Greenway Commission and the main purpose of that was to develop the loop trail around East Stroudsburg and Stroudsburg and make that connection. They went on to also become involved with East Stroudsburg School District and Stroudsburg School District and they are doing exactly what we've been talking about here - coordinating recreation in those areas. When we go further with this, he wants to make sure you are thinking about including your rail trail and for that to be part of your peer study. Mark said gathering the information on the existing facilities is something this consultant will request so they will know what is happening. It's not only to see what is occurring but maybe to look for the missing pieces. Developing a five year budget and organizational structure - an umbrella of how this group could service all the different needs, whether it is the scheduling, the programming, whatever that could be. More discussion and we'll figure that out. Working through an agreement for the adoption process needs to be discussed. If the municipality or school district involved wants to walk away, that could happen. He would go to the end anyway. Back to 6, the peer grant leading to the circuit rider, does anyone know what this is? The circuit rider is a program where after a peer study is completed, some kind of agreement is formed, and a commission has come to light. There are by-laws put together. There are personnel, things like that where they are looking to hire their first regional director. That's what he circuit rider is. This person would come in, go through the interview process, and they would run whatever that job description is that you formulate and they would be a director of the regional entity and DCNR would pay the salary, 100% the first year, 75% the second and 50% the third year and 25% the fourth year. They would need to see a five year budget and it would have to be from the municipalities and the school district to support that. It's something you'll see in this cooperation book that shows different numbers of what the municipalities and the school districts are giving from their portion of the tax dollars or per capita dollars or EIT dollars; however, they decide to do it. Normally, it is per capita. Five dollars per capita is the going rate right now. That would feed in and this individual would have to program together and look at some usage fees to balance the budget for special events, whatever it would be, and then would take this commission and be your umbrella to bring all what you are talking about together. Lorne said by the fifth year there would be a sustainable position, whatever would occur, programs, things like that, would be enough to sustain a position. Mark said he was a circuit rider twice already. In York County, there were 8 municipalities and school districts around the table in the peer study process and at the end of the day, it ended up being one borough, one township and one school district with a population of almost 5,600 and they made it work. He was there for 4-1/2 years and left there, and now there is someone else there from another township. He did it twice before he went to DCNR and it works. They had the information on the website so everyone from the Township knew what was going on. Not every group when they get to the end of a study is ready to move on to the next step. It's there and when the time is right, you've done the study and you know what your needs are. There was a group out in western PA who did the peer study six years ago and he just got a call last month that they were ready to move and they needed a centralized commission.

Someone asked how do you select the person that comes in as the peer? Mark said they try to select somebody who lines up with the type of work you are looking for. Someone who has done these peer studies before and has been successful and knows how to work the committee and knows what the goals are and these people do this for a living and understand what it takes. He has a list of those who have done good peer studies and have been able to pull the group together and put together a lot of good findings. For the committee, they would want to see at least two individuals from each municipality, one being an elected official. The decisions in the end are going to go back to the municipalities and they want everyone to be in the loop from day one. Jack

said the joint recreational study committee already meets monthly for discussion. Mark said he wants to make sure everyone understands and is on board. Priscilla said she doesn't have any children, but she knows you have to keep the children busy, so she's always very supportive of the youth, and whatever they do with the fields. She's very historic oriented also, and the Heller Homestead is right by the Rail Trail and the Water Street Park. There are so many facilities we have here at the Township. It's a great thing for all of us to talk and we are very fortunate that we have people sitting around this table that care about the community and think about regionalism. As the kids are growing up, they are going to have a sense of their community. You have to share what you are doing with the community so they know. When people think recreation, they think sports, but it's going to go beyond that. John said we also have one of the best trout streams in the region. Joe said there is also movies in the park and he thinks one thing we should do is capture and consolidate its athletic sports and programs, but the whole other part of the life of these communities that is out there and also needs to be recognized and evaluated and improved and developed as it's a great opportunity for people that they are using, but would be using it more if it was offered more, if the events were better, if the facilities were better, etc. Mark said on the East Stroudsburg website, everything is listed so you know what's going on in the community. Priscilla said she has a calendar on the website and puts events on, and this event person could do that. Mark said the next step would be to submit the application. What he can do in the meantime is start to think about who could do the consulting. It will come across his desk. There's a couple of ways we can do this. He can come up with a few names and resumes and you can look at them or he can recommend someone to you. This person could come to the next meeting and possibly start kicking something off. Priscilla said once a consultant was hired and if they talked to ten people and all those ten people were all geared to one part of recreation, that wouldn't be balanced. Mark said the committee will help determine who those different types of individuals are. Gail said she'd like to make a suggestion. Perhaps you could get it down to three individuals and share the resumes with the group and then maybe we can interview them and come to a consensus. Ed said don't we have to wait until we get the grant to interview somebody? Mark said yes you do. Ed said he doesn't want to interview anyone unless we have the money. Mark said this has already been put in for money for this project as it's been on his radar. We aren't talking about a lot of money. This was one that was on the radar screen. Can he say it's 100%? No, he can't. Once the application comes in, he will go through the proper channels to get the signatures and get back to you on what our next steps would be. He thinks he can come up with three consultants who would do a nice job here. Gail said if you feel strongly that there is one person who would match with us, share that. Mark said he'll look at the type of work they've done before and what the scope of work looks for that person. Jack said if we are able to get the application submitted in the next week or two, is that practical? Joe said that would work. Jack said our next Partnership meeting is October 13, would it be possible, if we make the cut, to have a decision back by that date? Mark said he has a lot of Greenway Summits to attend, and is on the road a lot over this month, so it's kind of crazy. Jack said it's hard to get everyone together as a group, so if it's not October, it will be November 10<sup>th</sup>. If you have the three individuals, then this group could interview them at that meeting. Once the peer consultant is selected, then they would go off to work with the Recreation Study Committee, the representatives from the three groups, who are already meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of the month. We already have a date scheduled. Mark said do you have the ability to get everyone's email address? Jack said he will send them to Mark. It will probably be the November 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Charlie asked Tom what is the County doing with recreation? Tom said it's a great thing and the first time he ever heard of it. There isn't any other of these co-ops in this area other than Stroudsburg. It's a great group and it seems to be going very well and could be a model for the rest of the County COGs who may want to do the same thing. It can even be brought up at next week's COG meeting and at least mention it and say this could be a resource for others to follow. He's not aware of anyone else going in this direction. Glenn said on the circuit rider, there are some programs the circuit rider could develop that would make the position self-sustaining. Could you give some examples of those programs? Mark said personally when he thinks back when he was in a position like that, he did an after school program, ran some day camp programs, some sports camps, special events, and there was ways to bring in some fee structure for the programs. It's just a matter of working through that. The biggest one they put on the ground

was the after-school program as it was a huge success. As long as they found the staff that had the qualifications, they could do that and were in good shape. The special events you are looking at sponsorships and today it may be a little more difficult. You go to what people are interested in. 5Ks are becoming popular for the health side of things. You need to find what people in your community really like to do. Lorne said he was thinking about the after-school programs and they are very successful. The kids stay at the school. A lot of times it's not any one things, it's a bunch of little things. It's utilizing more pool memberships. It can be a whole bunch of small things and new programs that you wouldn't have thought of before. In his community, they did dance instruction and they paid for that program, and it was expensive. There are a lot of programming opportunities. There are all sorts of little incremental things that add up to a lot. Mark asked if there were any adult classes offered by the school district for the community, the churches? Glenn said Northampton Community College has classes. Priscilla said also Bethlehem Area Vo-Tech. Lorne said you could have historical tours and see all the history in your area. Gail said she's real excited and looking forward to this.

2. **DCED LUPTAP Grant Application** – Update – Charlie said they are trying to get some grant money to do the zoning audit. There is a possibility they may get a donor.

#### **E. Brief Reports and Discussion Items**

1. **Casino Impacts Funding/County Gaming Authority** – Update – Priscilla said she has no updates. Their next meeting is on Monday, September 27<sup>th</sup>. The Township will be making their presentation along with the County, Bethlehem Township and Freemansburg. Jack said the decision on the first round of grants is October 25, 2010. At our last meeting, The Partnership made a recommendation to send a letter to Alicia Karner to ask them to delay the application period for the second round of the uncommitted funds, and when they were there at the beginning of the Gaming Authority meeting on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, they saw that get shot down pretty fast by the Authority, so they are left that they will have to submit applications for the second round without knowing how they did on the first round. They will send in their application again to the Authority. They are working on that and they will give them an update at the next meeting and see what happens on October 25<sup>th</sup>. John was presenting his grant application for Dewey and he was asked who the vehicles were titled to and John said Dewey Fire Co. No. 1. They said he wasn't eligible. John said that their casino impact was having to travel in and out of Bethlehem, so his impact was right there. Mr. Finnigan was incorrect with his information as his municipality had bought a vehicle an ambulance. Someone told him the Township couldn't own it in order to license it, so he went with that. Since then, he's been corrected and re-educated. Jack said the township would be the recipient of the funding and we would disburse it and be responsible for doing any forms. John said for the second round, he can see them going back and asking for physical equipment and breaking it down further which they are going to allow them to do under the uncommitted funds. Being the guinea pig in front of everyone, he found that there's four people on that board that are looking for money for themselves. A couple of them had slipped and said they were looking for equipment also. Jack said the Borough and the Township submitted 70% of the applications for this round, so hopefully they will get some of the money from the pot.

2. **Joint COG Projects (Rail-to-Trail; Joint Recreation Study Committee)** – Update

**Saucon Rail Trail** – Jack said the Rail Trail Committee will be having their next meeting on September 27<sup>th</sup>. He will not be able to make it as he will be making a presentation before the Casino Authority. The Township is moving ahead with some of the equipment they need on the rail trail. They put out a bid for fencing for the two bridges and for the culvert and opened the bids the other day. They got a very low bid for wooden railings and they will be bringing that to Council next Wednesday for approval. Once that's done, they will start getting the wooden railings up. They also got some good news in the Township. They have been kicking around one of the road crossings thinking they needed flashing lights for safety purposes and they finally were able to work with the Engineer and PennDOT to come up with the solution, which is pretty easy and

simple – it's for stop signs on either side of the trail. That is going to save a substantial amount of money and time. They will install the railings, then the road crossings and then they still are talking about the surface material, which PW can put down. They are still shooting for opening a portion of the trail by the end of 2010.

3. **Roads & Traffic – (Polk Valley Road/412 Intersection HOP Application)** – Jack said an update on that, he did get something from Jim Milot at Hanover Engineering who is the lead person there and has been working on the HOP application that was submitted to PennDOT. He indicated about two weeks ago that they have provided everything that PennDOT has requested. They needed some revised layouts. They updated the right-of-way plans to reflect the layout, and they finalized the signal and HOP. They will be submitting the whole package within two weeks which would have been at the end of August. He anticipates approval this fall of the HOP permit from PennDOT and he's saying right-of-way acquisition and bid document preparation would occur this winter for next year's construction. Based on this information, we should be hearing something shortly from PennDOT about the signal permit. Jack said that Ed had asked about the speed limits on Easton Road coming out of Hellertown at a previous meeting where it's 45 MPH, and then it goes down to 40 MPH. The Morning Call did an article in the paper about it which didn't make any sense so he wanted to explain the rationale behind the whole process. The reason it happened this way is the Township Council was getting complaints about speeding and the Township PD looked into it. They reported back and said there had been eleven reported crashes within a certain period of time. Township Council requested that a traffic study be conducted. They did the traffic study and it showed that it met the warrants for lowering the speed limit. Our expectation was that the 55 MPH speed limit would be lowered to 45 MPH. They submitted it to PennDOT and they looked at the data and did their own traffic study and then came back and lowered it to 40 MPH. It was a PennDOT decision. This is the stretch from Ringhoffer Road to the Williams Township line. Beyond Williams Township, it's 40 MPH. The Township controls both sides of that road section. The section coming out of Hellertown we don't totally control. The City of Bethlehem and Hellertown also control portions. We do want to focus on that as Hellertown had asked us a couple of years ago about speed limits from the Township transitioning down to 25 MPH. We haven't been able to accomplish that yet. It is something we want to go back and look at. It was insinuated in the Morning Call article that the Township may be balancing their budget on the increased fines from speeding tickets that the PD is giving out for speeding in this section of the road. This was a pretty stupid statement as the Township has a \$6 million annual budget and the PD only collects a total of \$12,000.00 a year from motor vehicle fines. Even if they doubled fines on Easton Road, they wouldn't be able to balance their budget with that. Ed said in the Hellertown portion of Easton Road, the road is narrower, the shoulders are narrower and all of a sudden you go by Ringhoffer, it opens up and you drop the speed limit. The speed limit on that stretch is the same as it is on Lower Saucon which is a narrow road that goes up the hill. Jack said it doesn't mean the road is any safer. The paving that PennDOT did contributes to that as people were doing 70 mph on that section. John said the target area where the speed limits got lowered is where the accidents occur. Ed said a lot of those accidents occur because PennDOT does not keep the brush away from the intersection of Lower Saucon and Easton Road. When you come to that intersection, you have to pull out in the middle of the road to see the traffic coming.
4. **Joint Enterprise Zone with City of Bethlehem** – Update – Charlie said nothing new on this. They are still getting organized in Bethlehem.
5. **Saucon Valley Compost Center** – Update – Charlie said it's been doing great. They have a 16 ½ % increase from last year in the same period of time. The amount of municipal trash tonnage collected in Hellertown has dropped since the recycling center opened. There's also a lot more participation from Township residents. It's about 29% Township, 71% from the Borough which is an improving number. There is mulch there. They ground up about 179 tons.
6. **Act 32 EIT Tax Collection Districts** – Update – Jack gave everyone a copy of the Morning Call article. Ed said about a week ago, people on the Northampton County Tax Collection Committee

(TCC) received a memo from County Executive John Stoffa and County Council President Ron Angle where they complained that they were very concerned about the fact that the tax collection committee might select Keystone as the collector of the EIT for Northampton County and from their perspective, Berkheimer was a Northampton County business and they thought that it was inappropriate not to select them since they were in essence, a Northampton County based business that employed over 300 people. There was a process the TCC went through which was to form a RFP group which developed an RFP. The RFP was reviewed by the committee on several occasions and at some point in time, the committee had asked the three companies that responded to the RFP to make a presentation to the committee. One of the responders was a consortium of people that didn't have an infrastructure. They had people that had actually worked in tax collection for many years and they were proposing that if they got the contract, they would actually form an infrastructure and a lot of people felt uncomfortable giving it to that company. Berkheimer gave a presentation and did a terrible job. The one thing that turned a lot of people off in the meeting was that at the end they said whatever Keystone offers, we'll match it. There were a lot of people from the boroughs and municipalities that said this isn't the way this process should work. An RFP was sent out, they should have made their best offer. His own personal view is that kind of behavior is unethical. In the private sector, it would be illegal. He responded to Ron and John's note and said they got some misinformation here. Here's what actually occurred at the meeting, and we're only looking at the EIT collection which is nickels and dimes in terms of tax revenue. Berkheimer is still going to be collecting property taxes, LST, what have you. In addition, Berkheimer indicated that they were bidding on RFPs for every County in the state, so there were some people that said these people could expand so fast that they could jeopardize the tax collection in Northampton County. Keystone indicated they were only going to focus in a couple of areas in eastern and western PA. In reality, if Keystone got the bid, they'd have to open an office in Northampton County. Since then, they've learned that Berkheimer has won the Lehigh County bid. They are actually looking at expanding their organization. Ron Angle's statement that Berkheimer is going to leave Northampton County or fire a whole bunch of people is false. It's misleading. We have a meeting tomorrow and he's not sure what's going to happen. Initially what they were supposed to do was approve or vote no on the Keystone bid as the committee sat down with Keystone and renegotiated some areas of contract to get a more stable contract. He personally doesn't know what effect his letter from John and Ron will have on the vote. He hopes people are not misled by this letter as he doesn't think it's accurate. He represents the Borough, Township and the school district and will be attending the meeting at the Bethlehem Township municipal building. It's made the newspaper twice in the last week. He really thinks that kind of a letter is really inappropriate. Ed said that John Stoffa responded and thanked him for his input and said that Ed made a couple of points that he didn't realize that Berkheimer still collected property and LST taxes.

7. **Fire Services - Update** – Jack said he and Charlie are acting as support persons to the Fire Chiefs groups and they have been meeting for more than a year. They put an article on the Township website and in our newsletter. It describes the good work that the Chiefs have been doing over the past year and the accomplishments they've been able to achieve. One of them is the policy about using PW people. They now have about 6 to 8 people who can respond during the day to fire calls. It's worked so successfully that they had a call recently where they told one of the guys he didn't have to come. They are working on some other things described in the article like training on each other's equipment. They are responding to the nearest fire house which makes the response a little speedier. They have made a lot of progress. They are still exploring the merger/consolidation which probably will take five to ten years to work out all the kinks. As a unit, they are really working together to respond to fires. This is something where we need to get that word out to the public about the good work they have been doing. Charlie said for the administrative sides of the fire companies, the presidents and treasurers started meeting in August and there will be another meeting at the end of September to talk about a first budget if they consolidate it, what does the budget look like now and what will it look like down the road. They need to look at the by-laws and charters for those organizations. That's probably where a lot of the issues are going to arise. Jack said they have to figure out how the social halls will be treated in a merger/consolidation

which will take more time. It's been done in other municipalities in PA who have merged together and had similar assets. They are bringing the Finance Directors: Cathy Gorman and Tina Krasnansky into the process. The chiefs are doing an inventory of their current equipment and the equipment they will need for this consolidated company. Any new equipment would be standardized so they could jump on it at any one of the fire houses. They have done some great work so far and we want to recognize that. John said from an operational standpoint, they are a separate entity. If you saw the new Leithsville tanker with the SVFD on it, the fire companies are making an effort. On the ambulances you are starting to see the SV logo on the side and they are all trying to work towards the common goal. In the last two weeks, they had two incidents on I-78 where responders from each individual fire company were up on the highway and it has worked. The Friday incident there were five people working on that car and in 23 minutes that gentleman was on his way to the hospital. The program is working. It's bringing the guys to a single station. What they are finding is that they are going to one station and some of the younger guys that have this rescue training, everyone is funneling quickly, but now we need to look at the secondary units. This is what the Chiefs will work out. Jack said on the first incident, a lot of equipment and resources were used up there. They did work through Bob Mateff from the County Emergency Management office and they are funneling all those costs to him and hopefully we will get reimbursed.

8. **Library Services** – Update – Jack said the Township Library Committee has been reviewing the proposal from the Hellertown Area Library. They are planning on making a recommendation to the Township Council at their next meeting. The recommendation will be to explore the proposal further.
9. **Leithsville Act 537 Plan** – Update – Charlie said on the test borings, he hasn't checked in lately with Brad to see what they are doing, but he thinks they accomplished a lot in Hellertown. They skipped the Grist Mill, but will come back. John said that will be very interesting.

10. **Other Issues** – None

F. **County Report – Tom Harp** – He said there is a quarterly joint meeting of the COGs next Tuesday at Palmer Township Community Center. He did get an agenda out this afternoon. They are amending it to see if the DCNR can stop by and talk about their program. Recycling events, there is an E-cycling event in Nazareth on October 2<sup>nd</sup>. There is also a Household Hazardous Waste event on October 9<sup>th</sup> at Northampton Community College. Last year there were 1,500 cars coming through. It's quite an operation the way they stage it. No latex paint is accepted. They encourage people in your community to stop by. The County Budget is in the final stage of preparation. Some bid decisions have to be made. There's quite a gap with a hiring freeze in the County. The big issue is the Gracedale situation. The County did commission a group to do a study of the operations at Gracedale. They submitted a 192-page report which was considered by County Council and their recommendation was to either sell or lease Gracedale. Gracedale is the second largest nursing home in the state. It's been losing money for the two years. The occupancy rate is not what it should be. People think maybe a private company could run it more efficiently. They are projecting that they could lose \$6 to \$8 million this year. They are saying if they sell it, it would get the County \$31 million and if they lease it, it could be between \$2.5 and \$5 million a year. County Council approved a resolution that the County Executive prepare a request for proposals that would provide for alternate ownership of Gracedale through a sale or a lease.

G. **Citizens Commenting on Non-Agenda Items** – None

H. **Events Calendar**

<http://sauconvalleycalendar.blogspot.com>

I. **Adjournment:**

Motion to adjourn by Priscilla. Second by Glenn The time was 9:04 PM.

**J. Next Meeting: October 13<sup>th</sup> @ Hellertown Borough; November 10<sup>th</sup> @ Lower Saucon Township;  
December 8<sup>th</sup> @ Saucon Valley School District**