

## SAUCON VALLEY PARTNERSHIP MEETING

Date: Wednesday, February 11, 2009  
Time: 7:00 PM  
Location: Lower Saucon Township

- A. **Call to Order:** The Saucon Valley Partnership meeting was called to order by Chair, Glenn Kern, on February 11, 2009 at 7:01 PM at Lower Saucon Township.
- B. **Roll Call: Present:** Glenn Kern, Chair; Ed Inghrim, Vice Chair; Mayor Fluck, Priscilla deLeon, Jack Cahalan, Charlie Luthar, Jenny McKenna, Tom Dittmar from the County. Guests: Joseph Pampanin from Hellertown Borough. Absent: Jane Balum, Tom Maxfield, and Susan Baxter.

Mark Wirth and George Howey arrived at 7:04 PM. Margie Segaline arrived at 7:07 PM. Ron Horiszny arrived at 7:23 PM.

### C. Council of Governments

1. **Minutes of January 2009 Meeting:** Motion by Ed, second by Priscilla to approve the minutes of January 14, 2009. All in favor.
2. **Treasurer's Report** - Jack said for the month of January 2009, the checking account balance as of January 31, 2009 is \$16,198.98. During the month of January, payments were made to Environmental Planning Design (EPD) in the amount of \$1,560.36 and also another payment of \$1,868.44. There were no receipts during the month of January for that. In the Treasurer's account, as of January 31, 2009, the balance was \$9,695.35. There were receipts from Lower Saucon Township of \$1,000.00 for dues and Hellertown Borough of \$1,000.00 for dues for January. There was one payment of \$60.00 for transcription services. Motion by Ed, second by Priscilla to approve the treasurer's report. All in favor.
3. **Approval to pay bills (if any)** - Jack said we have one bill from EPD for their services from January 1, 2009 to January 31, 2009 in the amount of \$2,241.48. He's recommending that be approved for payment. Motion by Mayor Fluck, second by Ed for approval to pay the bill from EPD. All in favor. Jack said we also have received from Pennsylvania COG Association Council of Governments – it indicates there the dues for 2009 are due by April 24, 2009. He'd like approval to pay the annual dues for the PA COG of \$200.00. Motion by Ed, second by Priscilla for approval to pay the PA COG in the amount of \$200.00. All in favor. Priscilla said if our budget is less than \$10,000 and we look on the financial statement, it says beginning balance of \$19,000.00. Jack said the balance in the one account is \$16,198.00 after we paid the expense. The balance in the other account is \$9,695.35. Ed said does the school district contribute? Jack said yes, and it will show up next month in the February Treasurers Report. Priscilla said we don't really have a budget that gets approved. Jack said the next level is \$250.00. Priscilla said she'd rather do the \$250.00 level than the \$200.00 level. Charlie said he'll check into this with the PA COG.

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

1. **Comp Plan Update & Schedule - Discussion (Note: EPD will not be attending meeting but will be available by telephone)**

Jack said we'll bring you up to date from the last COG meeting we had in January. We had a discussion about the comments we had received from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC). We had sent them a copy of the public draft and they had looked it over and they had asked Carolyn for some additional information. Charlie and Jack then went up and met with Olev Taremae and Mike Kaiser and they brought back a list of issues from that meeting which they worked on with Carolyn and AJ. EPD put together a completion strategy document that contained

additional documentation that they felt addressed the comments we had received from the LVPC. One was a sheet dated January 12<sup>th</sup>, which was the narrative. The second document, dated January 13<sup>th</sup>, was list of reports and studies that we put on a disk and that was provided as references and as the appendix we were referring to in the plan. That was discussed with the Steering Committee at our last meeting and was approved and they sent them off to the LVPC on January 15<sup>th</sup>. We held our breath waiting to see what would happen and we did receive a response from LVPC which was not as favorable as we thought we would receive. They are still looking for more information from us. There were some changes in the comments that they made from the previous ones. The comments that previously focused on traffic, numbers 11, 12, 13 and 14, somehow those went away and we have some other comments which we didn't see previously. We've been talking to Carolyn and AJ about this. We wanted to come back to the Steering Committee and provide you with some recommendations on how we think this could be handled. Originally when we got the letter, we thought maybe we should come back to the Steering Committee and recommend that we say thank you to the LVPC for the review letter, now let's move on. In the discussion at our January meeting, I think our group felt we had given them a plan that meets the MPC requirements for a comp plan, but apparently it wasn't written in the format that they wanted. It had everything in there that we had all decided we wanted in there and we thought it was a good plan for future action. Charlie said it's kind of disappointing because there was a lot of extra stuff on the CD. Glenn said in your view, if they had looked at that CD, would it have made a difference? Charlie said yes. Jack said it may have. He has looked at the formats for other comp plans. He has one here from the Nazareth Multi-Municipal Plan and there are all kinds of tables and data sheets in each of the sections. We're almost positive that it is the format they are looking for. It's a matter of getting data that's in the appendix and in the various studies and transferring it into the written portion of our Comp Plan.

Priscilla said the other municipalities we sent this to, did they have the information on the CD also? Jack said no, they only got the public release draft. Priscilla said why didn't the other municipalities get a complete set? Charlie said we prepared that to respond to the LVPC concerns. Everybody got a complete draft. Priscilla said you don't think they looked at it? Charlie said he thinks that is what the second paragraph of the LVPC letter is saying because of the time limits.

Ed said it's his understanding that it might be appropriate for Carolyn and AJ to contact the LVPC people and set up a dialogue. Jack said that has not happened. We sent the letter with the information after our meeting, and we held out the invitation to meet with them. The only response we got back was this letter. Ed said do we need their endorsement? They feel that our strategic plan conforms to the MPC requirements, right? Jack said yes, we handed out the sheet dated 2/11/09, which is the response from Carolyn and AJ. Carolyn said based on their work throughout the commonwealth and in other communities in both individual and multi municipal planning capacities, they believe the content and strategies presented in the fall 2008 public review draft plan are consistent with the PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC). Ed said that's essentially what they told us the last time they met. Jack said yes. Priscilla said if the LVPC doesn't like our plan and they are saying in their opinion it doesn't meet it and our consultant is saying it does meet it, once this is approved and we give it our blessing any development and site plans that come through the Township and the Borough have to eventually will have to go to the LVPC for review. Ed said that's kind of different. Priscilla said it's not different because the concerns they have now are going to be there for the next thirty years, every time they look at a proposal. Jack said they are saying the way it is presented it's inconsistent with the LVPC's Comprehensive Plan. The data is there, but it's inconsistent with the LVPC's comprehensive plan for the Lehigh Valley. Priscilla said do you understand what she's saying? It's going to be a red flag or stickler for any development and it's going to be many wrinkles for them to iron out.

Jennie said there's another issue here that maybe is more easily satisfied. Charlie shared it with her a couple of days ago what was really happening in the letter and she thinks it was the style in which we responded. We gave them a summary letter of what we were thinking in our dialogue. We didn't update the plan with anything that we agreed to and we did agree to. What she thinks they were looking for is a revised draft of the plan where we can maybe highlight the things we changed

and maybe our cover memo would have said “on this and this we agree with you, and on this, we are still wrestling with it” and summarize what we did. From their perspective, we were sort of in an argument-discussion mode in the cover memo and it didn’t put it into the plan. It’s hard to tell what we really accepted and what we didn’t. She thinks if we go back and not change our style and not do it to match these others, but if we put the comments down that we agreed to and the things we didn’t agree to in the draft, and summarized it, and then send it back again. Ed said that’s why he suggested we sit down and have a one on one meeting so they could face-to-face work these issues through. We could get into a situation here where we’re sending information back and forth for the next six months. Jennie said for their review purposes, they can then see what we are not agreeing to and reconcile that. It would be like your in school and you get the chance to proofread and you didn’t include any of the changes, but a cover memo saying you will change this and you will change that, so if we keep the same draft of the document, and make changes and have them then look at it. The cover letter was telling them we are getting there and this is what we want to do. They want a finished product. Charlie said they did not look at the changes. If you look at the letter, that’s a response to try to satisfy and address their needs.

Priscilla said these are questions she’d like answers to also. If they weren’t addressed in the plan, they need to be. Jack said it’s not a question of not being addressed, it’s just where was it in the plan? We provided this information. They are not satisfied on how it was presented in the format. Jennie said the difference there is not the style, more that we didn’t take the things we agreed to and rewrote our sentences in the draft. Jack said he thinks it was that, but some of our stuff was never intended to be in the front portion of the comp plan and that’s the difference of opinion. Jennie said we had strong disagreements with them on some of the issues, but she doesn’t want that to muddy what the whole plan looks like. We do agree on some things. We do appreciate what they have to say. Charlie said in the EPD strategy, it addresses items the LVPC has raised and if you look at the conclusion, you’ll see if we want to sit down with them, there is a cost involved to do the corrective action. Priscilla said by putting it in the document, it’s costing us extra money and then every time we have to have the other municipalities review it, they might have good ideas too, and somebody has to keep paying for the consultants to make the changes, print out the documents, and distribute them. She likes the fifth bullet, where it says we did not address the utilities that provide sewer and water service. Jack said in response to LVPC issues, we asked Carolyn to respond to each one of those item by item. We went the extra step and submitted several pages of documents from the Lower Saucon Authority and Hellertown Borough Authority and that was included on the disk. He doesn’t even think it was noted. Ed said they need to sit down and work this through. Priscilla said she can’t stand when we pay for a document and it sits on a shelf for ten years and gathers dust, so we’re going to look at this and a developer is going to look at it and see if their plans going to meet the conditions. They are going to look at the municipal services boundary map and then they are going to have to go to another part of the book, is this user friendly? Jack said it is to us, and that’s why we designed it that way. It may not be to a developer. That’s the way we wanted it to be.

Jennie said if we can make sure they understand that we are not to dissimilar in a lot of these issues, it’s just where they can find them because Priscilla has been saying we have to work with them. We hope to go back to them for some other funding, maybe for the joint zoning studies and if that comes up, they’ll be our funders for that. Ed said EPD said this document conforms to the MPC. They’ll accept it. The issue is the LVPC doesn’t like it.

Jack said speaking of grants; they did speak to DCED representatives who are responsible for the grants. They have no problem with this plan as it is, but they recognize in different regions of the state the planning bodies have different ways of doing things. Their recommendation was to see if we could work with them and get the document modified by making these slight changes to satisfy them.

Glenn said EPD has some great responses to the LVPC. How much would it cost for them to meet face-to-face? Ed said \$2,000.00. Jack said that when he and Charlie went to see the LVPC, the first thing we asked them was can we bring the planners in here to talk about this? They were not

interested in that as they were on a tight review schedule and they just wanted to look at the documents. He's not saying that that door is shut, but that was his impression. Ed said it sounds like we're in this mode where we just keep sending the documents back and forth until they decide, okay we like it. Glenn said there's no feedback and if we do what EPD suggests, we don't even know if it's going to be accepted by the LVPC. Jack said if this group was okay with making the changes, he and Charlie were going to go to the LVPC and sit down with them. Ed said EPD said if they are going to change the package to conform to the LVPC, they are going to have to charge us another \$2,000. Priscilla said if they'd go to the meeting, it would be more than that. Ed said that would include travel expenses.

Glenn said thinking back on school days - before he would embark on doing things, he would go up to the teacher first and ask them is this going to work, is this what you want, and then he would do the work. If Jack and Charlie would be willing, he thinks they should go and talk to the LVPC and be the scout. Jack said you would like us to run this by LVPC, see if they say okay, this would meet our standard, and if you do this in the comp plan, we'll give you the gold star. Ed said do they have copies of these documents? Jack said LVPC only has the ones dated January 12<sup>th</sup> and 13, 2009. The one dated February 11, 2009 just came in today. Ed said you don't even know if they read it. Jack said we can set up a meeting, go and talk to them and tell them these are the revisions that have been suggested by the planner, are you satisfied and would you accept them and give us your stamp of approval. Ed said we have this public meeting coming up next month. Jack said that can be moved if we have to. We were thinking if this additional work had to be done, we could push that back to the end of March or sometime at our April meeting. Ed said hopefully we'll know something really quickly because we already sort of advertised it. We had to reserve the room.

Priscilla asked what did Carolyn say about the Saddle Ridge subdivision as sensitive natural resource area? Jack said her response was that this information was on the data mapping she had gotten. Sandy Yerger had brought this to their attention at our October meeting and said there was a map with regionally significant resource areas and she indicated that it was LVPC mapping. Priscilla said was it an old map? Jack said we believe that's where Sandy got that map from and referenced it. Priscilla said we need to check that out. What about the parking deck? Charlie said it was mentioned in the discussion for the movie district, and it was mentioned that it was something that might be worthwhile doing because you would want to have the arts type features there. There isn't any plan to do that next week or next month, it was just a thought.

Jennie said with all the questions from all of the municipalities to the LVPC, was it our intention to do a final draft before approval. Jack said yes and speaking of that, the only other comments they got was from the City of Bethlehem which were handed out. Jennie said what she is saying about the draft again, as far as the expense goes, anything would be agreed to and can be folded into the text and it can say "revision, page 1-5" and they compare it with their plan. Jack said he believes they sent that information to them, but they had to their review now with the clock is ticking. They were actually looking for our final draft copy to do their review. Because it wasn't assembled in that fashion and the pieces weren't in there, it was one of the reasons we have this problem. No other municipalities or school districts had any comments about our draft. Priscilla said how to you respond to affordable housing. You can't make a developer build houses that you want them to. There has to be incentives there and it's not going to come from a local government. Jack said it seems to be a vague goal that pops up in every one of these comp plans. Priscilla said that is happening here with people coming from NJ, because there is no affordable housing for people. How do you get it, who's giving us that answer - it's the concept that looks good on a plan. She doesn't know the answer to that. Ed said we could add a buzz word. Jack said we did, which was the comment that Carolyn had added, where she referenced the LV Affordable Housing Report.

Margie said is there anywhere in the comp plan where it references subsidized housing? Jack said do you mean government subsidized housing? Margie said either for senior citizens, or subsidized housing. Jack said no. Margie said do all of the municipalities have subsidized housing? Charlie said Hellertown does for seniors. Priscilla said she thinks it doesn't have to be in a plan. The MPC

doesn't require we have that in our plan. It has other uses and it's up to the developer. She's been through so many comp plans since she's been sitting here and we've been through this and it's not realistic. Ed said that's one of the reasons for the COG; to say on a balanced basis, the joining of Hellertown and Lower Saucon meets the criteria for density or low cost housing. Priscilla said maybe that has to be shared more, and that was the whole basis for doing the comp plan with the two municipalities, so we wouldn't have to both have the same things.

Jennie said in reading our plan, where we don't specifically highlight it, we don't speak anywhere against it. We talk specifically about traditional neighborhoods and creating environments where people can come together. We talk about having in-fill where the borough is basically built out. There's not a lot of place to go. It certainly isn't prohibited and the traditional neighborhood thing gets you there. One of her concerns is that they didn't have the infrastructure to support an area being turned over completely to apartments. They didn't have the feeder streets to go into it, so basically we're enhancing what we have by gradual amount, in the borough, but if we expand those into saying we want to make those denser, apartment style blocks of land, and we can't do that as we don't have the infrastructure for it. It's a good question because we want to be good neighbors.

Priscilla said all the developments that have been coming through, like Redington, she made the comment about the information about the community sewers, and he said they were going to be very expensive.

Jennie said she doesn't know if we've done a survey of what the rents are for the apartments we have in Hellertown. She knows we have some apartments that aren't as glamorous as others, but they would certainly be more affordable. They are not in one setting, they are up and down Main Street. Maybe we need to do some statistics and count those things to say for the area, this is our affordable housing, and it's spread out all over town. Priscilla said the cost of an apartment or a rental home is going to be based on what it provides. How do you know that. Jennie said if we have it, then they want us to protect it and continue protecting the balance. If the market demands that we're in an area where you are willing to pay \$1,000 a month for an apartment as opposed to \$500 as to where it is and what we've done to Main Street, then we're not going to have affordable housing even if it is one room. Priscilla said that's the thing, it's owned by a person and if that person decides to sell it and rent it or sell it and live in it, how do you plan that. The individual has that right. Ed said if you look at the statement they made here, they say we really don't address affordable housing goals. Does anyone here know what those goals are? Jack said no. Ed said so we're sitting here talking about something that we don't even know what the goal is. He suspects they don't even know what the goal is. It's a gratuitous statement because everybody needs to have that in their document. Priscilla said not according to the MPC though. Ed said they say our documents meet the MPC criteria. Jenny said workforce housing and that sets the tone right there and it's in the City of Bethlehem's review letter. Priscilla said years ago they had houses and apartments close by to industry, we don't have that anymore. Jack said we thanked the City of Bethlehem informally for their comments.

Glenn moved for approval that our Township Manager and Borough Manager meet with LVPC to discuss EPD's 2-11-09 letter to determine whether or not it will meet the approval of LVPC to proceed with these changes to our comp plan. Second by Ed. All in favor.

Mark Wirth asked who EPD was. Glenn said they are the Environmental Planning & Design group who has assisted us in developing the multi-municipal comprehensive plan. They were the planners and the designers for our comp plan and LVPC is asking for changes to that plan.

Jack said he thinks they are going to welcome this...either it's going to do it or you're halfway or three-quarters away, but you are going to do it. It's a good idea to run it by them. They may, after the meeting, get back to us and say there's one thing you forgot, and it may be a minor thing, and ask us to take care of it. Ed said it is a good idea to have this meeting and make sure they understand what EPD has proposed to do. You ask them if we incorporate all of these changes, do you think you will approve the plan then. Jack said that's what they are going to ask them.

Priscilla said she would really like to have more of their blessing because it's going to stay with us. Jack said they will call tomorrow and try to set up a meeting right away. If they are okay with it, as they indicated in their letter, there's going to have to be another review cycle that it's going to have to go in. It's going to have to be rewritten and go to them for another 30 day period. Ed said his concern is the public meeting. Jack said that looks like they are going to say it looks good, if you put it in there, we'll approve it. You're going to start another 30 day clock, we're going to have to get it rewritten by EPD, it's going to have to go to LVPC for a period for review, then we also have to check and he believes that we will also have to send copies to Bethlehem and the other municipalities again. Ed said what he is hearing you say is we should make a decision that we are going to move the meeting. Jack said it's not going to be possible to have a document ready by March 11, 2009. Ed said then we'll move the meeting.

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

- 1. Casino Impacts Funding - update** - Jack said he, Charlie, Jennie and the Mayor went to the County Council meeting. The reason they attended was that Councilman McClure introduced an ordinance to establish another economic development authority and just to back track, at the county level, that is going to be the body that will be receiving the gaming impact funds and they will be responsible for distributing them to the municipalities and to the county. They need an economic development authority to do that, to be charged with reviewing the grant applications and disbursing the funds. This was the first step towards creating that body. Mr. Stoffa, the County Executive, has spoken to the Council and said you already have a body and it's the General Purpose Authority that already exists at the County. He feels that the GPA could handle the job of disbursing these funds. County Council, apparently, has other ideas. They want to create another authority. There was some question about whether there would be any funding for another authority. Mr. Stoffa estimated that it would cost about \$2 million a year to operate the authority with the staff and solicitors, and there's no funding stream or fees that come for that body. It's kind of debatable whether this second authority can operate on its own, but that's going to be ironed out. The purpose of our appearance was to speak about their proposal to divide up the money amongst the five contiguous municipalities. Charlie and Jack previously attended a meeting in Freemansburg where Tom Nolan from Bethlehem Township appeared and when they saw him coming into the office they thought maybe this was a breakthrough and maybe he was going to join with us and say they are part of the team. No such luck, as the whole meeting basically consisted of him telling us why our proposal was no good and why Bethlehem Township's per capita proposal, based on population, was the best way to go. He looked at Hanover Township and Lower Saucon Township and asked us why are you guys involved in this? You are going to get the same money under Bethlehem Township's proposal as you are going to get from your proposal, so, you should just step aside. They asked him where will that leave Hellertown and Freemansburg? He said he'll deal with Hellertown and Freemansburg. Charlie was there also and he said it right in front of him. We then decided we would have the Solicitor from Freemansburg, Larry Fox, put together some comments, and he did that, and we shared those with our Council members and with Mr. Stoffa. Mr. Stoffa thought the comments were very good, they were right to the point that they were trying to make. They went to the meeting and they had a couple of minutes to get up and talk. Mr. Fox spoke for a little bit and then he and Charlie got up and spoke. They wanted to clarify some points because the Council was misinformed and they wanted to clear up some misunderstandings they had about how the money is to be disbursed. It was a good discussion and following that they voted to create a redevelopment authority rather than an economic development authority. This was the first step, and then they have to introduce another ordinance for the rules and responsibilities for the body. Jennie said some of the Council members were talking about giving some of the municipalities a windfall. When this was developed, her memory recalls that it was extra money, a certain percentage they were going to be giving to the county, and then a group of you highlighted that the contiguous municipalities were going to have problems from the casino and there was an extra percentage of the terminal fees applied to that so the contiguous municipalities could address them. Priscilla said there was county money and in addition to the county money there was money for the municipalities. Jennie said some of their argument was that the five contiguous municipalities were going to be taking money away from the county. That's an important point to

talk to them about as we actually lobbied for extra money from the casinos, the terminal fees, to get this done. We are not taking any of their money. Priscilla said what happened and how they lost money was when they made the deal to share the money between the City of Allentown and the City of Bethlehem and they agreed to a different percentage than the law says. Then the County actually got less than they would have had they taken away that agreement. The agreement they did, whoever got the casino and whoever didn't, that agreement was what messed everything up. Jennie said we were being viewed as the five of us together taking money away from human services. She knows Jack and Charlie had sent this information over to them earlier, and they didn't seem to have looked at it and claimed they hadn't gotten it, so they had to be re-educated. Jack said didn't Ann McHale come to your council meeting and have that information. Charlie said yes. Jack said they all acted like they didn't understand what we had given them. Jennie said they were surprised to learn that we were not going to grab it all ourselves. They didn't understand the 60/40 split we had proposed. Jack said the 40% was available to all of the Northampton County municipalities. Ed said the county thinks we are trying to be greedy. What do they think we are trying to do? Jack said what Jennie was alluding to was they brought up the County's human services needs and Ron Angle said where is this money going to come from and they didn't understand there is really supposed to be a split of the municipal money and the county money. Jennie said is it possible to get some of the legislative history and notes from the legislators who debated this issue and also Browne's and Boscola's effort to put the revenue sharing and priority language in the law. Jack said at one point several years ago we put a series of questions to Kurt Derr at Lisa Boscola's office, and he did respond. Going back to the whole genesis of this thing, we could try. Priscilla said when we first went to Boscola that deal hadn't happened yet. It was right after the hearing. The law wasn't formulated yet. The problem was what would have been beneficial to the Greater Lehigh Valley might have not applied to other sections of the state, so for the law to apply and make sense to all parts of Pennsylvania, it didn't happen that way. When they were planning on what was going to go into the law, that predated the two cities, and then at the last minute for the two cities to agree, the ratio of the money got messed up. She doesn't think they were thinking county. We had to work very hard to get the word "priority" in there. We lobbied and lobbied to get that little word in there and if it wasn't for that little word, we probably wouldn't even be talking about this now as we'd be out of the picture. Jennie said will county council vote on who the membership of the authority is? That's going to be the next battle because one of the County Councilors, in particular, said it should not be anybody who receives the money, as that was just giving us something to run away with. Jack said they all had spoken in favor of appointing members from the five contiguous municipalities to the authority. Priscilla asked would they abstain from voting? Jack said they don't know how that will work. Ed said we just went through that with the school, we had impartial arbitrators – one from the union, one from the school and one from the state.

Mayor Fluck said one comment that Attorney Fox made that bothered him was that he said that the biggest impact was going to be felt in Freemansburg. Jack said one of the things he and Charlie both thought about was to ask Mr. Stoffa to come to one of our meetings and talk. He really has been the only one who's been consistently behind our proposal. Ed said he's a very reasonable guy, but he's dealing with the County Council. He stood up two years ago and said let's reassess the county. The county still hasn't done that. Jack said once Council appoints this authority, they are basically done, and then we have another government body to deal with.

2. **Joint COG Projects** - Charlie said we'll probably be talking to each other soon about the paving of the roads. Jack said on the Rail to Trail project, we're still trying to finalize the lease agreement with SEPTA. We reported last month that we think we're on the same wave length with the SEPTA legal guys in that we only want to lease the surface of the rail bed, not the whole infrastructure. They were talking about us leasing everything – bridges, tunnels, culverts, and all kinds of things. What we will do is lease the surface and maintain the rail bed, but only for pedestrian and bike traffic. We will not maintain it for rail traffic. If we have it for thirty years and a bridge is out there, we are not going to fix it, and if they want the train to come back, they are going to have to go in and rebuild the rail beds and the bridges to bring it back. We are hoping we can get the lease finalized. He and Charlie are providing SEPTA with a list of all of the structures

that are along there. Charlie is waiting to get confirmation about the help with the culvert down by the Grist Mill. Charlie said yes, that's right. Jack said once that's done, if we can get the lease document draft, it will be coming back to the Borough Council and Township Council and the Solicitor's will be advising the bodies on that. The next step we need to take is to get an advisory group formed to start guiding what the trail is going to look like and how it's going to be operated. They put together some recommendations on an advisory board. We're trying to get the other two municipalities up to the same speed we're at. If we can get that together, we'll bring back the advisory committee concept to the Councils and then we can start talking about forming that with the representatives from the Borough and the Township and the other municipalities. Charlie said it will be like the Steering Committee for the Compost Center. Jack said then the next step is the grant deadline as Joe Hoffman has volunteered on the Borough side to get a grant application together that we need to submit for funding to do the surface and the railings and the safety features that are needed along the rail trails. We are trying to push that along. We had a meeting a couple months back with the other two municipalities and we're going to have to get in touch with them again to see where they are. Charlie said one thing that has happened is he asked the Borough Engineer to take a look at the bridge structures in Hellertown. There's one across Silver Creek and it's very small and that's fine. There's a large one that merges the two communities and that's not fine, the bridge over Saucon Creek. He went down today to look at it as the engineers reported that it's from 1917 and it's the original structure. One-half is in the Borough and the other half is in the Township. It's the railroad bridge that crosses the creek by Neighbors. The Borough Engineer's assessment is that the east section of the bridge is not in as good a shape. The western part is pre-cast concrete and it's in fairly decent shape. He talked to Stewart, the SEPTA guy pulling rails, and they are pulling the rails from the bridge into Hellertown. He told him there was a problem and he's going to see if SEPTA's engineers can come and take a look at it because if we're going to sign a lease we have to make sure about the responsibilities. At the least, it looks like that bridge will have to be barricaded. We need to have SEPTA's input on this so they can give us guidance and how they can make it safe. It appears to be a solid bridge. He doesn't know the case of the other two communities and their bridges.

3. **Traffic - Polk Valley Road/Walnut Street Intersections; Speed Limits on Apple, Skibo & Friedensville Roads; School Zones)** - Jack said no update on the Polk Valley Road signal application. They are still waiting for approval from PennDOT. Charlie said Walnut Street has been tied up at the permits office at PennDOT for the last three to four months. They installed the handicapped walks as approved on the plan back in 2004. PennDOT changed that last summer and we just can't get past the permits office. The individual who is responsible for that is not willing to stick their neck out and say that we did this according to plan. We're probably going to have to make a visit to PennDOT's Allentown office and talk to the ADA Director and get an estimate as it'll probably cost another \$20,000 to do the handicapped ramps. They've been installed as per the original plans. We have not yet settled the legal side of this. Ed said what about the traffic study that Wally was going to do? Charlie said he didn't get anything back yet from Wally. As soon as he does, then we'll return it back to PennDOT and tell us what we have to do. Jack said on the other side of the Polk Valley Road, the engineer is looking to see if we can lower those speed limits and extend the school zone all the way around the corner past the park. The engineer will come back to us. We did get the okay from the homeowner to take that garage addition down. We're going to have a discussion with Council next week and then there will be a final plan coming to them for the bridge and the trail. On that issue, once Council approves the design for the trail and we move ahead with it, we'll ask the school to come back and talk to the Council about the waiver of the sidewalk that was in the approved plan. The trail is what was recommended in lieu of a sidewalk. It's on the schools approved plan. Council needs to give the school a waiver. We had a discussion two years ago with the school district about sharing some of the cost of the trail. We're talking about sidewalks with improvements that could cost you several hundred thousand dollars and we're talking about a fraction of that for the trail. Ed said now is the time to have that discussion because we do have some surplus capital bond money left over. We're having discussions now in what we think we need to do and the best way to earmark the money. Jack said he's spoken to Wally and whenever that comes up, we'll let everybody know. The other thing he wanted to follow up on is the parking at the school. We need to formalize the approval from the

school district to use the school parking lots for any overflow parking at Polk Valley Park. Once that trail is finished, we're going to be directing any of the sports group to park up at the school and use the trail to access the park. He will follow up with Dr. Fellin. Someone asked about the light at Polk Valley Road. Jack said we are still waiting to hear from PennDOT. Ed said if you put the light in, he suspects McDonald's is going to have a ton of trouble and they will come back to you and say they changed their mind, then what are we going to do? Jack said it could be engineered for them to use the light as exit. The issue we were talking about was if they wanted to pay for those improvements, we felt it was a long term benefit to them and to the other property owner. There are some legal issues about who owns the property on the paper street and they had to work it out with Family Services. It was sort of a joint thing that fell apart. Charlie said his suspicion is going to be legal action once the light is in. Ed said you'll sure get a lot of support from the school.

4. **Joint Enterprise Zone with City of Bethlehem - update** - Charlie said he has heard nothing further.
5. **Hellertown - Lower Saucon Compost Center - update** - Charlie said we had a good January; they had a turn out of about 200 or so people. We had some really nice volunteer help. Bud Prosser's church group volunteered to pick-up Christmas trees and they collected a lot of trees. It was very nice of them. Jack said the Compost Center will be re-opening in mid-April.
6. **Tax Reassessment - update** - Ed said there is nothing to update on tax reassessment directly, but indirectly, there is. We were notified by our Solicitor last night that a property owner in Lower Saucon has appealed their tax assessment because the county has now come up with a new common level ratio. They filed an appeal with the county and the county has asked us to pick up a portion of the cost of an appraisal. He suspects this may be the beginning of a number of property owners that are going to begin to demand that their assessed values of the property be lowered because of the current economic stress. He doesn't know if Lower Saucon was informed of this. This particular property was assessed at \$1.1 million. We agreed to pay for our share of the appraisal, but we may begin to see a lot of that. There's the issue that because of the fact that you have properties appraised at different times, they look at the market value of the properties based on recent sales and adjust for purposes of school aid, the ratio to equalize all of the school districts in the state. There is this long standing argument in many courtrooms across the state of PA what's the right way for the county to come up with the fair appraisal. It is not uncommon for two properties to sell for \$1 million and one will have three times the taxes of the others. It's going to get worse with this economy. This not only means a loss in taxes for us, but for the county, the borough, and the township.
7. **Fire Services – update** - Jack said he is trying to confirm with the DCED representative that they will hold the meeting on February 24, 2009. It will be at 7:00 PM at the Township.
8. **Leithsville Act 537 Plan - update** - Jack said no update.
9. **Other Issues** - Jack and Charlie said no new issues.

H. **County Report** - Tom Dittmar was here representing Tom Harp. He said there is a joint COG meeting coming up on March 10<sup>th</sup>, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the County Administration building from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM. Another big thing coming up in the environmental field, on May 9, 2009, the Two Rivers COG and the Palmer Environmental Steering Committee and the County are having an electronic scrap collection from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM at Easton High School. He has three planned this year. One is May 9<sup>th</sup>; May 16<sup>th</sup> at Washington Elementary School and October 3<sup>rd</sup>, at Nazareth Middle School. There is a household waste collection scheduled for the county on October 10<sup>th</sup> over at Northampton Community College. Another big program is a medication collection disposal event. Giant Pharmaceutical has come to us and said they will do it at some of their Giant stores. They are trying to put the whole program together with the DEP as it takes DEP approval and a temporary permit. It will be early this summer. People can bring their old medications instead of flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash. The deadline for the Tree Vitalization grant is February 15, 2009. On April 4, 2009, there is a training program on

pruning, the Tree Tenders program. The biggest thing is getting volunteers and training them to prune. He talked about two new brochures on recycling. He wants them to get out so that people can start reading them. We want people to get involved. Ed said he went on to the COG website and it looked really nice. We can basically put information about our meeting dates and links to our websites, etc.

- I. **Citizens Commenting on Non-Agenda Items** - None.
- J. **Events Calendar** - Priscilla said she's taking events to put on the calendar. She's now using google calendar to update and change the information.  
  
<http://sauconvalleycalendar.blogspot.com>
- K. **Adjournment** - Ed moved to adjourn the meeting, second by Priscilla. All in favor. The time was 8:35 PM.
- L. **Next Meeting:**
  - Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> – Saucon Valley School District**
  - Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> – Hellertown Borough**
  - Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup> – Lower Saucon Township**