



**Lehigh Valley-Berks Section of the
Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Planning Association**

Section Council Monthly Meeting

Friday, March 15, 2024

Section Council in Attendance: Craig Beavers, Charlie Schmehl, Molly Wood

Section Members in Attendance: Carmen Bell, Becky Bradley, Laura Mursch, James Daley, Joey Dotta, Evan Gardi, Meredith Keller, Taylor Lawrence, Ashley Showers, Laura Stedenfeld

1. Welcome

Craig Beavers opened the meeting at 12:01 PM.

2. Minutes Approval

Craig Beavers asked if there were any corrections to the February minutes, to which there were none. The minutes stand approved.

3. Reports

a. Treasurer's Report

No treasurer's report: Rick Roseberry was unable to attend.

b. Berks County Planning Commission

Laura Mursch and Ashley Showers provided an update from Berks County Planning Commission.

Four multi-municipal comprehensive plans are proposed and are being developed through a DCED grant. The PA Land Institute last month was successful and was well attended. The 2023 Annual Report is being finalized and will be released shortly.

c. Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

Becky Bradley provided an update from Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

The Lehigh Valley has had a record year for development. The TIP is being finalized and will be released for public comment in May. The LVPC is moving to their office at the end of April. The Passenger Rail Feasibility Analysis will be presented on March 27th. The Priority Climate Action Plan is complete and will be adopted in March, which will be used to apply for implementation funding for greening Route 22 and several other major highways. In May, the LVPC will be launching a housing supply and attainability strategy with the Federal Reserve Bank. The Freight Corridor Study will be analyzing land use in Lehigh County over the coming months. The Northern Lehigh communities are finalizing their coordinated zoning ordinances, and similar with Southwestern Lehigh communities as well.

d. State Planning Board

No State Planning Board update: Tina Roseberry was unable to attend.

e. State Chapter Updates

i. Legislative Committee

Charlie Schmehl provided an update from the Legislative Committee.

The State Legislature is introducing several bills aiming to reform zoning and housing regulations, with differing proposals between the political parties. Provisions range from zoning preemption, accessory dwellings, apartments in commercial uses, etc.

ii. Professional Development Committee

No Professional Development Committee update: Tina Roseberry was unable to attend.

iii. Executive Committee

Craig Beavers provided an update from the Executive Committee.

The Board of Directors recently voted to adopt the Communications Strategy Plan and is continuing to update the website.

f. Lehigh Valley Consortium of Professional Organization

No LVCPO: Rick Roseberry was unable to attend.

4. Section Updates

a. Survey Results

Craig Beavers provided an overview of the results of the Member Survey launched in February.

The survey was intended to help the Section best provide for planners and planning officials in our region. Key takeaways include the need to collaborate with existing organizations and county planning offices to not duplicate efforts, conduct more in-person educational, networking, and volunteer events, host more information sharing at section meetings, and provide hybrid options for meetings.

Becky Bradley noted that it is important to consider people who have shifted to four-day work weeks, and the Section should consider moving the meeting date to the middle of the week at noon. The LVPC would be willing to host the meeting at their office if needed.

Charlie Schmehl recommended narrowing down a vote between Friday and Wednesdays at noon.

Craig said he will send out a survey vote to see what people would prefer.

Ashley Showers said that Berks County holds meetings during Wednesday at lunch time.

Craig said we will need to find locations to host in-person meetings. LVPC, Upper Macungie, and LANTA indicated they would be willing.

Craig also said that we need to promote the value of membership. Membership with local planning officials/citizen planners is low, and organizational membership could be valuable. Becky offered to include a section at the next Local Government meeting to promote organizational membership.

b. By-laws Update

Craig Beavers provided an overview of the need to update the Section by-laws.

The current by-laws are outdated, both internally and with the Chapter by-laws. Several sections are no longer relevant, contain gendered language, and do not comply with election requirements with the Chapter. Craig requests authorization from the Section Council to consider the proposed amendments to the by-laws, and to send them to the membership for review.

Charlie Schmehl only requested to not add any additional red tape if possible. Craig agreed and noted some of the requirements from the state are the most “bureaucratic” that must still be included.

Becky Bradley noted that adequate time for review and comment will be needed prior to a vote. Craig indicated that a vote would not be conducted until May or so to allow time for discussion and review.

Motion: to authorize the Section Council to prepare an amendment for review by the membership, to be voted upon at a later meeting. Moved by Craig Beavers. Seconded by Charlie Schmehl.

Ayes: Craig Beavers, Charlie Schmehl, and Molly Wood. Nays: none. Passed 3-0.

c. Work Plan Approval

Craig Beavers provided an overview of the proposed Section Work Plan for 2024.

Motion: approve the Section Work Plan for 2024. Moved by Craig Beavers. Seconded by Charlie Schmehl.

Ayes: Craig Beavers, Charlie Schmehl, and Molly Wood. Nays: none. Passed 3-0.

5. Next Meeting –

The next meeting will be held on Friday, April 12th at 12 PM at the Upper Macungie Township Municipal Building, with a hybrid option available.

6. Adjournment

Craig Beavers adjourned the meeting at 1:10 PM