



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

Section Council Monthly Meeting

Friday, May 10, 2024

South Whitehall Municipal Building, 4444 Walbert Avenue, Allentown, PA 18104

Section Council in Attendance: Craig Beavers, Charlie Schmehl (via Zoom), Molly Wood

Section Members in Attendance: Corey Gray, Meredith Keller, Taylor Lawrence (via Zoom), David Manhardt, Craig Peiffer, Chris Strohler

1. Welcome

Craig Beavers opened the meeting at 12:19 PM.

2. Minutes Approval

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

Motion: to approve the March 2024 Minutes. Moved by Molly Wood, Seconded by Craig Beavers.

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

3. Reports

a. Treasurer's Report

No Treasurer's Report: Rick Roseberry was unable to attend.

b. Berks County Planning Commission

No report from Berks County Planning Commission: a representative was unable to attend.

c. Lehigh Valley Planning Commission

No report from Lehigh County Planning Commission: a representative was unable to attend.

d. State Planning Board

No report from the State Planning Board: Tina Roseberry was unable to attend.

e. State Chapter Updates

i. Legislative Committee

Charlie Schmehl provided an update from the Legislative Committee.

Both the Pennsylvania House and Senate have introduced bi-partisan housing reform bills, both with various degrees of preemption and/or reform to the MPC. More to come.

Allentown released the draft of their new zoning ordinance, the first form-based code in the region. It's a large change, as many properties are now rezoned to focus on design standards, rather than use and area requirements. There are questions regarding the potential legality of spot-zoning sections, but so far, no challenges have been publicly raised.

Molly Wood commented that LANTA spoke with Allentown's Planning Department about the new ordinances, and they think the new ordinance is easier to navigate.

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.

Craig B. mentioned that the Lehigh Valley will likely host the conference in the near future, possibly in October 2026. Kim Gusic said she'd like to host it at the Wind Creek Bethlehem convention center since there's been a new expansion added.

Chris Stroehler commented that WeConserve recently held their conference there, and it held plenty of room for them and another coinciding conference. It likely wouldn't be massively expensive if they were able to host it there.

Charlie Schmehl mentioned that the last time they hosted in the Lehigh Valley, they utilized the Renaissance which was undersized, and they had to use other locations like the Liberty Bell Shrine, PPL Center, etc. With the new Archer Music Hall, there might be more space in Allentown now.

iv. Student Engagement Committee

David Manhardt provided an update from the Student Engagement Committee.

The committee is seeking municipalities and offices who are hosting planning internships, as they wish to spread the word about them for planning students.

Craig B. mentioned that the PA Chapter wants to strengthen student engagement, and they are looking towards the sections to help in that effort.

David Manhardt said that the section should have more connections with the local colleges and universities, as there needs to be much more outreach to students.

Molly Wood said she spoke at a few schools about transit planning, and many professors would be interested to engage more with local planners.

Craig B. suggested that the Section create our own student engagement committee, given the interest from several members and the large potential for outreach. Craig said he will put it on the next agenda as a discussion item.

f. Lehigh Valley Consortium of Professional Organization

No LVCPO update: Samantha McLean was unable to attend.

4. Section Updates

a. By-laws Amendment

Craig Beavers reminded everyone that the ballots are open until May 15th.

b. Citizen Planner Appointments

Craig Beavers provided an overview of this item.

Craig Beavers mentioned that there are still two vacancies on both Section Council and the Chapter Board of Directors for citizen planners. Any person who is a Pennsylvania APA member and does not make a living as a planner is eligible to fill those roles.

David Manhardt asked about eligibility for members. Craig said there are organizational memberships that a municipality can sign up for, which covers full Chapter membership for planning commission members for a steeply discounted rate. The Chapter Executive Committee is working on making a revised info sheet to pass out.

Charlie Schmehl mentioned that the Section has gone for years without a citizen planner representative. Craig agreed that it was not a priority, but it would be nice to see it filled.

c. Section PDC Representative

Craig Beavers provided an overview of this item.

Alexis Williams, the state's Professional Development Officer, recently emailed me informing us that our current PDC Representative, Tina Roseberry, has been inactive and works out of state, so Alexis requested that she be removed. I have not heard back if she wishes to remain our section's PDC Representative. Craig Beavers said that we should begin looking to see if anyone might be interested as an alternate in the meantime, as this role is vital for coordinating CM events in our section.

5. CM Events

Chris Strohler and David Manhardt are coordinating a CM event around agriculture for late summer/early fall. Chris spoke with the owner who expressed interest. He said he'd like more information about what would need to be required for the event to count for CM credits, or if there was an outline of items that need to be present in the event. The workshop would likely discuss planning for agriculture and preservation in communities. It would likely be an afternoon event before they open, and then attendees can stick around to sample their menu.

6. Round Robin Updates

Craig Peiffer mentioned that the State Planning Awards deadlines are approaching soon, and nominations should be submitted by the end of the month.

Molly Wood spoke on the recent LANTA article in the Morning Call, about the recent replacement of old shelters. Bus shelters need to be located next to a sidewalk for pedestrian and ADA access, and pointed to the new Catasauqua Road shelters as a success story.

Chris Strohler mentioned that a bus tour might be a good addition to our next conference when we host. Molly agreed and said she has done similar tours in the past.

Chris Strohler spoke about the Eastern PA Greenways and Trails Summit in Sayre, which is now looking for session proposals. The conference will be held in mid-September.

David Manhardt announced the retirement of South Whitehall's long-time planner, and they are looking to replace that position. The job description will be sent out next week. Additionally, South Whitehall is working on a Landscapes Plan, covering agriculture, open space, and historical preservation, as well as a Transportation Plan, covering active transportation and safety planning.

Craig Peiffer and Corey Gray mentioned several of Bethlehem's ongoing projects, such as an Alley House Model Program, Broad Street improvements, an upcoming Parks and Recreation Master Plan, and an America 250 project at the Sun Inn.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Thursday, June 13th at 12noon at LANTA Headquarters. Lunch is BYO. Please let Craig know if you plan on attending.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 PM.