

**TOWNSHIP OF SALISBURY
LEHIGH COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**

**PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

**7:00 PM
January 10, 2012**

A Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Salisbury was held at the Township Municipal Building located at 2900 South Pike Avenue, Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. Present were Commissioners Miller, Licht, Schreiter, Hebelka, Hassick, McKitish and Beck. Also present were Ms. Sopka, Director of Planning & Zoning and Mr. Soriano, Township Manager.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Beck called the meeting to order.

RE-ORGANIZATION OF OFFICERS

On motion of Mr. Hassick, seconded by Mr. McKitish, the Planning Commission voted 7-0 to nominate Mr. Charles Beck as Chairman of the Planning Commission. All in favor.

On motion of Mr. Hebelka, seconded by Mr. Miller, the Planning Commission voted 7-0 to nominate Mr. Stephen McKitish as Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission. All in favor.

On motion of Mr. McKitish, seconded by Mr. Hassick, the Planning Commission voted 7-0 to nominate Mr. Joseph Hebelka as Secretary of the Planning Commission. All in favor.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion of Mr. Hassick, seconded by Mr. Licht, the Planning Commission voted 7-0 to approved the December 13, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes as amended. All in favor.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Present were Mr. Charles Schmehl and Mr. Bryan Cope from Urban Research Development Corporation (URDC).

Mr. Schmehl gave a presentation of the Comprehensive Plan and then opened the floor for public comment. He stated that the plan is not a regulation, but a policy and foundation for township development regulations. A majority of the Comprehensive Plan is land use and housing policies for different areas of the township. The Comprehensive Plan also provides natural feature preservation, community facilities and services, and transportation.

Mr. Schmehl stated that this is by no means a last chance for public comment and that revisions can be made. He stated that three more meetings will be held on the Comprehensive Plan before final approval by the Board of Commissioners. The plan is available for public inspection at the Salisbury Township Municipal Building.

Mr. Schmehl stated that the Comprehensive Plan will assist in the updating of the Zoning Ordinance and the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO). These Ordinances are the two main tools that township has to carry out development policies.

Mr. Schmehl reviewed the goals in the plan. Salisbury Township's main goal is natural features preservation. Mr. Schmehl stated that some of the undeveloped land in the township has major natural feature constraints.

The Comprehensive Plan will assists in the planning process of any proposed projects, i.e., the protection of natural features that promotes Salisbury Township's identity, recreation and trails, transportation, housing, land use and the Health Care Overlay District at Lehigh Valley Hospital.

Mr. Schmehl reviewed the Health Care Overlay District and URDC recommendations. This district includes Cedar Crest Professional Park located on the south side of Cedar Crest Boulevard. However, it does not include the area

closest to the existing homes. The hospital is considering building 10 to 12 foot-tall berms with plantings in the areas closest to existing homes which will help obstruct the view to the hospital.

The Health Care Overlay District would allow Lehigh Valley Hospital to have flexibility for development of new health uses, new medical research uses and new medical office uses. It would allow Lehigh Valley Hospital to construct buildings up to eight stories. Mr. Schmehl noted that Lehigh Valley Hospital will emphasize the protection of the existing neighborhood to the southwest during any proposed construction.

Mr. Schmehl and Mr. Cope gave a brief overlay of recommendations and goals for open space which includes Salisbury School District's open space along Emmaus Avenue, environmental conservation portion of the plan, protection of wetlands, waterways, seeps and slopes, Little Lehigh Creek which is a primary water source for the local area, agriculture, recreational opportunities, revitalization, and township identity.

Mr. Beck opened the floor for **public comment**.

Ms. Adele Clemmer of 3619 Sunset Avenue, a former township planning commission member, expressed her concerns about the Health Care Overlay District. As a former member she reviewed the history of why this location is an R3 zoning district that requires a special exception for certain improvements that the hospital proposes to do. The R3 zoning district allows the residents to an appeal process, to express concerns. She believes that residents will lose their rights if the township allows the hospital to have a special zone. Ms. Clemmer referred to the proposed 10 to 12 foot berms, stating the berms could be 100 feet high and she could still see the hospital because of the slope she lives on which gives her a direct view of the Lehigh Valley Hospital. Discussion ensued and it was agreed that Mr. Schmehl would set up a site visit to walk the grounds of Lehigh Valley Hospital with the hospital staff/representatives, neighboring residents and the Planning Commission.

Many residents were in attendance to oppose the Health Care Overlay District. There were complaints made about the hospital expansions, the property damage that occurred during construction site blasting and development. The hospital was unresponsive to the surrounding resident's damage to their homes. Residents asked that the township and Planning Commission help protect the surrounding neighborhood to prevent any future home damage.

Ms. Janet Keim of 11 Pine Street expressed her concerns about the protection of South Mountain and Lehigh Mountain. She noted their ecological importance on not only a township level but a regional, state and federal level. She stated that this plan does not reflect this information and recommends that it should. The plan needs to provide better protection for both South Mountain and Lehigh Mountain. She also believes more emphasis should be noted on the protection of the wetlands and seeps. She believes that the township considering agricultural zoning is beneficial.

Mr. Suiciak of 1215 Caroline Road expressed his concerns about the changing of the districts and the damage that has occurred to his home in the past. After much discussion, he suggested to do away with the hospital zone and the areas remain and R2 and R3.

Mr. Schreiter responded briefly to the comments and concerns that were stated from the residents that reside around the hospital. He stated that the Planning Commission is trying to reach a compromise between the hospital and the surrounding neighbors. Mr. Schreiter and Mr. Beck both stated that they are aware of what has happened in the past and are trying to protect the neighboring residents. Mr. Schreiter stated with this district the hospital will have to abide by rules and regulations. Mr. Schreiter stated that extensive work has been going into this plan and would like the residents of the township to come to those monthly meetings and see the progression that has been made.

Mr. Scott Stortz, representing Lehigh Valley Mountain Bikers, stated he was pleased with the identification of the need to enhance trails and pathways, outdoor recreation based tourism, Lehigh Mountain Park (a.k.a. Walking Purchase Park) and the other recreational portions of the plan. Mr. Stortz offered his help. The Mountain Bikers have built and maintained trails on Lehigh Mountain, and continue to have many ideas for the park.

Mr. Schmehl stated that many residents brought up valid points and will take them into consideration. He stated that this information will be under review and reminded the attendees that this plan is a draft and revisions can be made.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

The Planning Commission voted to adjourn the meeting. Meeting adjourned.