

Explaining the Roles of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (9)

The Bethlehem Gadfly 2 W. Market St., Serious Issues October 30, 2018

(9th in a series of posts on 2 W. Market St.)

Stephen Repasch is Chairman of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission.

Dear The Bethlehem Gadfly:

I'd like to take a moment to explain the two roles of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. In one, the LVPC is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization, which includes the job of planning and allocating most of the transportation money spent on our roads, bridges, transit, and trails, including \$534 million to be invested over the next four years.

In the second, the LVPC serves as the official planning commission of Lehigh and Northampton counties. In that role, the organization drafts dozens of regional plans, including the comprehensive plan, which provide a roadmap for regional land use. We set the tone of how the Lehigh Valley should grow as a region.

Among the many land development tasks under our purview, municipal zoning amendments are reviewed by the LVPC, to determine whether the amendment is consistent with the *The Comprehensive Plan – The Lehigh Valley ...2030*.

If the amendment is deemed to have a regional impact, or as we say "addresses matters of regional concern," our professional planners determine whether the amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan — as well as the impact if it is not — while making recommendations of what should be done to make it more consistent, as appropriate. We routinely makes those recommendations and find that most municipalities are receptive to our input.

However, if the proposed amendment addresses a matter of local concern, it is left for the governing body in the municipality to address, as they have the legal authority to do so under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code. *The Comprehensive Plan – The Lehigh Valley ...2030* looks at the best interests of the Lehigh Valley regionally. It simply does not involve the level of detail that would be needed to do block by block reviews of local plans. It is the municipality's role to administer its own zoning code.

Last week, when a zoning amendment was proposed in Bethlehem, much like three other amendment requests on the agenda that night, it was a matter that addresses local concern, acknowledging that the decision rests with the municipality.

That has always been our job, and we will continue to do it impartially and professionally, in the best interest of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the Lehigh Valley.

Sincerely,

Stephen Repasch

Chairman of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission