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UPPER MOUNT BETHEL TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2025 – 7:00 PM

*This meeting was held in person, and live streamed through the Upper Mount Bethel Township Facebook page.

I.

Supervisor Bermingham called the special meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

In attendance were Supervisor Bermingham, Supervisor Friedman, Supervisor Eckman, Supervisor Albert, Supervisor Erler, Township Manager Graziano, and Township Solicitor Karasek.

II.

APPROVE THE AGENDA

MOTION by Supervisor Friedman to approve the agenda, seconded by Supervisor Eckman. Vote: 5-0.

III.

PUBLIC COMMENT

IV.

DISCUSSION-PLAN SLATE BELT MULTI-MUNICIPAL PLAN

Supervisor Friedman stated that they have been working on this for quite some time. This multi-municipal comprehensive plan is a shared plan with eight (8) municipalities, with six (6) goals, a balance of growth and preservation. It is a shared zoning between all the communities. Supervisor Friedman sees no downside to this plan.

Russ Horn, Centerville Rd., asked when was a grant obtained to help with this program? Jill Seitz, LVPC, stated that the County just distributed the grants. Russ asked what is the cost for us to do it ourselves independently? Supervisor Friedman responded, probably thousands of dollars. Russ stated that he just doesn't understand

or see where the benefits are in this plan. Small government for the people, we are in control of ourselves.

Judy Henckel, Robin Hood Rd., stated she doesn't even know why we are here tonight. This has been voted on and approved. All the questions were answered. No other municipality is going to tell you what to do, we keep our own zoning and ordinances, we have control.

Jill Seitz, LVPC, stated the Township keeps its own Zoning Hearing Board, its own Planning Commission, the Township ultimately makes their own decisions.

Mark Mezger, Scenic Ct., commented on using other peoples' money to solve problems being beneficial. A community benefits agreement will be needed with the data center company. We need a vision for Upper Mount Bethel Township.

A resident asked why do we need to be in it? Supervisor Bermingham stated to get the municipalities to work together.

A resident asked if it's all independent, what is the benefit to us? Supervisor Bermingham stated he thinks it's more of autonomy. We don't have to listen to other municipalities.

Tracy Oscavich, LVPC, stated that it is really important to know that we are legally required to have a comprehensive plan, it's done, take what we love about it, leave what we don't, and decide to work with our neighbors or not. Supervisor Erler what is the actual cost already paid to the plan. Tracy stated the plan was originally set up as per capita, after grants, the balance was split by all ten communities, the Township's portion was \$11,670.56, which is approximately 6.2 % of the total cost of the plan.

There was a discussion on obtaining grants. Jill Seitz stated that being part of a group makes it easier to obtain funding.

Ron Angle, Million Dollar Hwy, stated that yes, we did already vote on this, but it doesn't mean we can't get out of it. Ron asked Supervisor Bermingham, prior to today, has he read this plan in its entirety. Supervisor Bermingham stated that he went through the whole thing today to be prepared. He's talked to people about it and the Lehigh Valley as well. There was a discussion on the Steering Committee and the people serving on it. Supervisor Friedman stated that a member of the Planning Commission was recommended to be on the committee, but no one responded. Ron stated that the LVEDC wanted to get the Amazon Data Center project away from us. Upper Mount Bethel is defined as a character-defining area, Upper Mount Bethel is very unique, so why do we want to be partners with other communities if we have this great character defining area. Another interesting thing is to allow transfer of development rights from farmland to development areas. What LVPC do for us that we couldn't do better for ourselves.

Judy Henckel, in 2014, the attempt to update our comprehensive plan did not work. Character defining area, means is where we are at the end of when the glaciers came

down over the ridge and dropped all the rocks all over our farmland, the vernal pools, the ridge, the woodlands, the fens, all of this makes us different.

Ray Higgins stated that if the Board now has doubts about the plan, he encourages them to go back and talk to the Townships that opted out. Ray asked Supervisor Erler if he was for the plan or against it. Supervisor Erler stated that he was against it and still is not convinced after talking to LMBT.

Charles Baltic, Laurel Hill Rd., stated that he would like to hear from the Supervisors, preferably each one, how do we go forward from here. How are they (BOS) planning on using this plan to inform your decision making. Is the steering committee still operative? Supervisor Friedman stated that it is a multiyear thing until we get everything straightened out and implemented.

Tracy Oscavich stated that an implementation agreement with the other municipalities to complete the comprehensive plan.

Supervisor Albert stated that according to this plan, we can do whatever we want.

Russ Horn feels as though this is a horrible plan and does not agree with it. What are they bringing to us? We have our own unique, we have our own things here.

There was a brief discussion on the Act 537 plan.

Joey Dotta, LVPC, stated that the Steering Committee members have discussed a bunch in depth of the plan. The Intergovernmental Cooperation Implementation Agreement has not been signed by any of the communities.

Charles Baltic, how are you as Supervisors going to use this plan going forward? The agreements he just heard of are things in the future. How are they supposed to be accessed/determined? How are you as Supervisors going to implement this plan, is it through the steering committee? Was the steering committee formed to inform you about the adoption of the plan?

Mark Mezger, are we going to use the other communities to fill our gaps? What do we want. Making decisions, achieving goals. This is a plan to force you to think about what it is we need to have and build towards it.

Supervisor Albert stated that there are aspects he likes and aspects he doesn't like. Take out the other municipalities and Upper Mount Bethel has a comprehensive plan. We don't have to work with the other communities, just make it ours.

Stavros Barbounis, Potomac St. commented on the additional agreements that have yet to be determined have not been defined. There should a representative from every committee in the Township be a part of this steering committee. He does not see a vision in this plan. We are trying to be good neighbors, trying to work together. The Act 537 Plan needs to be addressed, and he doesn't think this plan will help with that.

Supervisor Erler asked if our ordinances need to be rewritten, Tracy responded, not rewritten but reviewed to make sure they are in line with the plan.

Ron Angle commented on a major player coming into Upper Mt Bethel Township might have some of the same concerns and might be willing to work with us on some of these things. Ron suggested looking into getting a municipal planner and planning attorney to look into doing a plan for our township. We need to control our own destiny.

Judy Henckel stated that she thinks we should be working with the other communities.

Supervisor Bermingham stated that everyone made good points tonight.

V.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 pm, seconded by Supervisor Albert. Vote: 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by Cindy Beck, Recording Secretary