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SUBJECT: New Hanover Township Comprehensive Plan Overview

TO: New Hanover Township Planning Commission

FROM: Maggie Dobbs, AICP
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Overview

New Hanover Township has entered into a planning assistance contract with the MCPC, with the completion of a comprehensive plan as the primary work item.

What is a comprehensive plan?

A comprehensive plan is a long-range planning document that outlines future growth and development of a municipality. The PA Municipalities Planning Code (MPC) requires plans be updated every ten years, and most plans project community needs out twenty years. Through extensive public engagement, a community vision is established that guides the plan's recommendations. Individual goals and implementation strategies are proposed that comply with and advance the community's vision for its future.

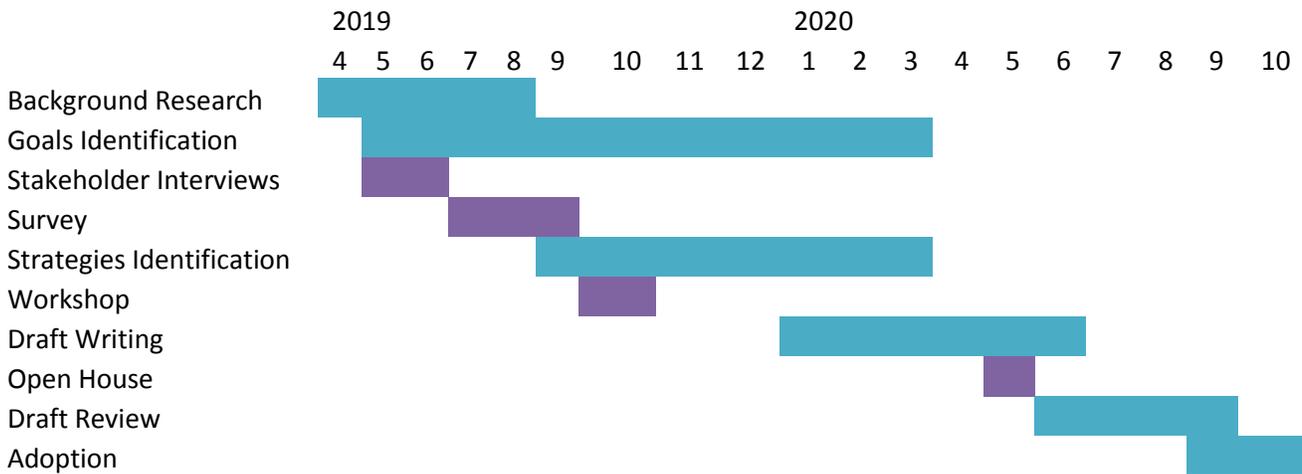
Generally speaking, actions taken by the governing body of a municipality with an adopted comprehensive plan must be consistent with the recommendations made in the plan, and any municipal plan should be generally consistent with a multimunicipal and/or county comprehensive plan. The township belongs to the Pottstown Metropolitan Regional Planning Commission and has adopted the 2015 PMRPC Comprehensive Plan. The township therefore has an obligation to achieve general consistency between its own comprehensive plan and that of the region. However, if the long-range vision and goals identified through the municipal comprehensive planning process differ from recommendations made in the regional comprehensive plan, the township may request amendments to be made to the regional comprehensive plan to achieve consistency.

Why pursue a municipal comprehensive plan?

The last municipal comprehensive plan was adopted in 1998. While the regional comprehensive plan outlines general goals for New Hanover, a municipal plan will be able to dive deeper into specific planning, project, and policy goals more endemic to the township. This process will result in an implementation chart that will better inform resource allocation and establish measurable goals to achieve based on the priority areas identified by community stakeholders, municipal staff, and residents.

Timeline

The comprehensive planning process will take about 18 months. A simplified timeline includes:



The first few months will mainly focus on data collection and analysis, conducting interviews with community stakeholders, and generally understanding the various issues and assets of the municipality. Community outreach will begin with a broad survey, followed by a workshop in the fall to better understand the values of the community. Throughout this process, the planning commission will be providing input on identifying goals and serving as the community's representative voice. Once we begin to develop the various goals, issues, and values, we will begin to identify specific strategies that will serve to implement the community's vision for the future. The planning commission will provide input during the draft writing process, and an open house will be held to present the community with the goals and strategies that were developed. A final review phase will lead to final adoption, anticipated in the late fall of 2020.

Community Engagement

Multiple community engagement opportunities will provide residents, businesses, and other stakeholders a chance to provide input on the planning process. Typical community engagement activities (listed in chronological order) include a survey, one or more workshops (a general workshop with options to have specific topic-based workshops), marketing and outreach tables at community events, an open house, and a public hearing just prior to plan adoption. MCPC staff will be primarily responsible for producing materials for these outreach events, but will rely heavily on planning commission members and municipal staff to advertise to friends and neighbors in advance of these engagement opportunities.

Planning Commission Expectations

The planning commission will serve as the steering committee for this process and is the primary group with whom planning staff will work to identify target goals of the community. The planning commission is responsible for providing feedback on the research and assisting in identifying community concerns and anecdotal information. The commission will serve as a liaison between the planners and the public

and will be a critical link to ensure that the planning process is transparent and open to all community members, regardless of age or ability. Other duties include:

- ✓ Consistent meeting attendance for the duration of the planning process
- ✓ Reading all data materials and information analysis provided by planning staff in order to be prepared to provide feedback on those materials
- ✓ Serving as community representatives that considers perspectives from all community demographics as well as personal experiences
- ✓ Promoting outreach opportunities to friends and neighbors in person and online
- ✓ Volunteering at community outreach events
- ✓ Willingness to present at meetings on topics of personal expertise

Deliverables

Throughout the planning process, materials will be prepared that will contribute to the body of knowledge that will shape the final plan. The planning commission will have an opportunity to review materials in advance of the meetings to prepare feedback to be discussed during regularly scheduled meetings. Additional discussions about how best to prepare, present, and provide feedback on the draft plan will be worked out based on the preferences of the group.