

Liberty Township Community Committee hasn't slowed roll amid leadership changes

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A change in leadership hasn't slowed the development of a new comprehensive plan for Liberty Township, according to township officials.

In late July, trustees terminated their contract with [Holly Mattei of Crossroads Community Planning](#), the consultant hired to guide the process, turning supervision over to Delaware County Regional Planning Commission executive director Scott Sanders.

The [Liberty Township Community Committee](#), tasked with creating a new comprehensive plan for the township, was formed in early 2022. The group, comprising 12 resident members – three representing each of the four quadrants into which the township was divided – and additional community stakeholders, has held monthly meetings since February.

The decision to shift gears was partly operational and partly financial, trustee Bryan Newell told *ThisWeek*.

The planning commission led the development of the township's previous comprehensive plan in 2018, and township officials had hoped to gain a fresh perspective by bringing in a consultant, according to Newell. It then became evident that an expanded citizens committee and a broader scope for the process itself were providing that desired perspective, he said.

"It was decided that (that leadership) wasn't worth paying for if we could get the same from our people and regional planning," Newell said.

Sanders said the group has been productive in the time he has served as facilitator.

"We've had some good discussion around the feedback we received at the neighborhood meetings," he said. "There's still some work to do before we get to really looking at and breaking down maps, which, I expect, we'll get to after the first of the year. I hope we can do a spring presentation for adoption."

“This is a very different group” from the previous citizens committee, member John Hartman said. “(In 2018) it was mostly zoning commission members and members of the board of zoning appeals. Now we have a geographical representation and also representatives of the local business community.”

Hartman, who also served on the 2018 comprehensive plan team, said Sanders has provided valuable guidance since being brought in to oversee the process.

The committee moved forward with its neighborhood meetings in August. These meetings were scheduled by quadrant and were always to be led by committee representatives from each quadrant, Newell said.

“We had a fantastic turnout for all of those quadrant meetings, with some really constructive feedback,” Newell said.

“I only attended the meeting in my area, but we had about 50 people attend,” Hartman said.

Newell said trustees initially had intended to wrap up the process by the end of 2022. Before it was decided to change leadership, the completion date was extended into 2023, he said.

“Nothing was sacrificed due to the change in leadership,” Newell said.

Hartman said the next steps include beginning to frame the recommendations portion of the plan, about which there have been what he called “spirited discussions.”

Newell and Hartman both expressed their thanks to Mattei for her leadership during the early stages of the process.

“I really enjoyed the opportunity working with Liberty Township,” Mattei said. “They informed me in July that they were terminating the contract with Delaware County Finance Authority, of which I was a subcontractor. There has been a lot of turnover in county leadership, and this happens from time to time with these types of changes. I wish the township the best as they move forward.”

For more information about the meetings and the community committee and its work, go to the Liberty 2040 Community Plan link at libertytwp.org.