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Learn How Development is Done

Ever wonder how that property down the street got rezoned? Or how your community leaders decided to allow a new warehouse to be built? Or maybe you're an elected or municipal official who wants a better understanding of how the planning and development process works.

The 2019 Lehigh Valley Government Academy courses can cover all that and more.

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission (LVPC) offers three courses a year in partnership with the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute (PMPEI). It's the only program of its type that spells out the legal obligations of municipal officials who serve on volunteer boards and commissions. These volunteer positions are key to maintaining the quality of life locally and regionally by balancing growth and development with infrastructure, educational, recreational, environment and other needs.

This year's schedule of classes begins in September with Community Planning. The 10-hour course will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. on three consecutive Thursdays, September 11, 18 and 25, at the offices of the LVPC. Those sessions give a crash course in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Code, the policies behind land use decisions and how to have a voice in your community.

Pamela Pearson, a Tatamy Borough Councilwoman and former Zoning Hearing Board member who sits on the LVPC, is one of a select few who have taken all four Government Academy courses, including the Zoning Administration class that's offered every two years.

"It gives you enough information so that, as a municipal official, you can understand what you're looking at when developers come in with plans," Pearson said. "It was especially helpful when I was a new Zoning Hearing Board member. I learned a lot."

You can find more information and the registration form at <http://www.lvpc.org/lvga.html>.

A second course, Subdivision and Land Development, will be held from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the LVPC on three successive Tuesdays beginning October 3. A third course, Zoning, also from 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. will be held at the LVPC on Oct. 4, 18 and 25.

The cost of each course is \$105, or \$280 for all three. Any questions can be directed to LVPC Program Associate Bethany Vazquez at bvazquez@lvpc.org or 610-264-4544.

Overall, 233 people have taken LVGA classes since 2014, including 53 who earned the distinction of Certified Citizen Planner for completing three classes. Anyone who completes all four classes gets an additional Outstanding Education Achievement Award from Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Education Institute.