

Planning Commission

MINUTES

July 17, 2025

Meeting Held at Passer Community Center

Members Present: Dave Long, Bruce Whitesell, Travis Pantaleo, Dawn Nicholson, and Neil O'Brien

Members Not Present: Nicole Zane, Angela Kelly

Mr. Long called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. He acknowledged the members present.

DISCUSSION

Township Ordinance List

Mr. Long provided an update on the efforts to compile a complete and updated list of township ordinances. He noted that the previous ordinance binder had not been kept up to date. An updated index has been created, but locating the physical copies of all the ordinances is proving difficult. American Legal publishing, which houses the township's ordinances, does not have a complete collection. The new admin, Kelli, is still in training and will not have significant time to dedicate to searching for the missing documents in the coming months. A suggestion was noted that copies may be available at the county courthouse, or at the law library.

Scenic Overlay District

Review – Members discussed the recent field trip that was conducted to obtain photo and video footage of the areas in question. Technical difficulties were noted, as some members had trouble uploading their videos to the shared Dropbox folder. Mr. Long advised that Township staff can assist in providing access. A future date is expected to be determined at which point the commission will be able to review the photos and video together on the big screen at the Township building once all footage has been compiled.

Observations – Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Nicholson observed that scenic views mostly correlated with high elevation or open agricultural fields. It was noted that conducting the same review in the winter, when there is less foliage, would likely provide a clearer view. The commission discussed the maps provided by the county, which delineate preserved properties. Various members expressed a lack of trust in the county data, noting inconsistencies, such a known preserved farm being listed as private, unpreserved property. Mr. Pantaleo agreed to take on the task of comparing the county-provided maps with the township's own spreadsheet of preserved properties to identify discrepancies.

Ordinance Application & Vagueness – The commission discussed that the ordinance, as written, only applies to subdivisions, not to individual homes. Members agreed that the ordinance is very subjective and lacks objective criteria for evaluating a plan's impact on a "scenic view". Mr. Pantaleo commented on the vagueness of the ordinance's definition of "scenic".

Ms. Nicholson suggested potentially expanding the purpose of the scenic overlay beyond rural preservation to include village centers. This could be used as a basis for beautification projects, historic preservation, wayfinding signage, and grant applications for programs like business façade improvements.

Event Venue Ordinance

Mr. Long initially suggested assigning individual commission members to interview members of the Board of Supervisors, using a consistent set of questions to gauge their positions. This would be done to avoid spending more time on a proposal the board would ultimately reject. Mr. Pantaleo & Ms. Nicholson felt that individual interviews could lead to ambiguity and preferred to schedule a joint meeting with the Board of Supervisors to ensure everyone hears the same information at the same time.

The commission acknowledged the board's division on key aspects of the ordinance, including whether to have one at all and whether it should apply equally to non-profit and for-profit entities. Mr. Long, Mr. Whitesell & Ms. Nicholson recalled that previous joint meetings had been held, but the board still rejected the proposal. It emphasized that the commission's role is to make recommendations, and they need clear direction from the supervisors to proceed effectively.

The goal would be to understand what the supervisors will agree to and to work within that framework, focusing on core issues like noise, public safety, and wastewater management.

PLANNING COMMISSION PROJECT REPORTS and COMMENTS

Natural Resource Protection – Mr. O'Brien provided an update on the initiative to review the adequacy of ordinances protecting natural resources. He is re-engaging with a colleague on the project and hopes to include a member of the EAC. The goal is to produce recommendations for ordinance amendments. Mr. Whitesell cautioned that local ordinances can be challenging to enforce when they conflict with state or federal regulations, referencing a past costly legal challenge.

Commission Operations – Mr. Whitesell suggested that at a future meeting, the commission could formally adopt a set of voluntary rules of operation to provide structure for current and new members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Modifications to the minutes from the June 4th meeting were presented. Motion made by Mr. Whitesell, seconded by Ms. Nicholson and unanimously carried to adopt the June 4th, 2025 minutes as presented.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

No announcements were made.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were made.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Nicholson, seconded by Mr. O'Brien and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Rich Pursell
Township Manager