

Board of Supervisors

Joint Meeting with Planning Commission

MINUTES

FEBRUARY 10, 2026

MEETING HELD AT SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP BUILDING

Supervisors Present: Dave Long, Lorna Yearwood, Pete Kade, Jim Hopkins and Jim Nilsen

Commission Members Present: Angela Kelly, Travis Pantaleo and Nicole Zane

Commission Members Present via Phone: Neil O'Brien, Dawn Nicholson and Bruce Whitesell

Also present: Rich Pursell (Township Manager), Mike Brent (Zoning Officer) & Tim Fulmer (Township Engineer)

Mr. Long called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENT

No announcements made.

BUSINESS ITEMS

Comprehensive Plan Review

Ms. Yearwood presented an update on the progress of high-priority recommendations from the Comprehensive plan:

- **Wastewater** – A study is currently being conducted for the villages and 309 corridor, which is ongoing and funded by a DCED grant (MAP grant).
- **Connectivity** – The Township is currently working with Diamond Communications regarding cellular service at the Hickon Rd substation.
- **Communication** – the website structure was updated in 2024, and a new hard-copy community map is being distributed to residents.
- **Public Safety** – UBREMS transitions to St. Luke's EMS late last year (2025), and a new Emergency Management Coordinator will begin planning in March.
- **Preservation** – the Historic Commission was re-established in January 2026 after a 3-year hiatus.
- **Natural Ecosystems** – An active subcommittee involving the EAC and Planning Commission is currently operating

Planning Commission Task Prioritization

The Board of Supervisors conducted a pre-meeting numerical ranking of six proposed ordinances to establish a workflow for the Planning Commission.

Discussion on Data Centers

Mr. Pantaleo led the discussion on establishing a proactive data center ordinance. Under the Municipal Planning Code (MPC), townships must provide a location for all uses. Without a specific ordinance, the township has no regulatory influence over where a data center might be built or how it is managed.

He described the environmental and infrastructural impact as follows:

- Data centers can range from 200,000 to 2 million SF
- The facilities require massive amounts of energy, often measured in megawatts or gigawatts, leading some developers to consider co-locating with small nuclear reactors.
- Newer “water immersion” cooling technology can require between 5.5 and 7 million gallons of water per site layout. Some projects require up to 28 million gallons for full functionality.

Pennsylvania is becoming a “hot spot” for data centers due to a perceived surplus of power on the PJM grid.

Board members generally categorized this as a high priority. The goal will be to create a “defensible ordinance” that regulates location and requirements for utility needs, among other considerations.

Discussion of Noise Ordinance

Mr. O’Brien led the discussion based on the Township’s receipt of frequent resident complaints, and the inability to effectively enforce. The Planning Commission has been reviewing ordinances from other townships to create a template that includes specific, enforceable standards (such as decibel limits, etc.) while remaining broad enough to satisfy resident concerns.

A critical part of the plan involves presenting a template or proposal to the Springfield Police Department to identify what resources or equipment would be required for officers and ensure the new rules are practical for officers to enforce in the field.

The Board ranked this as the #1 priority due to its immediate impact on the community and the high volume of existing residents’ complaints.

Discussion on Event Venues

Ms. Zane presented this discussion for balancing interests of business owners with the peace and safety of surrounding neighbors from a survey conducted by the Planning Commission of existing local venues to find a baseline.

A proposed ordinance would require venues to meet strict public safety standards, including verified septic capacity to handle large crowds, food and water safety permits from Bucks County Department of Health, and occupancy limits set by the fire marshal which are determined by parking, ingress, and egress rather than just building size. All amplified music would be required to be indoors, to mitigate noise issues.

Significant issue was raised regarding preserved farms. If a farm is fully preserved without a “building envelope” for non-agricultural use, the state or county may view an event venue as an unallowed use. Discussion included limiting the frequency of events (ex. One per weekend or 24 per year) and defining the number of guests (25, 50, or 100) that triggers the need for a permit.

Scenic & Historic Overlays

Mr. Pantaleo and Mr. Whitesell spearheaded this discussion, which aims to identify and protect specific corridors (like Route 212) and clusters of historic buildings.

The Historic Commission was officially re-established in January 2026 to lead these efforts after a 3-year hiatus.

While the Planning Commission and the EAC have an active subcommittee focused on natural ecosystems, the Board currently ranks this overlay project as the lowest priority compared to the more immediate infrastructure and nuisance issues.

Discussion on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Ms. Kelly presented this discussion centering on providing housing for seniors while preventing absentee landlords. Current draft ordinance requires the property owner to reside on-site, either in the main house or the ADU to prevent the property from becoming two rental units managed by an absentee landlord.

Generally defining the purpose of the ADUs as being independent living units located on the same parcel as a primary residence, often going by the term "granny flats". They are intended to help families care for ailing or elderly parents and provide a way for seniors to stay in their homes by generating extra income or housing a caregiver.

The drafted ordinance limits units up to 800SF and requires that the property owner reside in either the main house or the ADU. Additionally, the Board discussed prohibiting these units from being used as short-term rentals.

There is ongoing debate regarding federal regulations that may limit the Township's ability to restrict residency solely to family members, as specifying who lives in a unit can be legally questionable.

Short-Term Rentals (STRs)

Ms. Nicholson has proposed that the Township consider enacting regulated registrations and fee-based system. Proposed regulations include mandatory safety inspections (ex. Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers) and the requirement for a local contact person who can respond quickly to issues.

Similar to ADUs, the Board noted that the legal ability of a municipality to restrict rental activities is increasingly complex and must be handled carefully.

PRIORITIZATION RESULTS

Following the presentations, the board conducted a final poll to rank the tasks for the Planning Commission as follows (from highest priority-down):

1. Noise Ordinance
2. Data Centers
3. Event Venues
4. Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
5. Short Term Rentals (STRs)
6. Scenic & Historic Overlays

The Board concluded that the Planning Commission should focus on the Noise and Data Center ordinances first.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Deacon (Pleasant View Rd) suggested contacting the county or surrounding municipalities regarding their frameworks for proposed data center ordinances. He additionally suggested adding an indemnification requirement to protect the Township on alcohol-related services.

Ed Ziegler (Deer Trail Rd) inquired about the consecutive nature of repeated events being held on back-to-back weekends, and what the public input would be available before these ordinances are adopted. Mr. Long and Ms. Zane clarified the district allowance, hour restrictions, noise requirements, and frequency restrictions.

Ryan Youngstrand (Old Bethlehem Pk) spoke in favor of Airbnb's/STRs, stating that they have been "really impactful" for their family. He noted that their direct neighbors have used their properties as STRs for visiting friends and family, such as for weddings.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Kade, seconded by Mr. Nilsen, and unanimously carried to adjourn the public meeting at 9:04 PM

EXECUTIVE SESSION

No executive session was held.

Respectfully submitted,



Rich Pursell
Township Manager