

**Board of Supervisors**

**Joint Meeting with Park and Land Preservation Board**

**MINUTES**

**March 18, 2026**

**MEETING HELD AT SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP BUILDING**

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

**PLPB Members Present:** Frank Hollenbach, Jay Fuggiti, Kevin Boyd

**PLPB Members Absent:** Jerry Fritz

**Also present:** Rich Pursell (Township Manager)

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**

**Purpose Review & Agenda Overview**

Mr. Long noted that this is the second meeting in a series of joint meetings with the Township's Appointed Boards and Commissions (ABCs) to establish clear work priorities. The Board reviewed a comprehensive spreadsheet prepared by Ms. Yearwood containing 15 categories of projects and goals. The intent is to conduct a post-meeting assessment to finalize these priorities.

**Land Preservation Goals**

The Board discussed the status of preserved land, which stands at approximately 23% to 24% of the Township. Frank Hollenbach raised the question of whether to set a specific target percentage for future preservation or if funds should be shifted toward maintenance and recreation. There was a consensus that any new land preserved should prioritize public access, a goal echoed in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Nilsen explained that "low-hanging fruit" for preservation is largely gone, and future successes will depend on generational changes in property ownership.

**Parks & Rec and Open Space Plan**

A detailed discussion occurred regarding the Act 319 program and its impact on the tax base. Jay Fuggiti expressed concern that preservation programs reduce the tax base and favor landowners over taxpayers. Mr. Nilsen countered that only county and state involvement freezes taxes; Township-only programs do not change the existing tax income. NOTE: This statement is not accurate. Ordinance 135, enacted on November 14, 2006, does freeze township real estate taxes under certain conditions. The preceding statement is also incorrect; all three entities: County, School District and Township, must agree to freeze taxes and all need to have ordinances/resolutions describing such occurrence. Mr. Nilsen further clarified that properties in AG Reserve under Act 319 must remain unposted and open for public hunting with

permission. Mr. Nilsen also noted that Pennsylvania now recognizes purple paint on trees as a legal substitute for "Posted" signs.

### **PLPB Management Plan Update**

Management Plan Update -The PLPB is reviewing its annual plan and expects recommendations for a solicitor in April.

Grant Opportunities – Frank Hollenbach encouraged the Board to seek grant opportunities for trail construction once the initial support from private landowners is gauged. Mr. Long noted that granting agencies are far more likely to award funds if the Township already owns the land or has secured permanent easements. Having preliminary engineering or a clear "plan of attack" is a prerequisite for most state and federal applications.

Mowing and Maintenance – Frank Hollenbach mentioned that barren areas (with bedrock near the surface) in areas near Deer Trail. Frank and Jay discussed shifting these areas to a once-per-year mowing cycle to maintain their unique ecosystem. A suggestion was brought up to work with a naturalist to address soil health. Improving soil would allow for a healthier meadow that requires less mechanical intervention over time.

### **Peppermint Park**

This site remains on a standard annual management plan, with the Board of Supervisors keeping a close eye on maintenance costs versus public usage. PLPB members noted they were meeting with the EAC to discuss further management of the park.

### **Fuller-Pursell Preserve**

Approximately 2-3 years ago, a major project was undertaken at the preserve to remove dead trees, primarily dead ash. Frank Hollenbach reported a potential easement violation by the Heritage Conservancy involving the removal of hundreds of trees without required notification. While the clearing was meant to address dead wood, PLPB noted that live trees were also removed and the Township was not alerted to the project beforehand, as required for a "major project" involving a significant number of trees. The Board discussed the need for reforestation or a formal "active forestry plan" to manage the site properly. The idea of purchasing an easement for parking was discussed.

### **Lime Kiln**

Primary goal established back in 2017 to stabilize the structure has since been completed. Current maintenance is minimal, primarily consisting of weed whacking performed by the Public Works Department. While the structure is stabilized, there is a slump in the middle that has been reportedly present for many years. Physical evidence has come to attention, which includes a straight line of stones, suggesting a second lime kiln still buried on the property. Local accounts suggest there may have been as many as five kilns at one point, though many were likely destroyed or covered during road construction. Identified as a physical asset requiring future attention. The PLPB has funds for a sign but mentioned they do not wish to post until further investigation at the site has been completed. It was suggested that they should work with the Historic Commission on this project.

### **Upper Bucks Rail Trail**

Frank Hollenbach suggested a creative approach to funding smaller-scale “amenity” projects such as installing six bench sites and potentially a dinosaur-themed kiosk with QR codes. These private contributions can sometimes be used as a local “match” required by larger state grants, effectively doubling the impact of the donated funds.

### **Springfield Elementary & other Palisades Schools**

The school is under the jurisdiction of the school district, and there are no current plans to undertake any improvements to the playground by the PLPB. The Board discussed it in the context of municipal planning and community engagement. Frank Hollenbach proposed the idea of leveraging the school’s population for environmental and historical projects:

- STEM Club Collaboration – There is an ongoing initiative to work with the school’s STEM students. One proposed project involves students conducting bird surveys on Township-owned preserves.
- Educational Integration – The data collected by students would be integrated into the Township’s digital maps. This will allow students to see the real-world impact of their work while providing the Township with valuable ecological data.
- QR Code Technology – The Board discussed placing QR codes at parks that could link to projects created by Springfield Elementary students, fostering a sense of community.

### **Hickon Rd**

Listed as a physical asset the Board has discussed multiple times as a candidate, the Township has the right to take ownership under a court settlement agreement. The property is in an area described as the “triumph” of the Cooks Creek, Hickon Creek, and Upper Saucon Creek watersheds. The area is characterized by woodlands and is considered significant for protecting local water resources. Utilizing the site as leverage for the Trolley Bridge Trail was also discussed.

### **Zion Hill Trolley Bridge Trail**

This remains a high-priority, multi-year project. The trail is part of the “Circuit Trails” network aiming for over 500 miles of connectivity. One specific property which bisects the trail route is under discussion for purchase, with estimates ranging from \$680,000 to higher based on recent quotes. There are two PPL properties that would require easements for the trail. This portion of the trail would be 1-mile-long and would not connect to either Coopersburg or the Upper Bucks Trail. The Board is considering an option to only acquire the back end of the property, which contains the trail and an additional parcel of land, rather than the entire lot. Frank Hollenbach suggested potential tie-ins with Upper Saucon’s active recreational programs and access points from the Hilltop Rd area. Mr. Hopkins suggested the consideration of linking Zion Hill Trail to Upper Bucks Rail Trail, using the links available from the North Allison Road development offered to the Township over 25 years ago. Frank Hollenbach countered that the cost of upgrading Cherry Road for trail use would be expensive.

### **State Forest**

The state is finalizing the acquisition of two parcels of 100+ acres and 40 acres, each. The terrain is described as difficult to develop due to steep slopes, elevation changes, and heavy rock cover. One of the properties (40-acre) will carry a specific deed restriction that remains in place until the current owner passes away. Once the land is acquired fee-simple by the state, it will be registered as a state forest. While

the Township will have no direct control over the property, it can partner with the state on future initiatives. There will be a small parking area, and the Heritage Conservancy is managing this land transfer.

### **Buckwampum (County Land)**

The Board discussed the importance of this specific location for both historical and functional reasons. A major point was that the property was “landlocked” in terms of direct township road frontage. The only real way to reach it is through driveway easements over neighboring private properties. Because the access depends on these private easements, the Board discussed the logistical difficulty of getting heavy equipment or emergency vehicles to the tower site if repairs or fire mitigation were to be needed. The property is currently held by the County, and there was discussion about its eventual role in the state forest system or how the Township might need to interact with the County to ensure the easements remain viable for public or administrative use.

### **Passer Community Center**

Easements had been previously considered, but with the property being under 5 acres, it was deemed incompatible. The center is managed by the Passer Community Association and functions as a multi-purpose venue. Community events include workshops, soup sales and holiday open houses. Following recent renovations, the building is available for private rentals, seating up to 80 people for business meetings and social gatherings. It was agreed that the Township would support programs at Passer Community Center wherever possible.

### **Silver Creek**

The association was identified as the first major strategic “park” effort in Springfield. Long before the Township began acquiring its own preserves and parks, Silver Creek was the primary site for organized community recreation. It was noted that the association was established to provide the community with athletic fields and social space without being a direct municipal entity. The association functions completely on its own – managing the facilities, scheduling, and maintenance without Township labor or Public Works intervention.

Unlike the Township-owned parks that require annual budget allocations for mowing, repairs, and insurance, the Silver Creek Athletic Association handles its own fundraising and overhead. The Board of Supervisors specifically remarked on the “hands-off” nature of the relationship. The Township does not dictate how the association runs its programs or maintaining its grounds. PLPB members pointed to the association as a “gold standard” for how a recreational site can thrive through private volunteerism rather than government oversight. It was agreed that the Township would support programs at Silver Creek wherever possible.

### **Coopersburg Well-Field Preservation**

A discussion on strategic utility proposals involving the Coopersburg well field occurred. Mr. Hopkins suggested that the Township should negotiate with Coopersburg Borough regarding a “looping” water system. Currently, Coopersburg Borough has identified its lowest water pressure; found at Springfield St at the Springfield/Boro line. A proposed “win-win” involves Springfield Township granting preservation rights or easements for their properties on State Road above Cut-Off Road, totaling over 70 acres. This would further preserve water quality and provide capital for the Borough to extend their main along Springfield St., across 309 and on Hilltop Rd to interconnect with their storage tank behind Valley Manor Nursing

Home. This would allow Coopersburg to provide water to Springfield along the 309 corridor as suggested by Cowan Associates in an engineering study for BCPC on Springfield water resources in 1987. This metering station would provide the Township with a connection to the Coopersburg water system, offering multiple benefits by significantly improving fire protection for the western district, including the village of Zion Hill area and potentially providing a utility anchor for future development along the 309 corridor. Jay Fuggiti stated he felt the purchase of development rights might be a worthwhile expenditure.

### **Maps**

The Board is working to digitally map all physical assets owned or managed by the municipality, including the Township building, parks and preserves, and elementary school.

### **Website**

Frank Hollenbach suggested the website could serve as a dashboard to show progress on the categories discussed tonight, allowing the public to see where their Open Space tax dollars are being allocated in real-time. He acknowledged that while many projects must remain private during negotiations, the website should be the place where those projects “go live” once they are finalized. He also viewed the website as a way to recruit help by highlighting needs on the digital map (i.e. a bench site that needs a donor, or a trail segment that needs a cleanup).

### **Programming**

Frank Hollenbach discussed using QR codes at park sites to link directly to the digital map and/or provide historical and ecological data about that specific spot.

Ideas for community engagement include youth projects with the STEM club, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and the return of the Farmer’s markets and plant sales.

## **ACTION ITEMS AND NEXT STEPS**

PLPB expressed the following items as priority:

- Pavillion at Peppermint Park
- Work continuation on the Trolley Bridge Trail
- Investigating the Coopersburg wellhead as a potential public space
- Investigating potential additional kilns at the Lime Kiln site
- Improving public communication

Other actions include:

- Board of Supervisors will perform a comparison of the 15 categories and rank them in order of their preferred priority
- Technical details regarding the new mowing schedule will be provided to the BOS by the PLPB following the meeting
- The Board will investigate the tree removal on the Fuller/Purcell tract to determine if formal action is required regarding the easement violation.
- PLPB members will look into initiating preliminary talks with Coopersburg regarding water looping and trail funding.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No Public Comment.

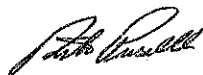
**ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Mr. Kade, seconded by Mr. Nilsen, and unanimously carried to adjourn the public meeting at 9:27 PM.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

No executive session was held.

Respectfully submitted,



Rich Pursell  
Township Manager