

**Planning Commission
MINUTES**

July 16, 2026

Meeting Held at Springfield Township Building

Members Present: Neil O'Brien, Dave Long and Travis Pantaleo

Members Present via Phone: Nicole Zane

Members Absent: Angela Kelly, Dawn Nicholson and Bruce Whitesell

Mr. O'Brien called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. O'Brien reminded members of the public in attendance that public comments would be held at the conclusion of the work session, and that each speaker would be allotted three minutes to offer comments or ask questions

NEW BUSINESS

Draft Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Ordinance Discussion

Ms. Kelly introduced the draft Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) Ordinance in brief review.

Mr. Whitesell distributed copies of Pennsylvania House Bill 2186 to the Commission Members. He reported that this bill was introduced in January and passed the Pennsylvania House of Representatives as an unusually fast track (within 60 days) via the Urban Housing Committee. He observed that support for the bill originates heavily from urban centers like Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, as well as seven counties in Southeastern PA, while rural areas have largely been unrepresented. None of the ten local representatives from Bucks County sit on the approving committee. The bill has moved to the Senate committee, where it is anticipated to progress more slowly due to a more conservative, Republican majority compared to the Democratic-controlled House. Mr. Whitesell spoke with the local senatorial representative regarding potential amendments for rural protection but expressed skepticism about significant changes.

Mr. Whitesell referenced a presentation given the previous evening by Scott Douglas, of the Cooks Creek Watershed Association, regarding an update to the Cooks Creek Watershed study. He committed to emailing the link to the commission members for review. He voices concern that the state bill creates a "one size does not fit all" disadvantage for rural environments, which lack the infrastructure of urban areas.

The Commission noted that because Springfield Township has older housing stock (much of it exceeding 50 years old), any addition of an ADU would legally trigger Bucks County Board of Health reviews for septic modification. Mr. Whitesell suggested that this requirement might inadvertently result in property owners installing updated, higher-performing septic systems, benefiting the township overall.

Statutory Parameters of HB2186 reviewed by the Commission were as follows:

- A maximum property setback requirement of no more than 4 feet.
- Municipalities may not establish a minimum net floor area requirement of more than 200 square feet for an ADU.

- The bill establishes a maximum floor limit of 850SF, or the complete floor plate of an existing basement or house structure.
- Municipalities retain the latitude to restrict the total number of ADU units allowed on a single lot.
- Under section 60351, municipalities “may not” require replacement off-street parking spaces if an existing garage, carport, or covered parking structure is demolished or converted to construct an ADU.
- Municipalities “may not” mandate a family relationship between the occupant of the ADU and the primary residential building. Mr. Whitesell added that companion state legislation is moving forward to eliminate local zoning definitions of a “family unit”, restricting municipal powers to regulating total occupancy counts under a consistent policy.

Mr. Whitesell distributed a second handout detailing the original state bill prior to committee amendments to show where language had been struck. He highlighted that the bill recommends municipalities enact rental ordinances with a 30-day minimum stay threshold to prevent short-term rental complications. He recalled researching ten local municipalities late last year, noting Bedminster Township operates a rental inspection ordinance triggered by occupancy changes. Ms. Nicholson and Mr. Long confirmed that Springfield Township currently operates under the Uniform Construction Code (UCC) but only tracks or inspects rental structures upon the formal sale of a property.

Ms. Zane questioned the formatting of the House Bill text, objecting to the extensive underline. Ms. Zane raised a procedural question regarding whether the commission should pause work on the local ordinance until the state Senate finishes voting, or advance local formatting regardless. Mr. Whitesell confirmed that if the Senate amends the bill, it must return to the House. He stated he is scheduling a meeting for the upcoming week with an aide to Senator Cioleman to gather an insider perspective on the bill’s outlook.

Ms. Nicholson stated she did not object to tracking the bill’s path for a reasonable period (6-12 months) before acting, noting that the township’s current zoning ordinance already permits in-structure dwelling units for family members. However, Mr. Long strongly advocated against letting the state house bill slow down local efforts, recommending that the Commission actively review its current draft ordinance against HB 2186, identify points of agreement or conflict, and debate policy direction line-by-line. Mr. Long and Ms. Kelly noted that the current Springfield Township draft is significantly more restrictive than the state bill (such as requiring owner-occupancy and additional off-street parking).

Ms. Kelly summarized the consensus: the commission will continue advancing its local ordinance rather than pausing. Commission members will review previous drafts alongside the distributed house bill to cross-reference conflicting terms. Mr. Whitesell will forward state updates as they arise. Deliberation on the ADU ordinance is target-scheduled for the August 2026 meetings.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Ms. Nicholson, seconded by Mr. Whitesell, and unanimously carried to approve the meeting minutes from June 3, 2026. Mr. Long abstained from voting.

CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comment.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Mr. Whitesell distributed supplemental housing data from Altoona, PA, explaining that its demographic similarities to Springfield Township made its affordable housing models relevant for local benchmarking. No formal actions were taken on the document.

Ms. Nicholson and Mr. Whitesell engaged in a discussion regarding regional development trends, local restrictions, and the potential need to adjust the township's SALDO or lot setbacks in the future to control development pressure. Mr. Whitesell remarked on a highly regarded development project located at Trolley Bridge Circle. He also noted that existing 35-foot maximum height restrictions make it difficult for modern properties to build three-story plans with scaled-back, ground footprints. Ms. Zane stated that updating the SALDO setbacks did not feel like an immediate "2026 conversation" but agreed it is worth monitoring if development pressures increase.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Ms. Zane inquired about the reason for Mr. Pantaleo's absence. Ms. Kelly shared that Mr. Pantaleo, and his wife recently welcomed a child, explaining his delayed communication during agenda preparation. Ms. Zane extended her congratulations to the Pantaleo family.

The Commission verified the upcoming meeting dates for the summer, confirming meetings are scheduled for July 16, 2026, August 5, 2026, and August 20, 2026. Ms. Kelly noted that the draft noise ordinance is scheduled for review on August 5, which she expects to be a brief discussion.

Mr. Whitesell emphasized a growing cultural dichotomy between long-term and newer residents in the township. He urged both groups to move past historical divisions and work collaboratively at the historical commission and historical society levels to build community synergy. He confirmed that the Historical Commission is currently fully staffed, operational, and fulfilling its duty to review property permits on the historic register within the mandated 30-day window.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Mr. Long, seconded by Ms. Zane and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Pursell

Township Manager