

**Planning Commission
MINUTES**

October 16, 2025

Meeting Held at Springfield Township Building

Members Present: Dave Long, Travis Pantaleo, Angela Kelly and Nicole Zane

Members Present Via Phone: Neil O'Brien and Bruce Whitesell

Members Absent: Dawn Nicholson

Additional Attendees Present: Jim Hopkins (Board Liaison)

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

DISCUSSION

Noise Ordinance / Nuisance Ordinance Review

Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Kelly had been tasked with comparing Springfield's ordinance with Tinicum Township. Mr. O'Brien noted that while there were similarities, Springfield's is "a little more truncated".

The committee discussed the overlap between noise and nuisance. Mr. Long used abandoned cars as an example of a non-noisy nuisance. The existing ordinance was criticized as being a vague "blanket" or "catch all" category that is subjective and difficult to enforce. Mr. Long reiterated the goal of creating a separate noise ordinance, as the current one is "buried under solar and wind power".

Ms. Kelly suggested the committee get guidance from the Township's enforcement staff on what provisions would be most helpful for them to enforce. The committee agreed this was the next logical step.

Haycock Camp Ministries

Mr. Long and Mr. Hopkins updated the committee on Haycock Camp Ministries' recent withdrawal against their conditional use filing. The withdrawal was reportedly due to a creek on the property being redesignated (possibly "Exceptional Value"), which now requires a 150-foot buffer and interferes with their plans. The Township Solicitor believes the 30+ conditions approved by the court during the prior process are still enforceable. Testimony had revealed numerous non-compliant activities, such as operating and "adventure park", renting facilities, and having more resident caretakers than permitted. Noise (from shooting and loud music) is a major complaint from the approximately 50 surrounding residents who hired an attorney. The Township has purchased a decibel meter to gather data.

Scenic Overlay Ordinance Review

Mr. Pantaleo and Mr. Whitesell led the discussion on the scenic overlay ordinance. Mr. Whitesell provided a one-page summary outlining (five) choices for the ordinance:

1. Leave the ordinance as-is
2. Increase its restrictiveness

3. Reduce its restrictiveness
4. Eliminate it altogether
5. Incorporate portions of it into other ordinances

Mr. Pantaleo noted that Tinicum has a “Delaware River Wild and Scenic Overlay District” and that Durham Township’s potential vote to join the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic designation could extend benefits (access to assessment grants) to Springfield via Cooks Creek. The designation was clarified as an administrative tool for assessment grants, not project implementation, and does not cede local control to the federal government.

Mr. Pantaleo further raised issue about data centers, noting they are a current development trend and questioned what role the overlay could play.

Mr. Long noted that the ordinance was successfully used to challenge a proposed cell tower, which ultimately withdrew its application. He requested that any update to the ordinance should identify the specific parcels included, rather than relying on the current map.

Ms. Kelly asked how the overlay applies to properties that are already preserved, and Mr. Long suggested the overlay might be redundant on preserved land. Mr. Pantaleo countered it could serve as “defense in depth”, as the overlay covers aspects like roadway maintenance that preservation easements may not.

After reviewing the five choices, Ms. Kelly stated her opinion to eliminate options 1, 3 and 4. The committee generally agreed they do not want to eliminate the ordinance. Consensus was to focus on a combination of options 2 (increase restrictiveness) and 5 (incorporate into other ordinances), with a goal of making the ordinance less subjective.

Data Centers and Water Resources

Mr. Pantaleo distributed a handout on data centers, noting their massive water and cooling needs. A brief discussion on traffic, the Microsoft facility, and Three-Mile Island took place. Mr. Hopkins provided a detailed history of the Township’s limited water resources, particularly on the west side. He described an ongoing issue where a well drilled by Upper Saucon Township is allegedly causing wells in Zion Hill to go dry. He also mentioned that test wells drilled by H&K for the quarry produced very little water (2.5 gallons per minute).

Event Venue Ordinance Review

The Board of Supervisors requested the Planning Commission review the event venue ordinance proposal. Originally, the Planning Commission submitted a recommendation to the board over a year ago.

Mr. Long summarized the Board’s previous divisions: some members were against including churches and nonprofits, while others felt the “health, safety and welfare” requirements (relating to food, sewage, alcohol, and access) were too restrictive.

Ms. Zane argued that the PC’s proposed regulations were “bare basic” and primarily aimed to make applicants aware of existing Bucks County and State requirements for things like food handling, septic capacity, and public water testing.

The committee discussed the best way to get clear, actionable feedback from the Board. Ms. Zane proposed a hybrid approach where the PC would develop targeted questions for the supervisors to answer

in writing *before* a joint meeting. This would help create a focused agenda and avoid another meandering or contentious” discussion. Ms. Kelly and Mr. Hopkins voiced their support for this idea. Mr. Hopkins advised making the questions detailed so the supervisors understand the full context.

The committee decided to develop the questions but wait until after the new year (following the supervisor election and reorganization) to send them.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A correction was noted on pg. 2, to fix a typo. Motion made by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Mr. O’Brien, and carried to approve the meeting minutes with the correction noted from the September 3, 2025 meeting. Ms. Zane abstained from vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A public meeting for the MAP Grant (Villages and 309 Corridor Study) is scheduled for Tuesday, October 21, 2025 at the elementary school.

A “walk-through” event is also scheduled for November 5th in Springtown.

The next steering committee meeting is tentatively proposed for November 13th. Mr. Hopkins expressed concern about it being a daytime meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Hopkins requested the Planning Commission to consider (2) items for future review:

1. **LED Signs:** The Township would like to install an LED announcement sign, but the sign ordinance currently prohibits them. He noted that the existing electronic billboard on 309 was also likely non-compliant when approved. He asked the PC to review this ordinance, as fire companies and churches have also expressed interest.
2. **Well Protection Ordinance:** Given the Township’s water resource issues, he asked the PC to research well protection ordinances used by other municipalities, which are designed to create liability when one property’s water use impacts a neighbor’s well. Ms. Kelly suggested asking the Solicitor for examples.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Ms. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Long and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Pursell
Township Manager