

**BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR PUBLIC MEETING
FEBRUARY 23, 2026**

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Walker called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Steve Gallagher, Mark Grandinetti, Les Walker, James Daley, Anna Thomas (via Zoom and unable to vote) and Dave Wong. Also present were Anthony Tallarida, Township Engineer, Anthony Giovannini, Township Solicitor, Samantha Smith, Community Development Director, Aaron Stasiw, Zoning Officer and Laura Zapata, Recording Secretary.

Members absent: Don Wright

REORGANIZATION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Township Solicitor Anthony Giovannini asked for nominations for the office of Chairperson of the Planning Commission. Mr. Daley nominated Mr. Walker. The nomination was seconded by Mr. Wong. There being no other nominations, the nominations were closed. Mr. Walker was unanimously elected Chairperson by voice vote. Solicitor Giovannini then turned the meeting over to Mr. Walker, who called for nominations for Vice Chairperson of the Planning Commission. Mr. Daley nominated Mr. Grandinetti. There being no other nominations, the nominations were closed. Mr. Grandinetti was unanimously elected Vice Chairperson by consensus. Mr. Walker called for nominations for Secretary of the Planning Commission. Mr. Daley nominated Mr. Wong and Mr. Walker seconded the nomination. There being no other nominations, the nominations were closed. Mr. Wong was unanimously elected Secretary by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Daley made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 27, 2025 regular public meeting as amended. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wong and carried unanimously.

Mr. Daley made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 16, 2025 regular public meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wong and carried unanimously.

COURTESY OF THE FLOOR

There were no comments during Courtesy of the Floor.

CORRESPONDENCE

Mr. Walker noted the correspondence as listed on the Planning Commission agenda of the February 23, 2026, and asked that if there was anything new. Ms. Smith said the Jefferson Street Lot Line Adjustment – Subdivision Plan and Blue Sky Farms - Sketch Plan were removed from the agenda at the request of their respective applicants. She also mentioned that she received the township geotechnical engineer's review letter for the Bethlehem Area Vo-Tech School Parking Lot – Site Plan Friday afternoon.

NEW BUSINESS

- **CONVENIENCE STORE ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT**

In summary, the applicant proposes changes to the Zoning Ordinance to update township standards for convenience stores in terms of design, services and modern amenities, among other things. Township staff worked with the applicant through a series of meetings and communications to develop a proposal amenable to both parties. A courtesy review by the Planning Commission was performed in December 2025, at which time the inclusion of standards for commercial electric vehicle charging was recommended and has now been incorporated. Presentation at this time is relative to the formal review process, by which a recommendation by the Planning Commission is anticipated.

Ms. Smith said the attorney for the applicant joined the meeting virtually. Mr. Wong asked for clarification pertaining to the lot line and structure. Ms. Smith said the intent of the setback is to protect the property rather than the property line. They discussed recommendations from the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission. Mr. Walker asked if the two-acre minimum applied to all uses or just convenience stores with gas pumps. Mr. Stasiw said it applied only to convenience stores with gas pumps. Mr. Walker asked if the former Pagats gas station changes ownership, whether the use would be grandfathered. Ms. Smith said yes. She also said this amendment applies to one zoning district. Mr. Gallagher and Mr. Daley asked for further detail about uses and grandfathering, which Ms. Smith clarified. Mr. Walker informed the audience that the Planning Commission is a recommending body. Only the Board of Commissioners has the power to amend ordinances.

Barry Roth, 4323 Chetwin Terrace

Mr. Roth expressed concern that people may purchase several properties all over the Township and then combine them to meet the two-acre minimum. Mr. Walker attempted to clarify that the ordinance would not apply to the whole Township. Mr. Roth repeated concern with the potential for a convenience store across the street from Farmersville Elementary on William Penn Highway, among other comments. Ms. Smith said a convenience store developed on that property would currently be a permitted by right use. Mr. Daley advised Mr. Roth that his comments were not germane to the matter being considered.

Diane Cimorelli, 4860 Country Top Trail

Ms. Cimorelli said she emailed the Board of Commissioners and Ms. Smith her concerns. Ms. Smith explained that public comments and feedback are considered by the Planning Commission for recommendations. The zoning text amendment will also be reviewed by the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and this Planning Commission for their recommendations. Once the Board of Commissioners receive the recommendations, a public hearing will be scheduled.

Mr. Wong said he was agreeable with the two-acre minimum setback, also mentioning open space and pedestrian safety.

Mr. Daley made a motion to recommend favorably and cautiously the Convenience Store Zoning Text Amendment to the Board of Commissioners. The motion was seconded by Mr. Gallagher and carried unanimously.

• GENERAL UPDATES TEXT AMENDMENT – COURTESY REVIEW

In summary, township staff and consultants propose a general, bulk amendment to the Zoning Ordinance covering a number of topics. Changes are proposed in order to adopt lot and use standards for data centers, as well as resolve references to site plan requirements throughout the Zoning Ordinance, update plot plan requirements to be more user-friendly for the average homeowner, clarify and resolve issues with the development requirements of the Streetscape

Enhancement Overlay District and change in a conditional use. Timing prevented these changes from being considered in conjunction with the convenience store text amendment.

Mr. Walker asked who was involved in updating the text amendment. Ms. Smith, Mr. Stasiw, Mr. Bruce, Mr. Tallarida, Mr. Gawlik and Solicitor Giovannini were involved in drafting the updates. Mr. Walker noted that it was important to identify specific uses and that the Township allow all uses, including data centers. Mr. Wong inquired about changes to traffic study requirements. Mr. Tallarida stated that the proposal is closer to PennDOT standards. Mr. Daley noted that on page two, the last sentence includes outdoor mechanical equipment. He said 95% of the power generated in data centers are in the building, not outside. He asked for that to be changed. Ms. Smith said it applies to both inside and outside. Mr. Walker asked if the proposal was available online. Ms. Smith stated that it's in the lobby for review.

Barry Roth, 4323 Chetwin Terrace

Mr. Roth said WFMZ 69 News reported on the negative impact of power companies with large substations.

Diane Cimorelli, 4860 Country Top Trail

Asked if smoke shops and dispensaries were included in the amendment. Mr. Walker said dispensaries are regulated by the State. Ms. Cimorelli clarified she was referring to establishments primarily selling tobacco products. Ms. Smith indicated that she may make a proposal to the Board of Commissioners for changes she'd like to see.

Mr. Wong said the frequency use of the data centers can cause noise. Ms. Smith said the township has a noise ordinance and can look into strengthening it. Mr. Walker reminded everyone that this is just a courtesy review. Solicitor Giovannini said the amendment will go before the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and this Planning Commission again for their review and recommendations to the Board of Commissioners.

No action was taken.

OLD BUSINESS

• **BETHLEHEM AREA VO-TECH SCHOOL PARKING LOT – SITE PLAN**

In summary, the applicant proposes a 31-space parking lot, widening of an existing driveway, installation of a concrete pad for a dog kennel and associated site improvements at 3300 Chester Avenue. The property is located in the Industrial Overlay (IN) District and is served by public water and sewer. The following waivers were requested.

1. A waiver is requested from Section 220-21.A., which requires comparative analysis for each direction of discharge.
2. A waiver is requested from Section 230-75.B, which requires a report identifying potential ground subsidence hazards.
3. A waiver is requested from Section 230-75.C.(2), which requires a synthetic impermeable membrane liner on the basin.

Terry DeGroot, Terraform Engineering said they are retracting waiver number one. Mr. Tallarida clarified Mr. DeGroot's retraction. He continued that he didn't think a karst report was necessary because the design assumes its possibility. Mr. Walker said he didn't support waiver number two as he said the purpose of the study is to support the design. Mr. DeGroot and Mr. Walker continued discussing specific stormwater design features, with Mr. Tallarida joining. Mr. Wong asked how

much impervious coverage was there. Mr. DeGroot said it was a small amount but didn't have the exact number. Mr. Walker, DeGroot and Tallarida continued discussion about whether a karst report was necessary, what results could mean and implications of results. Mr. Daley asked if there was a study previously done and whether a well is proposed. Mr. DeGroot said no to both items and retracted the request for a waiver of the karst study. Mr. DeGroot explained the justification for the third waiver request regarding basin lining. Mr. Walker, Mr. DeGroot, Mr. Tallarida and Mr. Wong went into further discussion about the basin and lining requirements. Mr. Walker asked the solicitor to clarify voting. Mr. Giovannini explained. Solicitor Giovannini said the board must vote on the waivers tonight.

Mr. Walker made a motion to recommend denial of the following waiver based on the township's geotechnical consultant's January 21, 2026 review letter:

- A waiver is requested from Section 230-75.C.(2), which requires a synthetic impermeable membrane liner on the basin.

The motion was seconded by Mr. Daley and carried unanimously.

Mr. Wong made a motion to recommend approval of the Bethlehem Area Vo-Tech School Parking Lot – Site Plan to the Board of Commissioners. The motion was seconded by Mr. Daley and carried unanimously.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT MEMO

Ms. Smith said the Primrose School - Land Development Plan was withdrawn by the applicant.

TABLED & ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

- **AUTUMN ESTATES – SUBDIVISION PLAN**
- **BETHLEHEM TOWNSHIP SELF STORAGE EXPANSION #2**
- **FARMERSVILLE ESTATES – CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT (PULLED FROM AGENDA BY APPLICANT)**
- **FARMERSVILLE ESTATES – SUBDIVISION PLAN (PULLED FROM AGENDA BY APPLICANT)**
- **NAZARETH PIKE SELF STORAGE – LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN**
- **PAXOS MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT (WAWA) – PRELIMINARY/FINAL (NO SUBMISSION MADE)**
- **RIVER HILL ESTATES (KAY RIVER HILL, LLC) – STREET TREE WAIVER REQUEST (TABLED)**

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wong made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. The motion was seconded by Mr. Grandinetti and carried unanimously.

NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

Monday, March 23, 2026 – Regular Public Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura G. Zapata
Recording Secretary

Samantha Smith
Community Development Director