

TINICUM TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
April 8, 2025 – 7 pm

MEETING MINUTES

Committee Members

Dr. David Upmalis, Chair; Terry Johnston, Vice Chair; John Clement, Secretary; Neil Sullivan; Luke Sorenson; Dan Ullman; Melissa Gufstafson

Roll Call of Members

Present: Dr. David Upmalis, Chair; John Clement, Secretary; Luke Sorenson; Neil Sullivan; Melissa Gufstafson

Absent: Terry Johnston, Vice Chair; Dan Ullman

Number of Public in Attendance: 8, including Township Supervisor John Cole.

Call to Order: Dr. Upmalis

Public Comment: None

Approval of Meeting Minutes

MOTION by Mr. Sullivan to approve the minutes of February 11, 2025. Seconded by Mr. Sorenson. Unanimous Vote to Approve. Abstaining (absence): Dr. Upmalis.

Agenda Items

New Business

1. 140 Bunker Hill Road
Conditional Use Application for a Minor Subdivision
Owners: Robert and Cristy Kreuscher

Applicants seek to subdivide their property. Because of its location within a number of overlay zones that merit special protection, Conditional Use approval is required. Applicants' attorney Edward M. Wild of Obermeyer Rebmann Maxwell & Hippel LLP introduced his clients along with Israel Berrios, Senior Biologist with Dubois and Associates. He then provided a brief history of the applicants' ownership and desire to subdivide their 56.23 acres into two distinct lots of 40.29 acres (which would include an existing dwelling) and 15.93 acres (currently undeveloped).

The Commission noted that in reviewing the proposed subdivision, applicants had been advised in three separate reviews (in the Zoning Officer's letter dated October 17, 2024, and in both of the Township Engineer's letters dated October 11, 2024 and February 26, 2025) that the application was missing Conditional Use requests for three of the six applicable Overlay Zones. Mr. Wild said he had hoped to address those missing requests verbally in the meeting.

In addition, the Commission referenced Paragraph 1 of the Township Engineer's October 11, 2024, letter, which noted that the subject property had previously been subdivided (in 1997) and had a lot line adjustment (in 2008) and was therefore, pursuant to Ordinance 255, subject to the requirements of a Major Subdivision. Mr. Wild said that this kind of ordinance is designed to prevent serial minor subdivisions by way of avoiding a major subdivision. He added that some municipalities set a time limit, for example five years, but in this case the first subdivision was 28 years ago. The Commission noted that Tinicum's ordinance does not establish a time limit.

Mr. Berrios discussed the Habitat Valuation Report dated January 7, 2025, that he prepared as part of the application. He confirmed that the final report had not changed from the draft report that had been submitted previously.

The Commission referenced Ordinance 262, which stipulates that all lots being newly created by a subdivision or land development in a residential district must be capable of being developed with a single-family residence without requiring a variance. After some discussion it was agreed that given the size of the newly created lot and its access to the road, one could reasonably assume that there was a suitable area for a single-family residence without the need for a variance, but a conclusive plan was not provided by the applicant.

Several neighbors were present to express their desire for the property to remain intact. One neighbor said he had moved to Tinicum specifically for its rural nature, adding that he hoped this application would be given the same level of scrutiny as all other proposed subdivisions in the Township.

After some discussion, the Commission advised that without addressing the three missing overlays or Ordinance 262, the application as presented was incomplete. It was decided, and Mr. Wild and his clients agreed, to continue the matter to the next meeting of the Planning Commission on April 22nd so that a complete application could be submitted.

2. Welcome Michelle Gustafson

The Commission welcomed new member Michelle Gustafson. Ms. Gustafson explained that she has strong connections to Tinicum: she was born here, she attended Tinicum Elementary, and she has close family that work for the Township.

She serves as the Coordinator of Federal and Non-Public Programs at Bucks County Intermediate Unit and currently resides in Ottsville.

Old Business

1. Comprehensive Plan Update and Revisions

Mr. Sullivan presented items for consideration, including:

Historic Zones — which Mr. Johnson said are currently identified in the Comprehensive Plan (along with an inventory of historic buildings and structures), but there are no Township ordinances or policies that are designed to specifically protect them. The pros and cons of establishing such policies was discussed.

Village Development — particularly in Ottsville, which is laid out in some detail in the current Comprehensive Plan, but Mr. Johnson suggested further implementation and, more pointedly, funding solutions have stalled. The needs for mixed-use zoning, sidewalks for safe pedestrian movement, landscaping, and parking solutions were discussed. Also discussed was the potential need for a sewer infrastructure serving Ottsville, especially as current systems age out and identifying suitable replacement areas becomes more and more difficult. The possibility of obtaining land for such a system was considered.

Septic Systems — in light of new technologies, Mr. Johnson said the Township's current hierarchy of preferred septic systems is outdated and not serving the Township's best interests. It was agreed that a panel of septic experts be invited to advise the Commission on possible improvements to the septic system hierarchy. Mr. Johnson also suggested exploring the idea of declassifying a septic system as a "structure", which would allow more flexibility for finding suitable locations, thereby speeding up the approval process and mitigating the possibility of contamination from failed systems.

Accessory Dwelling Units — Mr. Johnson discussed the Township Ordinance's current regulations regarding ADU's and suggested finding ways to loosen restrictions. Septic impact, water resources, housing affordability, limited availability of rentals, the need for some Township residents to have a source of additional income, and the need for a growing number of homeowners to have an option for multi-generational living was also discussed.

Municipal Building — Mr. Johnson discussed the current location of the Municipal Building and the limitations it presents, both for now and for the future. He suggested rather than expanding the existing building that the Township consider relocating to the Tinicum Community Park off Route 611, adding that because it is in a less residential/rural area, it would be a much more appropriate location for Township trucks, police, and other municipal services than the current

location, and furthermore wouldn't require waiving as many Ordinance regulations. Discussion included the park's original acquisition with Open Space funding and how that would impact such a plan, recreational facilities in the Township, the need for a centralized police headquarters, potential use of the existing building, possible funding sources, and public opinion.

2. Special Event Ordinance

Continued discussion of the draft Special Event Ordinance, including whether regulation of consumer-grade fireworks is warranted. Topics discussed: duration and frequency of fireworks events; impact on neighbors, pets and animals; permitting; fire safety; traffic control; and noise issues. The Commission agreed to discuss the draft Ordinance further in subsequent meetings.

3. Other

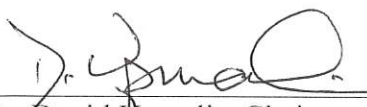
Mr. Cole updated the Commission on current and upcoming issues, including potential development projects and emergency services.

Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Clement. Seconded by Mr. Sullivan. Unanimous Vote to Approve.

Date: 5/30/25

Approved By:



Dr. David Upmalis, Chairperson



Terry Johnston, Vice Chairperson



John Clement, Secretary