

TINICUM TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
May 27, 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; Terry Johnston, Vice Chair; John Clement, Secretary; Neil Sullivan; Luke Sorenson; Dan Ullman; Melissa Gufstafson

Absent: None

Number of Public in Attendance: 11

Call to Order: Dr. Upmalis

Public Comment: None

Approval of Meeting Minutes

MOTION by Ms. Gustafson and seconded by Mr. Sorenson to approve the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Commission on April 22, 2025. Mr. Clement abstaining due to absence. Unanimous Vote to Approve.

Agenda Items

New Business - None

Old Business

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

There is a new Wetland Evaluation Report, Prime Agricultural Soil Evaluation and Habitat Evaluation Report and a letter of Waiver request from Crews Surveying dated April 21, 2025. Mr. Wild presented an overview of the submission and the review process so far, noting that revised plans requested by the Commission had been submitted in full, along with a Declaration of Easements, Covenants and

Restrictions that was submitted to the Township solicitor but not made available to the Commission for review. Also submitted were a Habitat Evaluation Report prepared by DuBois & Associates, a Wetland Evaluation report prepared by VW Consultants, a Prime Agricultural Soil Evaluation report prepared by VW Consultants, and an Environmental Assessment Report. Scott McMackin of Cowan Associates (working in partnership with Crews Surveying) was introduced as an additional resource to address issues. Mr. Wild then went through the review letters of the Township Engineer dated May 15th and the Zoning Officer dated May 1st.

A lengthy discussion centered around whether the subdivision in question should be classified as a “minor” or “major” subdivision, given that an amendment to the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) stipulates that any subdivision of a property that is the result of a previous subdivision should be treated as a “major” subdivision (and therefore subject to the underlying regulations thereof). It was noted that this property was originally part of a 3-lot subdivision in 1997 and a subsequent lot line change in 2008. Applicant now proposes a further subdivision to create two lots: a 45-acre lot with an existing home, and a new 15-acre lot for possible future development. Mr. Wild asserted that there was virtually no difference between the requirements for a minor subdivision and a major subdivision and that calling this a major subdivision would offer no substantive benefit—only increase procedural burdens.

A second lengthy discussion involved compliance with an amendment to the Ordinance that stipulates that no new lot can be approved that would require a future variance for development. Mr. Wild argued that in this case there is no present plan to develop the newly created lot. The owners intend to gift the lot to a family member who may or may not build on the lot – it could be built on in a year, or it could be built on in 20 years. Mr. Wild said that requiring a full-scale plan for a house that may or may not ever be built and that satisfies every ordinance that might be applicable is overly burdensome and not reasonable given there’s no concrete plan to build on the lot yet. However, he noted that as previously requested, a schematic design of a proposed home and improvements had been prepared and presented with the application, showing that the lot could theoretically accommodate a single-family dwelling that meets all area, dimensional, and setback requirements. Waivers are requested to defer those requirements that can’t reasonably be determined without a fully designed home, including a stormwater management plan, erosion and sediment control plans, aerial photographs, natural features within 500 feet map, improvements along street frontage, sidewalk improvements, well permit and installation, well-testing etc. Mr. Wild said compliance for all of these issues would simply occur in the future when the exact location and design of the home is defined.

Several examples were cited about subdividing property for legacy purposes (for example, for children or grandchildren, long-term holding, or future development) and Mr. Sullivan said there were numerous examples of people subdividing their properties and holding on to extra lots for decades without ever building on them.

Mr. Clement said that the intent of the ordinance is to ensure lots are not created that would require future waivers from environmental and other standards, but requiring a lengthy and expensive design and engineering process for an imaginary home that may or may not ever be built seems unreasonable and overly burdensome to residents. Mr. Johnston asked if the applicant was prepared to agree to no further subdivision on the property. Mr. Wild confirmed that that was included in the Declaration of Covenants.

Noting that there were neighbors present, Dr. Upmalis asked if there was any public comment. A township resident, Mike Wieder of Bunker Hill, said that he had complied for over 20 years with all township ordinances and was never granted a waiver. He said he felt that all applicants should be held to the same standard and subject to consistent zoning and waiver requirements.

Dr. Upmalis said the Commission had to deal with the application at hand and that the best course of action would be to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors with the understanding that further review and counsel from the Township's Engineer, Zoning Officer and Solicitor was needed. The Commission agreed.

MOTION by Dr. Upmalis to recommend that the Board of Supervisors: 1) grant the requested Conditional Uses; 2) consult with the Township Engineer and Solicitor regarding the waivers and determining whether this is a major or a minor subdivision as the Planning Commission is divided as to the proper classification; and 3) consult with the Township Solicitor regarding the Declaration of Covenants as it was not shared before the meeting and therefore the Commission can provide no guidance. Seconded by Mr. Johnston. Unanimous Vote to Approve.

2. Owner: Rendezvous Farm, LLC, 55 Municipal Road - Sewage Management Application and Waiver Request letter from Wynn Associates Dated May 2, 2025

Scott Drumbore of H&K Group presented a brief history of the project, explain that a waiver is requested from the Township's hierarchy for septic systems (Section 106(A)). He also introduced Jim Haynes and Dan Haynes of Rendezvous Farm, along with Adam Browning from Penn's Trail, who assisted with the sewage management portion of the project. There is an existing elevated sand-mound septic system. The system proposed here is an at-grade Eljen geotextile sand filter. Mr. Drumbore and his associates explained that such a system is superior to a spray irrigation or traditional sand mound system because instead of soil, it utilizes a geotextile fabric integrated with corrugated plastic to aid in the breakdown of sewage. It also utilizes a system to discharge small volumes over a 24-hour period, thereby minimizing the possibility of overwhelming the system during high use hours. It's profile is lower than that of a regular sand-mound system, and maintenance only involves pumping every 3 years.

A wide-ranging discussion followed regarding the Bucks County planning module process, County regulations, Township regulations, and proposed changes to the County's classification of septic systems. It was agreed that these classifications, including the Township's hierarchy for septic systems, are in need of updating, especially given advances in technology in the past ten years.

MOTION by Mr. Johnston to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the waiver request as presented for the septic system hierarchy. Seconded by Mr. Clement. Unanimous Vote to Approve.

3. Rural Road Classification - BOS is requesting the PC to review the Road Classification Map prepared by Wynn Associates dated March 4, 2025

A wide-ranging discussion of the proposed map of roadways in the Township. It was noted that some roads not currently open to motorized vehicles are incomplete on the map, such as Wildcat Road, Roaring Rocks Road, Swamp Creek and Lily Valley Road. It was agreed that to avoid future issues with potential development, they should be included in their entirety.

MOTION by Mr. Clement to recommend that all secondary and rural roads that are not currently passable by motorized vehicles be included in their entirety. Seconded by Mr. Johnston. Unanimous vote to approve.

4. Signed PC Minutes with recommendations regarding the Groundwater Ordinance from the 4/22/25 meeting.

Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Johnston. Seconded by Mr. Sorenson. Unanimous Vote to Approve.

Date: 6/24/25

Approved By:



Dr. David Upmalis, Chairperson

Terry Johnston, Vice Chairperson



John Clement, Secretary