

TINICUM TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
July 22, 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 Gustafson

Roll Call of Members

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

Absent: None

Number of Public in Attendance: 3, Township Supervisors John Cole and Eleanor Breslin

Call to Order: Dr. Upmalis

Public Comment: None

Approval of Meeting Minutes

MOTION by Mr. Sorenson and seconded by Ms. Gustafson to approve the Planning Commission minutes of June 24, 2025. **Unanimous Vote to Approve.**
Abstaining due to absence: Terry Johnston, Vice Chair; Neil Sullivan.

Agenda Items

New Business

1. Application: ZHB #2025-3
Location: 755 River Road LLC. Sand Castle Winery
Owner: Joseph Volpe
Zoning Hearing Board Application #2025-3 seeking an appeal from the Zoning Officer's review letter dated May 22, 2025, regarding a Use Permit Application.

Representatives for the property were not present.

The Commission discussed the applicant's grounds for appeal as outlined in the Zoning Hearing Board addendum prepared by the applicant's attorneys and dated June 23, 2025. The addendum makes the assertion that because in 2020 the Tinicum Zoning Hearing Board ruled that the property's approved Agricultural

Use could include “the hosting of events for wine-related marketing”, it naturally follows that operating a wedding venue on the site qualifies as “wine-related marketing” as long as Sandcastle’s wine is served and/or sold at each wedding.

The Commission discussed the fact that events such as weddings— even if wine produced on site is sold or served — do not automatically become “wine-related” under the meaning of the Township’s Ordinance. The primary purpose of a wedding is not to market or promote wine, but rather to celebrate a personal occasion. The sale of wine at such events is incidental to the event’s purpose and does not automatically transform it into a permitted agricultural or marketing activity. Furthermore, the Township’s Zoning Ordinance includes a separate, specifically defined use for events like weddings and addresses distinct land use impacts, such as frequency and scale of events, parking demand, noise and traffic generation, sanitation and safety requirements.

These impacts are not presumed or permitted under the Agricultural Use authorization, and the Township has established this use category precisely to address and regulate those factors appropriately. It was agreed that the mere inclusion of wine sales does not suffice to categorize an activity as a wine-related marketing event under the Township’s zoning framework, because, by that logic, *any* use would be allowed as long as on-site wine was served.

Ben Goodman, whose property on Headquarters Road adjoins the winery, said he was there to represent a number of neighboring property owners who are extremely concerned about present and future noise, trespassing and removal of neighbors’ trees, disposal of asphalt and cement on the property, and the winery’s overall impact on residents’ quality of life.

Mr. Sullivan noted that he had visited the property recently and that construction on the premises had continued apace despite the Township’s recent cease and desist order, adding that there were 20 trucks on the property and a steel structure had been erected in the parking area.

MOTION by Mr. Johnston to recommend that the Board of Supervisors send the Township Solicitor and the Township Zoning Officer to the Zoning Hearing Board meeting to oppose the appeal. Seconded by Mr. Clement.
Unanimous Vote to Approve.

2. Review of the Warehouse Ordinance

Continuing a previous discussion, Mr. Clement agreed to identify a discrepancy in the ordinance and present a solution to be discussed at the next meeting of the Commission.

3. Accessory Dwelling Discussion

The Commission discussed the challenges Township residents face with the current accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations and their implications for affordable housing and the subdivision of properties. It was agreed that easing restrictions on ADU's would allow more residents who are on fixed incomes to age in place and provide more affordable living options for the employees of local businesses. It was further agreed that the Commission should invite Zoning Officer Gary Smith and Township Engineer Curt Genner to a future meeting to review and discuss what changes could be made to the current Ordinance to provide relief without sacrificing safety and natural resource protection.

Old Business

1. Road Map Classification

Township Engineer Curtis J. Genner, Jr., of Wynn Associates, Inc. explained how the Township's official road map was developed, how it is used, and addressed concerns raised in the last meeting of the Planning Commission about gaps in some gravel/unpaved roads, like sections of Lily Valley Road, Swamp Creek Road, Wildcat Road, and Roaring Rocks. Mr. Genner explained that those gaps are consistent with other maps, including the liquid fuels map, which is used to determine some funding for the Township. Any questions about determining rights of way, future roadways, etc. along any of the gaps in the roads would be determined with on-site measurements. To further clarify, Mr. Genner recommended a disclaimer note on the map stating: "This map depicts street classifications pursuant to cited source information, Township ordinances, and Comprehensive Plan designations. The map is not to be relied upon for detection of all Township rights of way."

MOTION by Ms. Gustafson to recommend approval of the map as depicted, with the addition of a disclaimer to the map stating: "This map depicts street classifications, pursuant to cited source information, Township ordinances, and Comprehensive Plan designations. The map is not to be relied upon for detection of all Township rights of way." Seconded by Mr. Johnston. **Unanimous Vote to Approve.**

2. Comprehensive Plan

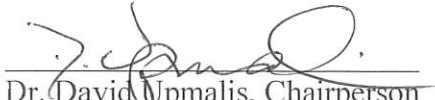
Further discussion on updating the Comprehensive Plan, including ways to make it more user-friendly, a township-wide questionnaire, census data, future plans for Ottsville, etc. The Commission agreed to review the first two sections of the Plan and provide recommendations for the next meeting

Adjournment

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

Date: 8/26/85

Approved By:


Dr. David Upmalis, Chairperson

Terry Johnston, Vice Chairperson


John Clement, Secretary