

**Mt. Joy Township
Planning Commission Regular Meeting
Tuesday, May 12, 2026**

Meeting Minutes

Present: Kim Birckhead, Chairman; Kenneth Mutzabaugh, Vice-Chairman; Ben Hawkins; Ben Mearns; Chris Burne

Also Present: Christine Demas, Supervisor; Erik Vranich, Engineer; Kim Livelsberger, Zoning & Code Enforcement Officer

The Mount Joy Township Planning Commission met this date, as publicly advertised, at the Mount Joy Township Building located at 902 Hoffman Home Rd., Gettysburg, PA 17325. In addition to being in person, the meeting was also accessible by remote ZOOM platform. The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Chairman Comments: None

Public Comments: Barbara Steele, Mud College Road expressing concerns regarding continued development within the township and the potential impacts on local water quality and water supply. Ms. Steele noted the importance of protecting groundwater resources.

Ms. Steele additionally raised concerns regarding issues associated with a shared driveway.

Approval of Minutes: April 14, 2026 - Mr. Mutzabaugh moved, seconded by Mr. Hawkins, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

Business:

Presentation by Jared Abell from the Trust for Public Land: Jared Abell, Pennsylvania Land Protection Project Manager for Trust for Public Land, provided a presentation regarding the value of parks, open space, and outdoor recreation. Mr. Abell explained that the organization is a nonpartisan national nonprofit focused on connecting people to the outdoors through land conservation, parks, trails, and recreation projects. He noted that the organization works on projects involving parks, rail trails, cultural and historic sites, and conservation of land with recreational or cultural significance.

Mr. Abell discussed several benefits associated with parks and open space, including improved physical and mental health, opportunities for recreation, social connection, environmental resilience, and economic development. He explained that access to parks and outdoor recreation can strengthen communities, improve quality of life, and contribute to local economies through outdoor recreation tourism and related spending.

Mr. Abell further emphasized the importance of balancing development with intentional preservation of open space and natural resources, noting increasing development pressures throughout Pennsylvania and the importance of maintaining access to green spaces.

Preliminary/Final Chavio Subdivision Plan: Mr. Vranich presented a revised subdivision plan for the property on Orphanage Road, noting that the plan had been modified from the version previously discussed by reducing the development from eight lots to seven. He stated that the revision water usage to below the ordinance threshold requiring a hydrogeologic study. The revised plan proposes shared access driveways serving two lots each in order to comply with access limitations discussed with PennDOT. He also noted that the smallest proposed lot would exceed three acres, with several lots exceeding ten acres in size.

Mr. Picarelli from KPI Engineering stated that review comments from the township engineer and staff had been addressed, including revisions to plan notes and correction of typographical items. The applicant further noted that sewage planning documentation had been submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for review and approval.

Mr. Picarelli addressed the previous discussion regarding environmental review requirements and the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) process. He stated that a PNDI review had been completed as part of the sewage planning process and that no impacts to known threatened or endangered species were identified. He explained that the PNDI review process involves coordination with agencies including the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to determine whether additional environmental review is required for a project

Resident and adjoining property owner, Donald “Doc” Carman, expressed concerns regarding the proposed development and its potential impact on groundwater availability in the area. Mr. Carman requested that the Township consider requiring or recommend a hydrogeologic study to evaluate the potential impacts.

Planning Commission member Mr. Hawkins stated that the Planning Commission has focused in recent years on reviewing development proposals and protecting agricultural land, community character, and natural resources within the township. He expressed concerns regarding the impact of additional residential development within the Agricultural zoning district and questioned whether the proposed development would negatively affect existing residents and farms experiencing groundwater shortages. Mr. Hawkins referenced concerns raised by neighboring property owners regarding wells running dry, installation of additional water storage systems, and increased costs associated with drilling new wells to meet residential and agricultural water needs. He further stated that approval of additional residential development in agricultural areas could establish an undesirable precedent for future development within the township.

Resident and property owner, Gene Burns, questioned the requirements to complete a hydrogeologic study for the property. Township Engineer Mr. Vranich explained that a hydrogeologist would be required and a study could include monitoring impacts on surrounding wells and evaluating whether the study satisfied the intent of the ordinance.

Planning Commission member Chris Burne discussed concerns regarding the proposed subdivision and acknowledged that the township must operate within the requirements of the existing ordinance. Mr. Burne stated that while the plan may technically comply with the ordinance, the Planning Commission could recommend that the Board of Supervisors consult with the township solicitor regarding whether unusual circumstances exist that may justify additional review. He also suggested that the developer voluntarily complete a hydrogeologic study to address concerns raised by neighboring property owners. Mr. Burne stated that such a study could provide protection and assurance for both the developer and future homeowners by evaluating potential impacts to surrounding wells and demonstrating due diligence.

Resident and property owner, John Coughlin also commented on groundwater issues experienced in the area and described his personal experience with declining well performance. Mr. Coughlin expressed concern that additional residential wells could further impact groundwater availability.

Resident and property owner, Anne Burns expressed concerns regarding both traffic safety and the long-term rural character of the township.

Mr. Burne further stated that while testimony presented during the meeting provided insight into existing groundwater issues in the area, written documentation and supporting information would assist the Board of Supervisors in better understanding the extent and legitimacy of the concerns prior to further consideration of the proposed subdivision plan.

A motion was made by Mr. Hawkins, seconded by Mr. Mutzabaugh, that first the Board of Supervisors consult with the Solicitor to investigate available legal avenues to deny this plan. Second, we the Planning Commission, acknowledge the ordinances as written, but this plan is not aligned with the spirit of the current Comprehensive Plan and the concerns of the citizens are outside of the scope of the ordinance. The Commission's recommendation is that the plan be denied.

The motion carried, unanimously.

Adjournment. With no further business, Mr. Burne moved, seconded by Mr. Mutzabaugh, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried, unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheri Moyer
Township Secretary