NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
North Whitehall Township Municipal Building, 3256 Levans Road, Coplay PA 18037
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Meeting brought to order, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag and a moment of silence at 7:00 p.m., on Tuesday, September 22, 2026, by Chair Brian Horwith.

Attendance:

Supervisor Richard Semmel	Planning Commission Member Sean Ziller
Planning Commission Chair Brian Horwith	~~Planning Commission Member John Barto~~
Planning Commission Vice Chair Bob Korp	Township Zoning Officer Aubrie Miller
Township Director of Operations Jeff Mouer	Township Engineer Dave Alban
Planning Commission Secretary Kathy Crawford	Township Planner Kevin Murphy
~~Planning Commission Member Jeff Johnson~~	Township Solicitor Rocco Beltrami
Planning Commission Member Rich Fuller	Fire Code Admin Jim Steward
Planning Commissioner George Borman	Township Consultant Judith Goldstein

Planning Commission Chair opened with an introduction of the PC, its role and outlined the proceeding of the agenda.
Meeting minutes from August 24, 2026 PC Meeting motion by George Borman and seconded by R. Fuller (unanimous)

1. Lot Line Adjustment Nancy Ehle Comment Request – 6119 Haasadahl Road, Orefield, PA 18069 (Upper Macungie Township), Parcel ID Number 5467-0496-7678, Lot Line Adjustment
    a. Brad Rock, Project Manager, introduced himself and the project. Outlined that this is a Courtesy Review triggered by the MPC because of how close the property is to the North Whitehall Boundary.
        i. Looking to keep the Act 319
        ii. No comment from the PC
        iii. Motion from R. Fuller to not provide any letter, second by B. Korp, unanimously approved.
2. Rustic Barn Special Exception – Craft Distillery Special Exception, Project Number ZHB-2026-5, 1990 Neffs Laurys Road, Slatington, PA 18080, Parcel ID Number 5570-5679-0871-1, Agricultural-Residential (AR) Zoning Dis:
    a. Representatives for Rustic Barn include Attorney Schoch and Lew Rauch, Phil Albright, and Heather Skorinko (the applicant)
        i. Brian gave a brief description of what the PC's role is in the Special Exception process
            1. Followed by Attorney Beltrami who reinforced what Brian said and explained that this is just an advisory review
    b. Zoning Officer Aubrie Miller, introduced the project, a brief project history and description of the property
    c. Chair Brian Horwith, asked if comments can be expected from Engineering and Fire when the project comes back for Land Development
        i. Township Planner: Yes
    d. Chair Brian Horwith, also asked if the Township Planner had any additional comments
        i. Township Planner explained again that this is an advisory meeting, and when this comes back into Planning Commission for land development they will have to submit a full plan.
    e. Applicants:
        i. Attorney Schoch: Stated that Special Exception means that it is a permitted use in the district, he then handed off to the Engineer associated with the project.
        ii. Engineer Lew Rauch: Gave a detailed description of the property, the level of disturbance, the grading, the buffering to be provided, etc.
        iii. Attorney Schoch: Went through the different requirements listed in the zoning ordinance, acknowledge need for Land Development approval, licenses approvals needed, annual report requirement, food on premises needed, adaptive use encouraged, etc. Not proposed to be a home occupation, on a farm property greater than ten acres, that will require 50% of ingredients to be produced on site.
        iv. Chairman Brian Horwith asked about the intent behind the ordinance that regulates this
        v. Director of Operations Jeff Mouer: Explained that there were calls from the public to agri-entertainment, argi-tourism, etc. Distillery, microbreweries were one of the uses asked for rather than more housing, or warehousing, etc.
        vi. Chairman Brian Horwith: Stated that he remembered there was also a lot of discussion for using agricultural land in different ways so that farmers could have different uses available to them.
        vii. G. Borman: No comment
        viii. R. Fuller: No comment

ix. K. Crawford: Expectation of capacity in the space for visitors? How many parking spaces?
    1. Heather Skorinko: About 1200 sq feet for the public, capacity of about 60 people, 16 parking spaces
    2. Attorney Schoch: Not asking for a variance.
    3. Kathy Crawford: What about food?
        a. Heather Skorinko: Just a vending machine at this point, potential for a food truck but not the initial plan.
    4. B. Korp: No comment
    5. R. Semmel: Asked Judy about the history of the ordinance
        a. Judy: Stated that the agri-tainment came before the comprehensive plan but the outcome the comprehensive plan and the
    6. S. Ziller: Just an overview of the history of the property
        a. H. Skorinko: Still actively farming, since 1893, six generations on the farm.
    7. R. Beltrami: No comment at this time
    8. Township Planner: No comment at this time

x. Public Comment
    1. Ken Walters, 2015 Neffs Laurys Road: Stated that this is about the use, character, purpose, and long-term goals of the agricultural residential district. Concerned that this creates a contradiction in the zoning ordinance. Spoke about the EIT, said it is reasonable to question why we are preserving the land that would allow for it. Asked if this is the type of use that we want to allow in this zoning district. Objection to a commercial alcohol serving use in an agricultural zoning district. Request to review the "precedence."

xi. Planning Commission
    1. B. Korp: Is this parcel preserved?
        a. Applicant: No
    2. B. Horwith: Our role is to provide commentary to the Zoning Hearing Board
    3. S. Ziller: I understand the challenges that NWT is facing for growth and sustainability, so we have to be strategic about the growth, so what's in front of us tonight is what role do we have to play in the favorability or not of this use, we have to be thoughtful at the micro and macro level and this is a way to preserve a farm. Motion to offer a favorable recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board.
    4. G. Borman: Seconded
        a. B. Horwith: Yes
        b. B. Korp: Yes
        c. K. Crawford: Yes
        d. R. Fuller: Yes
        e. G. Borman: Yes
        f. S. Ziller: Yes
        g. R. Semmel: Abstained

3. Saxton Walks Planned Commercial Development – Subdivision and Land Development, Project Number NWT-240-26-005, 3410/3530/3531 Mauch Chunk Road, Coplay, PA 18037, Parcel ID Numbers 5479-8020-3012-1, 5478-6947-3456-1, 5478-8849-7206-1, Single Family Residential (SR) & Planned Commercial (PC) Zoning Districts
    a. Greg Adelman (Attorney), Tony Tallarido (Engineer), Chris Brown (Landscape Architect), Rob Hoffman (Traffic Engineer), & Phil Malitcsch (Tuskes Applicant)
    b. Greg Adelman gave a brief description of the history
    c. Tony Tallarido gave a brief description of the plan location, layout, no issues with letters, NPDES permit has been submitted, PennDOT TIS approved, HOP to be submitted within a month, Planning Module is being drafted, Whitehall waterline comments being addressed, LCA has been submitted, FEMA CLOMR being prepared
    d. Township Planner explained that this is here for preliminary plan recommendation only
    e. Fire Code Official: Requested for turning templates to be shown on the plan behind the apartments, and some kind of emergency access to the barn.
        i. Tony: No objection to that and will work with PennDOT to give whatever access is needed.
            1. PennDOT will have to approve the future location or current location
    f. R. Semmel: Any reason to tear the house down?
        i. K. Crawford: Has people living there now
            1. Traffic improvements do impact the house
    g. Township Engineer:

i. Working through his letter Township engineer highlighted specific comments available in the KCE Review Letter dated September 22, 2026.
ii. Explained the CLOMR process and explained that it is up to FEMA
    1. Tony Tallarido and Greg Aldeman
        a. R. Semmel: If you start filling it how does it impact the Coplay Creek?
            i. T. Tallarido: When we did the study we do not affect the flow, the analysis shows that the base flood does not increase
                1. R. Semmel: Expressed concerns that additions of homes, will impact the Ironton Rail Trail.
iii. ADA Compliance and Ironton Rail Trail Potential Connection
    1. Tony: Explained that we have a path shown, a final location to be shown will tie into the Ironton Rail Trail and cross the Creek
    2. B. Horwith: Asked about a potential location for the connection to the IRT
        a. Tony: Demonstrated a few points where they could potentially connect.
        b. Repeated willingness to connect to the IRT
    3. B. Horwith: With the network of trails there, a connection would be a positive addition.
iv. Comments 35 and 36 Phasing of the Plan
    1. Provide an updated phasing construction, along with a sequence that follows the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Phasing.
        a. T. Tallarido: Agreed with need
        b. G. Aldeman: Are we coming for each phase (to Phil)
            i. Phil Malitsch: Coming in for a few phases at a time, Township will hold financial securities to ensure that improvements are maintained, not exactly sure what the order of the phases at this point. If at any point we make a change to the phasing plan then the Township has to approve the phasing plan.
            ii. R. Beltrami: This is the final phasing plan then?
                1. P. Malitsch: Yes, and Dave brought up a good point that the conservation district doesn't just look at these phases they consider all of them. Migration of materials, etc. That sequence is going to have to match the approved NPDES plan.
            iii. R. Semmel: When does road improvements happen?
                1. P. Malitsch: Front load, traffic improvements as required by PennDOT
            iv. R. Semmel: Fill area is located where?
                1. T. Tallarido: Generally cut the top and fill the bottom.
            v. B. Horwith: What about changes and what do we when each phase comes in?
                1. Explanation of phasing and what the process is for changes to the plan as it moves through the final plan process for each phase
v. Comment 42
    1. Right of way and setbacks
        a. Concern about WB-67 getting through
            i. 67 can use the mountable curbing, and turning
    2. R. Semmel: Why do you have that extra curbing?
        a. R. Hoffman: That's a slip lane for your heaviest traffic flow to continue to move through
            i. Design with PennDOT must be approved,
    3. Concerns expressed about the slip lane expressed by multiple PC members
vi. Comment 43
    1. Summary of the traffic and PennDOT proceedings
    2. Concerns expressed about the Quarry Road and Mauch Chunk intersection by K. Crawford
        a. Issue is queuing on Quarry Road, the theory is that by adding the right turn lane that brings the Levels of Service to acceptable levels for PennDOT
    3. K. Crawford: Concern about the speed limits on either side of the roundabout
        a. Intent to do 35 MPH to go through the residential area
    4. K. Crawford: Traffic Impact Study ended rush hour at 5:30 PM, and said that it ended too early.
        a. R. Hoffman: It takes a group of hours, and boils it down and considers the highest volume hour, which happens to be 5:30.

b. That is part of the analysis that they will be providing to us
5. S. Ziller: Willow and Mauch Chunk is out of scope?
    a. Additional is the one up at Cedar Crest
        i. Going to be received prior to final approval.

vii. Comment 51
1. Any easement for path or move the path to just outside of right of way
2. Location because there is no curb, and location is where it is
3. Recommendation from Township Engineer to move out to get away from appearance of sidewalk in someone's backyard
    a. If you need an access easement it will be provided, but trying to make it as safe as possible
4. Haven't decided on whether or not its just a private trail for the HOA, feels like it should be public
5. R. Semmel: How many crossings on Mauch Chunk?
    a. Just at the roundabout
    b. Typically no pedestrian signalization is allowed at roundabouts by PennDOT
6. S. Ziller: The community amenity area will be fenced?
    a. Not at this time.
    b. Left overly generic on the plan because we do not know what it is going to become in the future yet.
7. R. Semmel: Concern about pedestrian crossing on Mauch Chunk through the roundabout
    a. It will be lighted
8. B. Horwith: Will the roundabout be lighted?
    a. Yes
9. P. Malitsch: How are we lighting the trails?
    a. Pedestrian scale lighting on the road sides, no lighting along pedestrian access roads, pole lighting in the neighborhood, intersection lighted, etc.
10. S. Ziller: Do you have a greater idea of the commercial uses taking the space?
    a. Do not at this time.

viii. Lighting Comments
1. They are providing one light at each intersection, roundabout lighting, as stated before
2. Any concerns about the type of lighting in the residential area, standard of lighting type, etc?
    a. Lantern style based on the pro-rated of PPL, more typical residential style, PennDOT will also have say on the lighting requirements.

ix. Comment 63
1. Open Space and Payment of Fee in Lieu of Dedication
    a. P. Malitsch: Would prefer to pay the fee in lieu of dedication, if we work out some recreation facilities for the township would then look for a pro-rated rate for the rec fees
    b. K. Crawford: Any option to connect the trail that ends in the cul-de-sac with the other trails
        i. P. Malitsch: Trail locations could change pending going out to the trails and seeing what works best.
        ii. J. Goldstein: Expressed concern about staking out potentially impacting trees and nature existing

x. Comments 66 & 68
1. Comment 66: 3:1 Slope where the ordinance requires 5:1, the BOS has the ability to provide the exception
2. Comment 68: Thorny and prickly shrub recommendation but is subjected to the BOS' requirement.

h. J. Goldstein Review Letter dated September 16, 2026
i. ib. Different Elevations and Designs provided to the Township to be shown to the Planning Commission
    1. P. Malitsch: Explained the different designs provided
ii. ii. Requires design measures require privacy in the rear yards may was not addressed by the existing plan
    1. C. Brown & P. Malitsch: Will be addressed and potentially could be addressed by a buffer screen or a fencing layout, details can be provided
iii. iv. Mailbox clusters: Right now the way they are showing access overlaps with the ADA compliance requirements
iv. Tree protection areas – will be addressed
v. Open space – Will comply but management and maintenance will be given
vi. Landscape comments, some counts not matching up

vii. Drive Aisles of the apartments

i. R. Semmel: No intention for a gas station?
   i. No intention for a gas station

j. General Plan
   i. B. Korp: Why is this a preliminary plan not a preliminary/final plan?
      1. T. Tallarido: Give you the opportunity to see the full plan then each individual phases stand on their own. Financial purposes requires a lot of capital and a lot of moving parts. It is beneficial for us to go for preliminary first.
   ii. J. Steward: Questions about access
      1. Access easement, paved path something to be provided in Phase 1
   iii. B. Korp: Well thought out plan, attractive development just wish it wasn't at this location, the roundabout is the right approach it is appropriate for the intersection considering all categories. Have reference to the HOP Plans and when you get to the next steps need to see that, Rich touched on the slip lane not a fan of the slip lane. I think you need traffic calming measures on the residential streets because of people speeding through the neighborhood. Concern about the impact to the preserved farm, some of those homes are very close to the preserved farmland and buffer should be preserved. Specific section about restriction on left turn and to me that's a non-starter.
   iv. G. Borman: Slip lane is my concern
   v. R. Fuller:
   vi. K. Crawford: Is that 14 acres where you are putting the irrigation pumps?
      1. Spray heads closer to the irrigation area.
      2. Is it feasible to put in a bike path? (K. Crawford)
         a. Might be opportunities
      3. Plowing concerns
         a. We can provide snow storage easements
            i. We do disclose any easements on the lot
      4. In the townhouse area, access drives d, e, f stated that people are going to park there despite the signs and driveways
   vii. R. Semmel: Not a fan of the left and right on the three other intersections, not in favor of the waiver for the exemption of the left turn. Safety concern, improving it but adding more traffic.
      1. B. Horwith: We have a problem intersection today, and this offers no improvements, and recreates the existing problem.
   viii. S. Ziller: Expressed similar concerns to the left-turn waiver, phasing comments, and is going to continue to ask about the commercial users.
   ix. B. Horwith: This concept is unusual scale for what we see in North Whitehall Township, all within the ordinances, reticent to see the loss of the farmland, concerns with the suitability of the open space being offered to the HOA,

k. Waivers
   i. B. Horwith asked about each waiver
      1. Waiver 1: Requested to slow speed in the development, the cross section we are proposing here is the same cross section at Ridings at Parkland Phase 2, which provides us with the amenities we provided there. No objections from staff.
      2. Waiver 2: Permanent wet-bottom, so you do not want to have a slope to that bottom. No engineering objections.
      3. Waiver 3: This connects to the pathway conversation, and PennDOT regulations.
         a. Comments from B. Korp on this waiver go back to the Comprehensive Plan and defended by T. Tallarido stating that PennDOT will not accept your standard, and we are asking to put it in a different manner
      4. Waiver 4: No additional comments
      5. Waiver 5: B. Horwith comment - You are providing a stub street to the parcel to the north, between 87 and 88 is there something we could do there? R. Beltrami and G. Aldeman could show the right of way and establish a deferral rather than a waiver. We can put a condition on the recommendation and potentially create an easement. Change this to a condition.
      6. Waiver 6: Partial waiver request lit through the roundabout and through the development but request for partial waiver. Phrase it differently, potentially lot
   ii. Public Comment

1. Joel Newhard 2969 Willow Street: If you look at lots 19-23 is there any way to get another road down to the field (southwest)
2. Ray Deutch: Concern about flooding onto the Ironton Rail Trail, showed some examples of the trail flooding and washed out from August 2020.
3. Bob Hoppes 2705 Willow Street: Own land neighboring this development and a trustee of the Hoppes family trust which also owns property. Expressed concerns about discharge out into the Coplay Creek.
    a. Preliminary discharge requirements set by DEP and DRVC, in terms of continuous discharge its based on continuous flows. Whatever it is will governed by the water quality management plan.
    b. Even when it is at full capacity of the tank it slowly releases. Discharge is spread out over the day. There is an increase but is not substantial increase.
4. B. Hoppes cont.: You have a stub street going to where I live, do you have a record plan for that field that the Hoppes family trust owns?
    a. No from the developer.
    b. Hoppes has a sketch plan and that stub street does not help us. Though we are not planning on developing the lot at this time.
5. B. Hoppes cont.: Have you done a final survey on the property? Is it current?
    a. Yes to all.
6. B. Hoppes cont.: Could I get a copy of that plan?
    a. No answer given
7. B. Hoppes cont.: In your previous subdivision plan you showed a buffer on the north side of the development above the apartments. Where did the buffer go?
    a. Once explained that there was not a buffer on any version of the plan, stated that there is should be a buffer.
8. B. Hoppes cont.: There should be a clause/disclaimer for the effects of the farming on the neighboring property
9. B. Hoppes cont.: Consider health, safety and welfare, is this to the benefit of the residents of North Whitehall Township
10. Dwayne Hoppes, 2616 Willow St.: Could make it simple and keep it farmland, and asked if the developer would drink the water out of the discharge
    a. Governed by the Clean Water Act
11. Jodi Blose 33 Sand Spring: Is the roundabout going in first?
    a. The roundabout would be required first but you might need a detention basin to manage runoff.
12. Jim Wilson, Allied Utility: What are the limits the treatment will be met?
    a. Meeting the DRVC standards may exceed it.
13. Micheline Bruner Jean Court: Where would the water go?
    a. All water will run towards the stormwater irrigation area, in fact some water that runs from our site in the existing conditions to Jean Court.
14. Micheline Bruner cont.: Expressed concerns about the roundabout and claimed that they are extremely unsafe. Who is maintaining that space? Because PennDOT will not maintain it. Expressed issues with the traffic improvements offered. Expressed dissatisfaction with the left turns. Water going into the creek, expressed worry about the paving of the space and where the water is going to go.

iii. No further public comment
iv. Waiver Revisited
v. B. Korp asked if they still wish to pursue waiver for left hand turn?
    1. Yes
vi. B. Korp what's going on in front of lot 99?
    1. Requirement to stub under the Township ordinance.
vii. Waiver Votes
    1. Motion from B. Horwith 1, 2, 3 and 5 favorable waiver recommendation. Unfavorable recommendation on waiver 4. Seconded by G. Borman. 1 abstention, the rest were yes. R. Beltrami created a new waiver motioned by B. Horwith, and seconded by S. Ziller. All voted yes.
viii. Motion for Plan Recommendation:
    1. As read by Attorney Beltrami, motioned by B Korp and seconded by G. Borman
        a. Vote

i. 1 Abstention
ii. Motion passes

Any other items that may be discussed at the discretion of the Planning Commission

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Meeting Adjourned: 11:20
Kevin J. Murphy Jr.
Township Planner/Assistant Zoning Officer
North Whitehall Township