NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING

July 9, 2026

Convened: 7:00 pm Adjourned: 8:12 pm

In Attendance:		**Absent:**
Dennis Klusaritz-Supervisor	Al Geosits -Supervisor	Randy Cope -Township Manager
Mike Kukitz - Director of Grants, Preservation & Trails		Mark Yatcilla
Rich Semmel - Supervisor	Heather Skorinko	
Bob Korp	Paul Semmel	
Marlene Stofflet	Susan Williams	

Dennis Klusaritz called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by a moment of silence.

MEETING AGENDA:

1. **Approval of April 9, 2026 Meeting Minutes:**
   A motion was made by Bob Korp to approve the April 9, 2026 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Paul Semmel. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

2. **Old Business:**
   a. Current Preservation Update
      - Mike displayed a Lehigh County list of properties under consideration for preservation in 2027. The top four North Whitehall Township properties are listed as numbers 11, 12, 13, and 15 for consideration.
      - The Copeechan Fish & Game Club reached out to the Township regarding its interest in preservation.
      - Dennis stated that he believes the Committee should focus on larger, relatively flat farmland properties that could be easily developed. Bob Korp noted that viewsheds, wetlands, wooded areas, and other environmentally significant areas also require protection.
      - Dennis suggested taking all Committee members on a tour of potential and preserved properties throughout the Township. A motion was made by Susan Williams to schedule a property tour. The motion was seconded by Paul Semmel. All were in favor.

- Heather mentioned that the township should reach out to the Longenbach family regarding preservation of their property. The Longenbach property is located adjacent to the Loomis property.
- The estimated amount needed, without County assistance, to preserve all properties currently submitted for consideration is approximately $2,355,697.
- Paul clarified that the renovation expenditures for Neffs Valley Park are not being paid from the Open Space Fund.

b. Earned Income Tax (EIT) Update
- Educational Video - Mike presented the completed EIT educational video to the Committee. He noted that the video has already been posted on the Township website.
- Fifty (50) yard signs are being produced to promote the EIT referendum. Paul Semmel identified a minor error in the information on the signs that will need to be corrected.
- Susan suggested pursuing a possible segment on WFMZ and a segment on the *Tony Iannelli Show – Business Matters*.
- Mike is creating a postcard to be mailed to all Township residents in September or October.
- Mike also announced that the Township is developing a new website which will have updated content, be more user friendly, and have a new design.
- An oval icon on the homepage was suggested as a possible link to EIT information.
- The Committee discussed the possibility of showing the EIT educational video at the Shankweiler's Drive-In and discussing it with residents during the Township's Back-to-School Carnival.
- The Back-to-School Carnival is scheduled for August 28, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Mike noted that he is unable to attend and asked whether anyone from the Committee would be interested in attending the event.

3. New Business:

a. Farming Incentives
- Handouts: Other Program Information & Opportunities (Lancaster, Chester, Cumberland counties)
  Aging Out
  Current Park Land & Park Land Standards
  Agritourism Information
  Opportunities for NWT
- Dennis stated that Pennsylvania already offers many of these programs and incentives to help young farmers and that we do not need to start an incentive program locally. Dennis also stated that he is worried about the lack of young farmers in North Whitehall.

- If county and/or state money is used for preserving, the land must stay preserved agricultural land and cannot be used for future park land.
- Dennis noted that Diane Matthews-Gehringer retired from working at Lehigh County. Diane had overseen the Lehigh County Agricultural Land Preservation Program. Donna Wright is now in charge of the program with Christopher (Kelsey) Brown as the new Conservation Program Specialist.

b. Park Land Standards

- The recommended NRPA standard is 10 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. North Whitehall has approximately 15,655 residents and 116.82 acres of parkland at this time, equating to approximately 7.46 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, or about 75% of the recommended standard.

4. Final Comments from the Floor:

- Mike displayed a large map of North Whitehall Township showing the Township's existing parks and highlighting the gaps in our park system. Mike stated that if the EIT is successful, the committee could look to purchase certain properties for potential future park land for the community. A community park is a larger, more comprehensive park that serves a broader geographic area than a neighborhood park.
- The Committee noted that there are several areas throughout the Township that could potentially be considered for future parkland.
- Dennis asked about the Rohr property and Stangle property. Mike stated that the status of the Rohr Farm remains unchanged and nothing new has been heard from the Stangle family regarding moving forward with preservation.

5. Motion to Adjourn:

A motion was made by Bob Korp to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Paul Semmel. Motion carried by unanimous consent.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marlene Stofflet, Secretary

THE NEXT FARMLAND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR October 8, 2026