NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

FARMLAND & OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

July 10, 2025

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

Mark called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

In attendance were:		**Not in attendance:**
Randy Cope -Township Manager	Paul Semmel	Ron Heintzelman - Supervisor
Mike Kukitz - Director of Grants, Preservation, & Trails	Susan Williams	Dennis Klusaritz-Supervisor/Chairperson
Mark Yatcilla - Vice Chair	Bob Korp	Al Geosits -Supervisor
Marlene Stofflet - Secretary	Richard Semmel	Heather Skorinko
Stacy Yoder – Gilmore & Associates		

JULY 10TH, 2025 MEETING:

1. **Approval of April 10, 2025 Meeting Minutes:**

   Motion was made to accept by Paul Semmel.
   Seconded by Bob Korp.
   The motion was passed unanimously.

2. **ASA UPDATE**

   Mike Kukitz, Director of Grants, Preservation & Trails presented the following:

   - Since our April meeting, Charlie Nemeth submitted an ASA application for his land in Whitehall Township and North Whitehall which is mostly wooded acreage which was reviewed at the 5.12.25 Board of Supervisors meeting. After the 180-day waiting period, his request will be reviewed at the Board of Supervisors meeting.

   - Rochelle Ferrera owns 18.08 acres on Ranch Road and submitted an ASA application which was taken into consideration by the Board of Supervisors at the 6.2.25 BOS meeting. After the 180-day waiting period, this request will be reviewed at the Board of Supervisors meeting. There is a possibility the County will not accept this land into the Farmland Preservation program.

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3. <u>PRESERVATION UPDATE:</u>

- The following have agreed to three-year installments. Preserving these three properties will come at a total cost to the township of approximately $150,000 per year:
    - Pat S. – is on the county list but has an encroachment issue to solve, preservation expected in 2026.
    - Heather S. #1 – is on the county list, preservation expected in 2026.
    - Heather S. #2 – is on the county list, preservation expected in 2026.

  Arial view maps of each of the above were distributed to committee members.

- Terry M. – farm preserved with settlement on May 21st - 77.49 acres.

- Theodore Rohr-Rabenold farm preservation is progressing and working to settle the sand mound issue with his neighbor. An easement would be acceptable by the county. This farm is number 29 on the county list.

4. <u>OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN</u> – Public Survey Results & General Plan Update

There were 1,075 responses mostly from residents over the age of 45 years.
The highest rated areas the community would like to see preserved were our natural resources and farmland protection.

77% want more preservation
45% support tax increase, 32% said no
21% are undecided for tax increase
2% did not answer this question

- Noted that 26 surrounding townships use Earned Income Tax of .10 - .25%.
    - Open Space Bonds have been issued but mostly to Bucks County farms.
- Our township has 3 options:
    - Continue as is utilizing the property tax (0.1 mill) to be used for Farmland and Open Space Preservation which generates approximately $160,000 in revenue annually.
    - Propose an EIT referendum with a possible increase of .10 -.25%.
    - Secure an Open Space Bond but this will most likely not be a large amount per Randy. The township finances (revenue stream) will not support a large bond.
- It was discussed that an EIT referendum (tax rate) would most likely need to be voted on every 5 years.
- Average individual income in North Whitehall Township is $67,990.

- On average, the township can preserve one farm per year using a conservation easement with our current revenue stream per Stacy. The current funding stream does not provide much funding for potential future property acquisition.
- The committee discussed creating possible future marketing materials to help educate residents about EIT and preservation. Suggestions included using visuals, relevant examples, a short video for social media, mentioning at Supervisor meetings, and a drone video of the community.
- Susan Williams inquired if there is a list of working farms in the township that are available to committee members.
- Bob Korp made a motion to: "Recommend a public relations campaign to ask voters for a robust EIT rate to preserve, protect, and enhance the Township's quality of life."
    - Paul Semmel 2nded, the motion was passed unanimously.
- Stacy noted that Gilmore & Associates will complete the draft Open Space Action Plan in September to present to this committee during the October meeting.

FINAL COMMENTS FROM FLOOR:

Susan Willimas commented that the committee's meetings have been very productive with good recommendations to present back to the supervisors.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: by Bob Korp, seconded by Paul Semmel.
Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marlene Stofflet, Secretary

**This meeting was held at the Neffs Volunteer Fire Company 3755 Park Ave, Neffs, PA 18065

The Next Farmland Preservation/Open Space Committee meeting is scheduled for October 9th, 2025.