

NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Lehigh Carbon Community College, 4525 Education Park Drive, Schnecksville, PA 18078
Lisa Jane Scheller Community Services Center Building 7 – (Parking Lot F)
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF APRIL 22, 2025

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, April 22, 2025 by Chairman Brian Horwith

Attendance:

Supervisor Al Geosits	Chairman Brian Horwith
Township Manager Randy Cope	Vice Chairman Robert Korp
Township Director of Operations Jeff Mouer	Secretary Richard Semmel
Township Planner Kevin Murphy	John Barto
Township Engineer Steve Gitch	Jeff Johnson
Township Solicitor Rocco Beltrami	Richard Fuller
Township Planning Administrator Jane Kelly	Kathy Crawford
Special Project Engineer Judy Gilmore	

Minutes of the March 25, 2025 meeting were approved. Motion made by John Barto, seconded by Jeff Johnson, all others agreed.

1. **LCA Grant** - Request for Review of Compliance with Land Use Plans for North Whitehall Water System Interconnect Project.

- The presentation was presented by Tori Morgan and Amy Kunkel.
- The DCED grant is due 4/30/25.
- LCA is applying for the grant to better serve North Whitehall Township northern division.
- If the grant is received, \$500,000 will be put towards the project and will be used to increase fire protection in the area, customer service and response time.
- The possible interconnect route is along Sand Spring Road.
- Before this grant is applied for, there is a requirement to have the Township review and send a letter of recommendation along with the application.
- There is a template response form for the letter to be sent with the grant application.
- The Township emergency services is in support of this grant due to the increase in water flow for fire protection.
- Several Planning commission members are in favor of this grant and consider this long overdue.
- **Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp** questioned if Township wells were looked at before this grant was considered? Ms. Kunkel stated they were but typically the wells in this area are producing low.
- **Supervisor Al Geosits** questioned the time frame for this project, start and finish time? Ms. Morgan stated the design and permit phase is first and then depending on how long the beginning phase takes the connecting might begin in early 2027.

Comments from the Residents:

Randy Blose, Willow St, Coplay, questioned if there would be hydrants connected to this line and how do the fire companies tap in? He also questioned how many houses can hook up to this interconnection?

Robert Korp motioned to send a letter of recommendation to DCED as this project is generally consistent with North Whitehall Township's Comprehensive and Land Use Plan goals and objectives, Kathy Crawford second the motion, a vote was taken, Rich Semmel abstained as he came into the meeting halfway through the presentation, all others agreed, motion carried.

2. **Mauch Chunk Rd Development**- NWT-240-25-002, Sketch, Parcels 5479 8020 3012, 5478 6947 3456 & 5478 8849 7206, 3531, 3410 & 3530 Mauch Chunk Road, SR & PC Zones, 104.07 Acres. The sketch plan was presented by NVR representatives Eric Salansky and Brian Thierrin.

- a. Keystone Engineers have reviewed the plan and offered their comments and recommendations in a letter dated April 14, 2025.
- b. Gilmore and Associates' review is contained in their letter dated April 18, 2025.
- c. Assistant Township Fire Marshall's review is contained in his letter dated April 4, 2025.
- d. The proposed plan was submitted as a sketch plan and is in the early stages of planning. Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith thanked the applicant for submitting the sketch plan for comment.
- e. This proposed plan is at Mauch Chunk Road and Cedar Crest Blvd and is to be a mixed-use project with commercial, retail, restaurant and convenience with gas.
- f. There will also be townhomes and single-family homes.
- g. The realignment of Cedar Crest Blvd and Mauch Chunk Rd needs to be discussed with PennDot. A possible traffic circle but definitely traffic improvements will need to be made.
- h. The development is proposing public water and public sewer.
- i. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** stated he feels there are too many cul de sacs, the traffic circle needs to be 2 lanes for trucks to get through, the townhomes should be in one area, and he'd like to see less basins. He also stated he is disappointed to see the farm area developed. **Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford** agreed with Richard.
- j. **Special Project Engineer Judy Gilmore** stated there are too many differences in the project and the Township Zoning Ordinance.

NORTH WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Lehigh Carbon Community College, 4525 Education Park Drive, Schnecksville, PA 18078
Lisa Jane Scheller Community Services Center Building 7 – (Parking Lot F)
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF APRIL 22, 2025

- k. **Township Engineer Steve Gitch** stated there are many issues to resolve, cul de sac, the sewage treatment plant and the traffic issues to name a few.
- l. **Township Director of Operations Jeff Mouer** reviewed Assistant Fire Marshall's review letter and there are concerns with vehicle navigating through the development and the road width was insufficient for emergency vehicles.
- m. **Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith** has concerns with the access points, the cul de sacs are not desirable; while the traffic circle is potentially a good idea, creating two additional intersections seems to be adding to traffic challenges rather than solving. Brian also suggested adding a connection to the IRT.
- n. **Planning Commission member Richard Fuller** stated there have been a lot of comments so far for the developer to address.
- o. **Planning Commission Vice Chairman Robert Korp** thanked the developer for the sketch plan and reminded the developer their neighboring property is a preserved farm and this needs to be protected. Also, the Coplay Creek which runs through their property dries up often. Bob also suggested a traffic study.
- p. **Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford** suggested a recreation should be added to this development. Kathy also has concerns on additional traffic on the Township's local streets.
- q. **Planning Commission Secretary Richard Semmel** has concerns about the access onto Mauch Chunk Rd from the Commercial area, turning lanes should be added and the roads should line up.
- r. **Planning Commission member John Barto** agreed with the other members on their comments.
- s. **Planning Commission member Jeff Johnson** thanked the developer for their sketch.
- t. **Township Manager Randy Cope** stated the Township will work with the developer to overcome the hurdles.
- u. **Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith** questioned if their will be an HOA? Will the Township take over the roads? Brian is not a fan of HOA's. The developer stated they are planning on an HOA and their plan right now is for the HOA to take care of the roads.
- v. **Township Supervisor Al Geosits** questioned if there will be twin homes? And will any of the streets butt up to the neighboring farmland for possible future development? Al also stated he is not a fan of the package treatment plan. The developer stated no twin homes, townhomes and single-family homes and at this time they are not sure if the streets will butt up to the neighboring farmland.

Comments from the Residents:

Linda Johnson, Coplay, has concerns with the existing stormwater basin. They have already put a fence up to protect their children from falling into the pond and their concerns are with their property and the swale flooding. She also was confused as to why she was not notified about this development and her neighbor was. She would prefer this parcel to stay farmland.

Micheline Brunner, Coplay, is very concerned with traffic issues. She also suggested if the development is approved, they hook up with WTA water as their development uses.

Christopher Brunner, Coplay, questioned who from the Township was on the property surveying and what were they surveying for?

Brian Bucks, Coplay, has concerns about traffic as this is a very busy area.

Doug Petri, Coplay, he also has traffic concerns.

Brooke Horwith, Schnecksville, questioned the project timeline, when do they think this project will start building? The developer stated no clue at this point and once they start it will take years to complete.

Joel Newhard, Coplay, stated if the parcel is zoned this way you can't save it, the only way to save farmland is to preserve it. He is requesting the developer to consider the size of the roads because farm equipment is large and will need to fit on the roads.

Vicki Francis, Coplay, stated traffic in the area is already a nightmare and what about the firing range, the new residents will hear all of that. Will they be made aware of that?

Jaclyn Cressman, Coplay, she is also concerned about the traffic and what will be done with the schools? Are the schools aware of these additional homes? Also where will the wildlife go?

Township Manager Randy Cope stated every year the Township meets with Parkland School district to review all new and pending projects so they can plan for their vision. Randy also stated the Township has already preserved over 600 acres of farmlands. There are more that can be preserved but more resources are needed. Please do the survey on the website to help.

Township Planner Kevin Murphy stated the school is also sent a copy of every plan on the Planning Commission agenda and given a chance to review and comment on the agenda items.

David Gallo, Coplay, questioned why does it have to be so big? He believes there would be less push back if it was smaller.

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

Jeanene Bauer, Orefield, questioned the room set up and maybe it should be set up differently for next week's meeting.

Planning Commission member Kathy Crawford at what point does North Whitehall Township decide we can't use the State Police anymore?

Planning Commission Chairman Brian Horwith adjourned the meeting at 8:55pm

Meeting Adjourned: 8:55pm

Jane K. Kelly

Planning/Recording Secretary

North Whitehall Township