

MINUTES
PENN TOWNSHIP PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
JUNE 1, 2026

The Penn Township Public Works Committee convened on Monday, June 1, 2026, at 7:21 p.m., following the Public Safety Committee meeting. Present were Chairman Baile, Commissioners Arnold, Elksnis, Heiland, and Rice. Also present were Police Chief Merwede, Fire Chief Clouser, Township Engineer Bortner, Zoning Officer LeFevre, and Township Manager Sweeney. The following items were discussed:

ANNOUNCEMENTS: There were none.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

The minutes of the May 4, 2026, Public Works Committee meeting were approved as submitted.

CITIZEN'S COMMENTS: There were none.

ENGINEER'S REPORT:

Wellspring Wesleyan Church Improvement Bond: Engineer Bortner recommended the Wellspring Wesleyan Church Improvement Bond be set at \$43,079.85. With no concerns raised, the Committee favorably recommended forwarding the item to the Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda for consideration.

South Western School District – Park Hills Elementary Improvement Bond: Engineer Bortner reported the Southwestern School District Park Hills Elementary Improvement Bond would be ready to be set, however he received an update regarding the status of the project.

Mr. Kris Raubenstine, Hanover Land Services, Inc., explained that although the plan review process is substantially complete and administrative comments have been addressed, the School District recently decided to place the project on hold due to budget concerns. He advised that the project had been expected to move forward this fall; however, the School Board elected to delay the project until the next fiscal year budget discussions, anticipated to begin in January or February, to better evaluate its financial impact.

Mr. Nate Osbourne, Facilities Director, South Western School District explained that there is general agreement regarding the need for the project, but concerns remain regarding timing and budget impacts. The Committee discussed options for handling the plan during the delay, including conditional approval, extending the plan review period, or placing the project on hold until the School District is prepared to proceed.

Engineer Bortner advised that, rather than establishing an improvement bond amount that may become outdated due to inflation and delays, it would be more appropriate to continue the plan through periodic extensions until the School District is ready to move forward. Committee members discussed whether a longer extension or standard 90-day extensions would be more appropriate, with preference expressed for continuing the plan

under the Township's standard 90-day extension process to remain consistent with other plans under review.

Outdoor Storage Facility-9 Industrial Drive Improvement Bond: Engineer Bortner recommended the Outdoor Storage Facility-9 Industrial Drive Improvement Bond be set at \$574,753.30. With no concerns raised, the Committee favorably recommended forwarding the item to the Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda for consideration.

Martin Garcia Zepeda & Blanca E. Barajas – 299 Wirt Avenue Improvement Bond: Engineer Bortner recommended the Martin Garcia Zepeda & Blanca E. Barajas – 299 Wirt Avenue Improvement Bond be set at \$61,448.20. With no concerns raised, the Committee favorably recommended forwarding the item to the Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda for consideration.

Triaxle Dump Truck: Engineer Bortner provided an update on the Township's tri-axle truck, which is currently at A&H undergoing revisions to the plow system. He explained that adjustments are needed to both the plow hitch and plow equipment to meet PennDOT specifications. The plow is being modified by Valk Manufacturing in Harrisburg, while the hitch is being revised at A&H. Once completed, the truck is expected to be sent to the Western Star dealer for final preparation. The Committee inquired about the anticipated timeline for completion and delivery. Engineer Bortner advised that the final preparation schedule remains uncertain, Western Star dealer had not yet provided an update. He stated that the truck, originally ordered in 2024, is expected to be titled as a 2026 model year vehicle. He added that photographs of the truck are available but acknowledged that confidence in delivery will likely come once the Township takes physical possession of the vehicle.

Review of Subdivision and Land Development Plans: Engineer Bortner reported that several plans remain under review, although a number of them may be removed from the list this month. Committee members were given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the status of the plans, and no questions or concerns were raised.

HOMEWOOD LIVING PLUM CREEK WAIVER REQUESTS: The Committee considered a request dated March 11, 2026, from Frederick, Seibert & Associates regarding the Homewood Living Plum Creek Preliminary Land Development Plan for waivers from Section 306.B.3 (Slopes in Basin), Section 306.B.4 (Fencing Requirements), and Section 306.B.5 (Retaining Walls) of the Stormwater Management Ordinance.

Mr. Rob Holmes, Frederick, Seibert & Associates, and Ms. Ruth Allen, Project Director, Homewood Retirement Homes, represented this request. Mr Holmes reviewed the requested waivers and explained that the first request involved permission to utilize 3:1 side slopes in stormwater basins rather than the ordinance-required 4:1 slopes. He explained that the proposed design includes a low-maintenance native steep slope seed mix to stabilize the basin areas. Committee members noted that similar requests had been approved previously and expressed no concerns with the proposal.

He then discussed the waiver request from fencing requirements around stormwater management facilities. He explained that while Homewood was willing to fence several stormwater areas, concerns existed regarding the appearance of fencing around facilities located near residential cottages and landscaped areas. He added that several facilities would contain minimal stormwater during storm events, with some having little to no standing water and others reaching a maximum depth of approximately one foot during a 100-year storm event. He stated that while the applicant is requesting relief from fencing requirements for certain facilities and also expressed interest in alternative fencing styles in place of chain-link fencing.

Committee members discussed prior Township practice regarding stormwater fencing and emphasized that fencing has generally been required around stormwater facilities for safety purposes. It was noted that while chain-link fencing is referenced in the ordinance, alternative fencing styles, such as black aluminum fencing, have previously been considered. Committee members expressed willingness to review alternative fence options while maintaining fencing requirements where appropriate.

The final waiver request related to a proposed retaining wall within a stormwater management area. The applicant explained that a gas line easement limits the placement of stormwater facilities and that the retaining wall is needed to accommodate the proposed layout and nearby residential units. He added that the retaining wall is currently proposed at approximately 11.5 feet in height and would require fencing. He also indicated that potential design revisions, including walkout basements, may reduce the wall height.

Committee members discussed the ordinance prohibition on retaining walls within stormwater management facilities and the safety concerns that led to the restriction, including the potential for falls into basin areas. Discussion also occurred regarding whether slight adjustments to the stormwater facility limits could address ordinance concerns. The Committee recommended forwarding the request to the Board of Commissioners Meeting Agenda for consideration.

WELLSPRING WESLEYAN CHURCH WAIVER REQUEST: The Committee considered a request dated May 8, 2026, from Hanover Land Services regarding the Wellspring Wesleyan Church Land Development Plan for a waiver from Section 402 (Preliminary Plan Requirements) of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

Mr. Kris Raubenstine, Hanover Land Services, Inc., explained that the request was a standard waiver to allow the project to proceed as a combined preliminary/final plan rather than through separate preliminary and final submissions. He added that the proposal involves a straightforward two-lot subdivision with limited public improvements, making the two-step review process unnecessary. Engineer Bortner advised that preliminary plans are often utilized to reduce or phase bonding requirements; however, the Committee had already reviewed the proposed improvement bond amount for this project and no concerns had been identified regarding the estimated bond of \$43,079.85. Committee members expressed no concerns with the request and recommended forwarding the request to the Board of Commissioners' Meeting Agenda for consideration.

MARTIN GARCIA ZEPEDA & BLANCA E. BARAJAS WAIVER REQUEST: The Committee considered a request dated May 21, 2026, from Hanover Land Services regarding the Martin Garcia Zepeda and Blanca E. Barajas Subdivision and Land Development Plan for waivers from Section 303 (Submission of Plans) and Section 605 (Landscaping and Bufferyards) of the Penn Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance.

Mr. Kris Raubenstine, Hanover Land Services, Inc., explained that the first waiver request related to Section 303 and sought permission to proceed with a combined preliminary/final land development plan rather than separate plan submissions. He added that this is a common request intended to streamline the review process.

The second waiver request related to landscaping and bufferyard requirements along the side property line adjacent to existing residential property. It was explained that the proposed paving area leaves limited room between the property line and parking area, while still maintaining the required five-foot grass strip. Due to the limited width and the presence of an existing fence, the applicant requested relief from the landscaping requirement and proposed installation of a fence in place of trees and vegetation. He stated that a fence would be easier to maintain and avoid vegetation encroaching onto vehicles displayed for sale. Committee members discussed the distance between the proposed fence and the neighboring residence and whether neighboring property owners had raised concerns during prior zoning approvals. It was noted that neighboring property owners had opportunities to participate in prior hearings but had not expressed objections. Mr. Raubenstine further stated that the proposed improvements would significantly improve the appearance of the property, including site cleanup and installation of a public sidewalk along John Street. Following discussion, Committee members expressed no concerns with the requested waivers and recommended adding them to the Board of Commissioners' Meeting Agenda for consideration.

MS4 UPDATE: MS4 Inspector Garrett reported that the next MS4 Task Force meeting is scheduled for June 11, 2026. He added that priority outfall inspections for the 2025–2026 inspection year were submitted, with the current inspection cycle scheduled to conclude on June 30, 2026.

FOCUSED ZONING ENFORCEMENT PROPOSAL: Zoning Officer LeFevre discussed a proposed proactive code enforcement initiative intended to address common property maintenance concerns throughout the Township. She explained that during posting of sewer shutoff notices, numerous properties were observed without visible house numbers, prompting discussion about dedicating time to focus on compliance issues in a more organized manner. She proposed that the Township provide advance public notice through the website, Facebook page, and informational materials to advise residents of areas that will be reviewed and common property maintenance issues that may be addressed. Topics discussed included sidewalk conditions, deteriorated porches, accessory structures in disrepair, house numbers, overgrown grass and weeds, grass clippings in the street, and parking on grass. She explained that the goal would be to encourage residents to voluntarily address issues before formal enforcement becomes necessary and to open communication with residents who may need additional time or guidance to correct violations.

She included providing educational information to residents regarding permitting requirements, property maintenance standards, and frequently asked questions explaining the purpose of various ordinance requirements. Committee members expressed support for the initiative, stating that advance communication may reduce resident frustration and improve compliance by helping residents better understand Township expectations. She suggested that inspections could be conducted by neighborhood or targeted area rather than Township-wide, with initial focus potentially placed on locations where concerns have been identified, including deteriorated sidewalks along Baltimore Street, York Street, and West Granger Street. Committee members recommended providing residents with clear guidelines regarding maintenance expectations, particularly for sidewalks, and emphasized that the intent of the initiative is to improve compliance and neighborhood conditions rather than penalize residents. She also acknowledged that many affected properties may involve elderly, low-income, vacant, or rental properties, and stated that flexibility and communication would remain important throughout the process.

EXTENSION REQUESTS: Zoning Officer LeFevre reported the following extension requests:

SL25-09 – 127 Hickory Lane – Wellspring Wesleyan Church – The applicant is addressing comments

SL26-02 – 770 Frederick St & Hanover Pk – Homewood Living Ministries, Inc. – The applicant is finalizing Agency review comments and incorporating a minor subdivision plan into the preliminary land development plan set.

SL26-03 – 26 Industrial Drive – Pero Farms Hanover Facility, LLC – The applicant continues to refine the interior design of the building to ensure it meets both current and future operational needs. Until the interior layout is finalized, additional site revisions may be necessary. To ensure the Township grants final plan approval for the completed and accurate plan, the applicant is requesting additional time to complete the interior design process.

RECREATION:

2027 Capital Projects: Engineer Bortner reported that the soccer goals at the Community Park will likely need replacement in the near future at an estimated cost of approximately \$5,000. He also discussed potential pavilion improvements, including ceiling liners, gutters, downspouts, gutter guards, and stormwater management enhancements to reduce maintenance needs and improve drainage. He reported that these added improvements would increase project costs beyond earlier estimates, with the estimated cost for improvements to two pavilions totaling approximately \$22,500. Engineer Bortner further reported that installation of a new playground system, including equipment and related site work, is estimated to cost approximately \$40,000. He discussed priorities for future park improvements, including upgrades at Little Knoll and Forest View parks, as well as improvements to pavilion facilities at Community Park and Young's Woods. Committee members discussed balancing future playground replacements with other park improvements to avoid multiple large replacement costs occurring at the same time. Funding options, including use of recreation reserve funds for replacement items such as soccer goals, were also discussed. It was suggested that future draft budgets include funding for pavilion improvements while continuing to evaluate long-term park and recreation priorities.

OTHER MATTERS: There were none.

CITIZENS' QUESTIONS TO THE COMMITTEE REGARDING DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Ruth Allen, Director of Project Development for Homewood's Corporate Office, inquired about the timeline for consideration of the waiver requests presented during the meeting and when a decision would be made. Chairman Heiland explained that the waiver requests would first be presented to the Planning Commission for recommendation and would then proceed to the Board of Commissioners for final action at its June 15, 2026, meeting. It was explained that the applicant would be informed of the outcome following Board consideration.

Christina Dickinson, Hammond Avenue, asked questions regarding sidewalk maintenance responsibilities and code enforcement standards. The Committee explained that sidewalks are the responsibility of the adjoining property owner and are subject to property maintenance standards requiring sidewalks to be maintained free of hazardous conditions. It was noted that enforcement typically focuses on significant deterioration, uneven surfaces, or conditions that create safety hazards for pedestrians. Ms. Dickinson expressed concerns regarding deteriorated sidewalks throughout the Township, particularly in areas such as Baltimore Street and Granger Street, and emphasized the importance of maintaining sidewalks for pedestrian safety, especially for children and individuals walking or riding bicycles. She also expressed concern regarding overgrown weeds and general property maintenance issues affecting neighborhood appearance and quality of life. Zoning Officer LeFevre discussed the proposed proactive code enforcement initiative and explained that advanced public communication and educational outreach would be used to encourage voluntary compliance with property maintenance responsibilities before formal enforcement measures are taken. She added that the goal of the initiative is to improve neighborhood conditions and resident awareness while encouraging cooperation and community pride.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Sweeney
Township Manager