

SOLEBURY TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

May 27, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Solebury Township Hall/Virtual - Hybrid Meeting
MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: Peter Brussock, Chair; Lesley Wright Marino, Vice Chair; Gretchen Rice; Dan Fest; John J. DeAndrea;; Lia Mandingo (via Zoom); Curtis J. Genner, Jr., P.E., Township Engineer; Mark L. Freed, Esq., Township Solicitor; Kevin Morrissey, Supervisor Liaison; Pankaj Jobanputra (PJ), Simone Collins LA (via Zoom); Zachary Zubris, Director of Planning & Zoning; and John Ives, Planning & Zoning Administrator.

Absent: Adrian Max; Amishi Joshi Castelli

Participating Public: Jerome Giuliano; Benjamin Wilde

I. Call to Order

The Solebury Township Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

II. Approval of Minutes – April 27, 2025

Upon a motion made by Dan Fest, seconded by Gretchen Rice, the minutes of the April 27, 2026 meeting were unanimously approved.

III. Old Business

Orchard Meadows Estates Preliminary/Final Minor Subdivision Plan (6633 School Lane - TMP #41-013-096-005).

The Planning Commission continued discussion regarding the land development application involving two residential lots, stormwater management, buffering, and requested waivers associated for the proposed minor subdivision. The applicant’s engineer provided a summary of the modifications that have occurred in response to the township consultants review letters. The largest revision was shifting the location of the house on Lot 2 out of the 200’ required setback from active agricultural uses. Consequently, there were revisions to the driveway alignment and stormwater facilities. Buffering was discussed based upon the Township Planner’s review and an on-site meeting. The applicant’s engineer noted that there would be compliance with all review comments except there was still a question on the waiver regarding Section 23-306.4.H that prohibits infiltration in the Carbonate Overlay Zoning District.

Commission members discussed alignment at the intersection with School Lane, site distance, and large vehicle maneuverability. Overall, Commission members noted two principal issues emerged during discussion: stormwater and drainage concerns, and buffering between adjacent properties.

Two neighbors (Jerome Giuliano; Benjamin Wilde) to the south and west of the subject tract were present and discussed concerns about water run-off onto their properties, sink hole potential, and buffering along their property lines. Mr. Wilde discussed buffering requirements and the classification of his tract as being a farm that plants seeds, trees, annuals and perennials, and has wild flowers. It was noted that the existing barn on Lot 1 will be removed. He further discussed the poor drainage issues and sink hole potential on his and neighboring properties.

Discussion included consideration of whether berms and additional landscaping could potentially serve as a compromise solution to address buffering and runoff concerns between neighboring properties. It was noted that Township ordinances permit berm construction under certain circumstances and that berms can be designed to support tree plantings and stormwater management functions.

Commission members discussed the importance of encouraging communication and cooperation between adjacent property owners while also recognizing that the Township must apply its ordinances and technical standards consistently to the application under review. Township representatives explained that the Board of

Supervisors would ultimately be required to make a decision on the application regardless of whether the Planning Commission issued a recommendation at that meeting.

Further discussion focused heavily on stormwater management requirements within the Township's carbonate overlay district and the applicant's request for a waiver associated with infiltration requirements. The Township engineer explained that, regardless of whether the waiver was ultimately granted, the applicant would still be required to satisfy both Township and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection stormwater management standards, including obtaining applicable NPDES permitting and demonstrating compliance with required stormwater treatment and management practices. It was further explained that the proposed stormwater facilities were modeled to reduce both the rate and volume of runoff compared to existing conditions, particularly through infiltration practices incorporated into the design.

However, concerns were expressed regarding the possibility of off-site subsurface impacts and the potential relationship between infiltration practices and sinkhole formation within carbonate geology areas. Commission members discussed prior sinkhole occurrences within the Township, including references to sinkholes associated with nearby school property improvements and quarry-related geology conditions.

The applicant's engineer provided detailed explanation of the proposed stormwater management system, including operation of the bioretention basin, infiltration components, principal spillway, emergency spillway, overflow pipe, and energy dissipator features. It was explained that the stormwater facilities were designed to manage storm events ranging from two-year to one-hundred-year storm frequencies while reducing runoff impacts compared to existing site conditions.

The applicant's engineer further explained that the emergency spillway would only function under highly unusual circumstances involving failure or blockage of the principal spillway system and that maintenance agreements would be implemented to ensure proper ongoing operation of the stormwater facilities. Discussion also addressed the comparative impacts associated with a lined stormwater basin alternative if the waiver was denied, including the potential need for larger or more visually intrusive facility and additional berm height. Commission members discussed the possibility that side-by-side comparison modeling of waiver versus non-waiver stormwater designs could assist the Board of Supervisors in evaluating the practical differences between the alternatives.

Additional discussion focused on existing topography, runoff concentration points, tree planting, amended soils, and overall site grading intended to maintain existing hydraulic conditions while minimizing adverse impacts to adjacent properties.

A motion was made by John DeAndrea and seconded by Gretchen Rice to recommend Preliminary/Final Minor Subdivision Plan and Conditional Use approval to Orchard Meadows Estates located at 6633 School Lane (TMP #41-013-096-005) subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Further consideration by the Board of Supervisors regarding the requested waiver from Section 23-306.4.H. of the Storm Water Management Ordinance that prohibits infiltration in the Carbonate Geology Overlay Zoning District.***
- 2. Reallocation and relocation of twenty-four landscape trees (Pinus Strobus – White Pine - as depicted on Landscaping Plan 1 of 2 and 2 of 2, pages 6 of 16 and 7 of 16 on the submitted Minor Subdivision Plan, dated April 24, 2026) to strengthen buffering along the south and west property boundaries.***
- 3. Compliance with Township consultant review letters and outstanding review comments and conditions.***

Township consultant review letters include:

- Wynn Associates, Inc., dated May 20, 2026***

- *Solebury Township Zoning Officer, dated May 18, 2026*
 - *Bowman, dated March 13, 2026*
 - *Simone Collins Landscape Architecture, dated May 20, 2026*
 - *Solebury Township Parks & Recreation, dated February 27, 2026*
4. *Recommendation of approval of one driveway per lot (no shared driveway).*
 5. *Recommendation that no additional Environmental Impact Assessment be required.*

The motion carried 6-0

IV. New Business

Farm Worker Housing Ordinance Amendments

The Planning Commission next reviewed proposed amendments to the Township’s Farm Worker Housing Ordinance. Township representatives explained that the ordinance revisions originated from recommendations and requests developed by the Township Farm Committee and agricultural stakeholders.

It was explained that prior versions of the ordinance permitted limited accessory farm worker housing, while the proposed revisions would permit additional farm worker housing units based upon a sliding scale tied to active agricultural operations acreage.

Under the proposed ordinance:

- Properties between 10 and 25 active agricultural acres could permit one farm worker housing unit.
- Properties between 25 and 50 active agricultural acres could permit two farm worker housing units.
- Properties of 50 active agricultural acres or greater could permit three farm worker housing units.

Commission members noted that the proposed farm worker housing units could each contain up to 3,000 square feet and potentially accommodate many occupants per dwelling, which would be subject to health department septic limitations.

Extensive discussion occurred regarding the scale of the proposed ordinance changes and the potential long-term implications for land use, agricultural preservation, attainable housing, and development intensity within the Township.

Commission members expressed concerns regarding:

- Potential cumulative residential buildout on agricultural properties.
- Lack of clustering requirements for multiple farm worker housing units.
- Septic and infrastructure impacts.
- Long-term enforceability of occupancy restrictions limiting the housing to farm workers.
- Definitions of “attainable housing” and associated Area Median Income standards.
- Potential conversion of farm worker housing into de facto residential development.

Discussion also addressed broader questions concerning:

- Actual agricultural workforce needs.
- Seasonal versus year-round labor demands.
- Housing for generational farming succession.

- Agricultural labor programs requiring compliant worker housing.
- Balancing preservation of active farming with avoidance of unintended residential subdivision patterns.

Township representatives explained that many of the ordinance provisions reflected compromise positions reached through discussions among Township staff, the Farm Committee, and Board representatives, including reductions from earlier proposals that contemplated larger numbers of units and fewer restrictions.

Commission members requested additional information from the Farm committee Concerning:

- The rationale supporting the proposed number of housing units.
- Anticipated labor and housing demand.
- Attainable housing standards and Area Median Income calculations.
- Practical implementation and enforcement considerations.

A motion was made requesting additional time for review and requesting further discussion and presentation from the Farm Committee prior to issuance of any recommendation.

Deer Fence Ordinance Amendments

The Planning Commission next reviewed the proposed Deer Fence Ordinance Amendments relating to riparian corridor and floodplain regulations.

Township representatives explained that the amendments arose from prior situations in which property owners encountered difficulty obtaining permits for agricultural deer fencing due to conflicts between zoning ordinance provisions, riparian corridor regulations, and floodplain requirements. It was explained that the Township had coordinated with FEMA regarding the proposed amendments and revised ordinance language to address FEMA concerns regarding floodplain terminology and applicability. Discussion focused on allowing qualifying open-style deer fencing within riparian corridor and floodplain areas without requiring unnecessary site-specific floodplain studies where the fencing is consistent with FEMA guidance.

Commission members reviewed ordinance provisions requiring:

- Zoning permits for qualifying deer fences.
- Fence openings sufficient to allow floodwaters to pass through without trapping debris.
- Compliance with FEMA guidance concerning non-obstructive fencing design.
- Potential discretionary review by the Township engineer when necessary.

Discussion also addressed:

- The distinction between mandatory and discretionary engineering review language.
- Applicability of the ordinance to existing fences requiring repair or replacement.
- Lawful nonconforming fence situations.
- Administrative review processes for qualifying deer fences.

Commission members generally expressed support for the amendments and acknowledged that the revised ordinance would likely reduce unnecessary permitting obstacles while providing clearer guidance for agricultural property owners.

A motion was made by Gretchen Rice and seconded by John DeAndrea to recommend that the Board of Supervisors approve the Deer Fence Ordinance Amendment(s) as drafted and presented.

The motion carried 6-0

Acceptance and Filing of the Windy Bush Sketch Plan

The Planning Commission acknowledged acceptance of the filing associated with the Windy Bush Sketch Plan application. No substantive discussion occurred regarding the sketch plan at that meeting.

V. Comprehensive Plan Update

The Planning Commission next received an update regarding the Township Comprehensive Plan revision process.

Commission members reported substantial progress during the preceding two months and noted that the revised draft plan was beginning to take clearer form through ongoing work by the Comprehensive Plan Committee. It was explained that the committee remained generally on schedule to complete review edits by the end of June, although minor cleanup revisions could potentially extend into July.

Discussion emphasized that the revised comprehensive plan represents a substantial reorganization and rewriting effort intended to modernize the Township's long-range planning framework while incorporating years of Planning Commission discussions and policy deliberations.

Major planning topics identified within the revised plan include:

- Sustainability and resiliency.
- Climate change considerations.
- Attainable housing.
- Overlay district planning concepts.
- Transportation planning.
- Route 202 corridor planning issues.

Commission members emphasized that the updated comprehensive plan is intended to provide stronger guidance for evaluating future development proposals and aligning Township decisions with long-term planning objectives.

Discussion also addressed the anticipated public review and adoption process for the comprehensive plan under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

Township representatives explained that the completed draft plan would return to the Planning Commission for public review and comment prior to final adoption by the Board of Supervisors. Commission members emphasized the importance of ensuring adequate public access to the draft plan prior to any formal public review meeting so that residents and stakeholders would have sufficient opportunity to review and comment on the document.

Additional discussion addressed the relationship between the comprehensive plan update and broader Township concerns regarding agricultural viability, attainable housing, workforce needs, and preservation of active farming operations.

VI. Training Sessions Planning and Scheduling

The Planning Commission next discussed possible educational and training sessions for commission members. Commission members discussed a proposed professional educational presentation regarding modern roundabout design, transportation planning, traffic flow, and safety considerations. The proposed presentation was described as an approximately fifty-four-minute educational video produced by transportation planning professionals discussing:

- Roundabout sizes and configurations.

- Traffic operations.
- Before-and-after transportation studies.
- Vehicle accommodation design.
- Safety and traffic calming concepts.

Discussion referenced PennDOT's proposed roundabout project at the Route 202 and Route 179 intersection and anticipated future traffic discussions associated with the Fountainhead project. Commission members discussed the increasing use of modern roundabouts within Pennsylvania transportation planning and shared personal observations and experiences regarding roundabout design and operation.

The commission also discussed trail planning and connectivity initiatives as topics warranting future educational presentations, particularly given the frequent role of trail accommodation in land development review discussions.

Commission members discussed scheduling the roundabout educational presentation prior to a future Planning Commission meeting, potentially beginning at approximately 6:00 PM before the regular meeting start time.

VII. Public Comment

N/A

VIII. Adjournment

Upon a motion made and seconded and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted, John Ives
Planning & Zoning Administrator, Solebury Township