

Pennsbury Township Planning Commission Minutes

February 11, 2026

Present: Kay Ellsworth, Joe Short, George Trammell, Mike Clements, Karen Meloney, Dennis Smith, and Dan Boyle.

Chairperson Kay Ellsworth called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. in the Harris Room.

The minutes of the Planning Commission meeting of January 14, 2026, were presented. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by George Trammell and seconded by Mike Clements. The motion passed unanimously.

519 Kennett Pike - McCauley Zoning Hearing Board Application – Use Variance (Barn/Office in Village Residential)

Applicants Mr. and Mrs. McCauley presented their application for a use variance to permit professional office use within an existing historic barn located in the Village Residential (VR) District along Route 52. Office use is not a permitted use nor a listed special exception within the VR District.

The applicants explained that the barn dates from approximately 1720–1740 and has been rebuilt multiple times. They have owned property in the village for approximately 30 years and have renovated nearby commercial properties while preserving their historic character. They previously converted another barn to office use, which has been consistently occupied by local tenants.

Mr. McCauley described the deteriorated condition of the rear portion of the barn, including significant water and structural damage. After consultation with Amish barn specialists, the estimated renovation cost is approximately \$750,000, exclusive of acquisition costs. The applicants asserted that such an investment would not be economically feasible for a typical residential purchaser and that office use would provide a viable means of preserving the structure.

The applicants also described longstanding septic limitations in the village, including saturated soils and elevated nitrates. They stated that a residential use would generate approximately 400–500 gallons of wastewater per day, while the proposed office use would generate approximately 10–20 gallons per day. They argued that reduced septic loading constitutes a hardship unique to the property and would better protect local water quality.

The proposed office would house a law and tax practice with approximately five on-site employees. Most client interaction would occur remotely, with approximately one in-person meeting per week anticipated. The property provides approximately nine parking spaces,

allowing forward egress onto Route 52. Immediate neighbors have expressed written support for the proposal.

The applicants emphasized their long-term commitment to historic preservation and cited examples of deteriorating historic structures within the village as evidence of the need for economically viable adaptive reuse.

Members of the Historical Commission were present but have not yet taken formal action. They acknowledged the applicants' history of responsible stewardship and noted that Article 17 (Adaptive Reuse) was recently updated. Formal comments will be submitted at a later stage.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Dennis Smith to recommend that the Board of Supervisors support the applicants' request for a use variance to permit office use within the existing barn in the Village Residential District. The motion was seconded by George Trammell. Upon vote, five members voted in favor and one opposed. The motion carried by a vote of 5–1. No specific conditions were attached to the recommendation.

800 & 1000 Hickory Hill Road - Renninger Subdivision, CU, and ZHB Application

John Renninger, with architect Richard Buchanan and attorney Max O'Keefe, presented revised plans for a proposed barn on Lot 2 of the Hickory Hill Road property, which is subject to a conservation easement administered by the Brandywine Conservancy and located within the Brandywine Battlefield Overlay District.

At a prior meeting, the Commission deferred action on three requested variances relating to maximum accessory structure square footage, maximum height, and location of the accessory structure within the front yard.

The applicant reported that, following meetings with the Historical Commission and neighbors, the barn design was revised. The structure has been shifted an additional eleven feet back from Hickory Hill Road and is now positioned between two existing barns to be removed. The total footprint of the proposed barn is smaller than the combined footprint of the two existing barns.

The revised design more closely resembles a traditional stone bank barn, including a solid stone gable facing the road, a projecting southern gable, and a lower shed addition to the north screening the main doors. The Historical Commission and neighboring property owners indicated that the revisions represent a significant improvement.

The revised barn measures approximately 3,791 square feet. Total accessory building coverage on the property would increase from approximately 5,426 square feet to 5,618 square feet, an increase of approximately 192 square feet. The proposed height remains 22 feet. Because the barn is located forward of the principal dwelling, relief is required from ordinance provisions limiting accessory structures to side or rear yards.

Mr. O’Keefe advised that a formal addendum to the ZHB application will reflect updated square footage calculations, confirm the 22-foot height request, and reference all applicable ordinance provisions.

The Commission discussed impervious coverage limitations under both Township ordinances and the conservation easement. Mr. Buchanan indicated that projected impervious coverage is significantly below the easement cap and that the Brandywine Conservancy has provided conditional approval, including documentation of remaining impervious capacity on final plans.

The Historical Commission confirmed its support for the revised design and location.

A motion was made by George Trammell to recommend approval of the requested variances for Lot 2, specifically: (1) the variance for total accessory structure square footage; (2) the variance permitting a 22-foot accessory structure height; and (3) the variance permitting location of the accessory structure within the front yard and relief from side/rear yard limitations. The motion was seconded by Dennis Smith and passed unanimously.

Sewage Facilities Planning Module - Component 4A

Township Engineer Matt Houtmann presented the Component 4A Municipal Planning Agency review for the Renninger project’s on-lot sewage disposal plan. He reviewed the required findings and confirmed that the proposal is consistent with the Township Comprehensive Plan, Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), and water resource protection standards. He further stated that no known adverse impacts to historic resources or natural features were identified.

A motion was made to recommend approval of the Component 4A submission to the Board of Supervisors by Mike Clements. The motion was seconded by George Trammell and passed unanimously.

Annual Report

George Trammell presented the 2025 Pennsbury Township Planning Commission Annual Report (see attached). Karen Meloney made a motion to accept the report as submitted, which was seconded by George Trammell. The motion carried unanimously.

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:35pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Dan Boyle
Recording Secretary