

Pennsbury Township Board of Supervisors Minutes

June 17, 2026

The Board of Supervisors of Pennsbury Township held a regularly scheduled meeting on Wednesday, April 18, 2026, at 7 p.m. in the township building. Present were Supervisors Aaron McIntyre, Wendell Fenton, Gerard Pinamonti, Solicitor Tom Oeste, Township Engineer Matt Houtman, Planning Commission Chair Kay Ellsworth, Historical Commission Chair Judi Wilson, and Township Manager Dan Boyle. A motion to approve the May 20, 2026 regular meeting minutes was made by Supervisor McIntyre and seconded by Supervisor Fenton. The motion carried unanimously.

2405 Brintons Bridge Road (Urbany) Variance - Side Yard Setback / Garage

The applicant presented the following information:

- The dwelling was constructed around 1978 and is located near the rear of a four-acre property, limiting options for garage placement.
- Existing garage bays are too small to accommodate the applicant's truck, which is approximately 1.5 inches too tall to clear the existing doors.
- Multiple siting options were evaluated; any feasible location for a code-compliant garage would require some form of variance.
- The applicant distributed courtesy neighbor notification letters and obtained several letters of support (approximately nine neighbors), particularly from adjoining property owners.

Planning Commission Recommendation

- The Planning Commission conducted a site visit and reviewed the application at a public meeting.
- The Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the Board support the variance application, finding:
 - The 16-foot side yard variance requested is reasonable.
 - A hardship exists due to the location of the house at the rear of the lot and the configuration of the property.
 - Alternative locations would have required a different variance (accessory structure in front of the principal dwelling).

- Neighbor support further weighed in favor of recommending relief.

The Board noted that both the Planning Commission and the Board typically exercise caution in supporting variance requests and often remain neutral; support is reserved for circumstances where the ordinance's purposes are still substantially met and a legitimate hardship is demonstrated. No neighbors spoke in opposition; no adverse public comment was received. A motion was made by Supervisor Fenton and was seconded by Supervisor Pinamonti. The motion carried unanimously.

1907 Hillendale and 901 Hickory Hill Road (Weathers and Herrera) Variance and Special Exception - Common Driveway & Natural Resources Relief

The proposal is to construct a shared (common) driveway from Hickory Hill Road to serve both lots. Township Solicitor Tom Oeste outlined the application:

- The lots are located in the R-3 zoning district.
- Hickory Hill Road is steep and bordered by riparian buffer and steep slopes.
- The applicants seek variances and special exceptions primarily for:
 - Disturbance of moderately steep slopes;
 - Disturbance within Zone 1 and Zone 2 riparian buffer (RBA); and
 - A special exception for disturbance within the Regulated Protected Area (RPA) to construct the driveway.

Applicant's Counsel presented updated numbers and clarified that all proposed disturbances have been reduced from the original submission:

- 901 Hickory Hill Road (approx. 6.8 acres):
 - Variance – Moderately Steep Slopes (Section 162-1503.B(1)(a))
 - Ordinance: variance required if >30% of the resource is disturbed.
 - Original proposal: 53% disturbance.
 - Updated proposal: 36.8% disturbance.
 - Variance – Zone 1 Riparian Buffer (RBA)
 - Disturbance required to achieve a compliant driveway alignment.
 - Original disturbance approx. 4.0%; revised figure 4.1% (reflecting recalculation methodology, not increased physical work).

- Variance – Zone 2 Riparian Buffer (RBA)
 - Original disturbance: 43.6%; revised disturbance: 38%.
- Special Exception – RPA Disturbance
 - For grading and construction of the driveway as required under the ordinance.
- 1907 Hillendale Road (approx. 5.8 acres):
 - Accessed via easement; the property owners have agreed to share the driveway.
 - Special Exception – RPA Disturbance
 - Original riparian disturbance: 4.6%; updated: 4.3%.

The applicant's engineer, Tom Shrier explained:

- The driveway is located on a curved segment (S-curve) of Hickory Hill Road. The selected location provides the best achievable site distance given roadway geometry and existing banks.
- The design limits the driveway slope to a maximum of 12%, flattening to 5% near the residence with a flatter area near the house and a circular turnaround for emergency and delivery vehicles.
- The grading is designed to balance cuts and fills on-site, reducing truck traffic, off-site soil export, and associated impacts.

Township Engineer Matt Houtman reported:

- At the proposed driveway entrance on Hickory Hill Road, required sight distance appears to be met, but there is no appreciable safety margin.
- Greater sight distance could potentially be obtained by grading back an existing bank located on Hamorton Woods HOA open space, but this lies off the applicants' property.
- Above the lower portion of the site, the common driveway crosses Zone 2 riparian buffer in a long, narrow "sliver" of disturbance. The Engineer recommended that the design be revised to relocate that segment out of the riparian buffer where feasible.
- On the north side of the proposed dwelling, steep slope disturbance approaches existing woodlands. The scalloped line on the plan represents dense scrub vegetation, not true woodland edge; the actual woodland line is farther north.
- The Engineer recommended:

- Plotting the true woodland edge and avoiding woodland disturbance;
- Minimizing additional steep slope disturbance north of the house; and
- Considering modest relocation and/or re-grading (e.g., slight house shift south, limited driveway adjustment, and/or drainage redesign) to achieve resource protection objectives without compromising reasonable use of the property.

Planning Commission Chair Kay Ellsworth summarized the Commission's review:

- The Planning Commission conducted a site visit and held a detailed discussion at its recent meeting.
- The Commission sought to balance:
 - Safety and sight distance,
 - Protection of natural resources (steep slopes, riparian buffers, woodlands), and
 - The applicants' right to build on legally created building lots.
- The Planning Commission voted to recommend that the Board support the requested variances and special exceptions subject to conditions, including:
 1. Contacting the Hamorton Woods HOA to explore a temporary grading easement on HOA open space to improve sight distance and reduce cut depths.
 2. Considering a shift of the common driveway approximately 10 feet to the north where it passes near riparian buffer areas, to reduce or eliminate buffer disturbance.
 3. Considering relocation of the dwelling somewhat to the south to reduce disturbance in steep slopes north of the house.
 4. Considering reducing or reconfiguring the large flat rear yard/plateau behind the dwelling (currently proposed at approximately 50 ft of depth) to further limit steep slope impacts.

Following extended discussion, the Board sought to:

- Avoid unduly delaying the applicant's project;
- Emphasize public safety (sight distance on Hickory Hill Road); and
- Provide clear guidance to the Zoning Hearing Board on natural resource protection priorities.

A motion was made by Supervisor Fenton and seconded by Supervisor Pinamonti that the Board of Supervisors remain neutral on the variance and special exception application, but recommend that the Zoning Hearing Board consider imposing the following conditions if relief is granted:

1. Woodland Protection: There shall be no disturbance of woodlands or trees located north of the proposed dwelling on the lot, with the woodland edge to be accurately plotted and grading adjusted to avoid woodland removal.
2. Riparian Buffer Protection: The common driveway on the western portion of the property (generally in the vicinity of the split serving each lot) shall be relocated and/or re-graded such that, beyond the initial entry segment near Hickory Hill Road, there is no disturbance within the Zone 2 riparian buffer (RBA).

The Board further indicated that:

- The Township Solicitor will attempt to contact the Hamorton Woods HOA regarding a potential temporary grading easement to improve sight distance and grading at the driveway entrance.
- Any such effort is separate from and not a condition of the zoning relief; if an easement is obtained in a timely manner, the applicant is expected to cooperate in refining the design, but the applicant will not be required to purchase land or rights as a pre-condition of relief.

Professional Reports

Township Engineer's Report

Township Engineer Matt Houtmann presented his report:

- Land Disturbance Permits:
 - One new land disturbance permit application was received for a property on Hillendale Road for a proposed house/garage (south) addition.
- Zoning Variance Review:
 - Completed engineering review for the 901 Hickory Hill Road / 1907 Hillendale Road application discussed earlier.
- Code / Complaint Investigations:
 - Investigated recent activity at the former ski slope property following complaints raised at the Planning Commission.

- Observed brush and understory clearing between trees near a small stream and steep slopes.
- No evidence of significant tree removal or soil disturbance (no tilling) was observed.
- The Engineer advised the owner regarding riparian buffer and woodland protection requirements and reminded him that any land disturbance exceeding 1 acre would require NPDES/Conservation District permitting (erosion and sediment control).
- Other Monitoring:
 - Continued monitoring of activity at the Willow Glen property for compliance with Township requirements.

The Engineer's written report is on file at the Township office.

Roadmaster's Report

The Roadmaster presented the Roadmaster's report, including:

- Removal of four fallen trees.
- Edge repairs completed on Stockford Road.
- Completion of the first round of road bank mowing Township-wide.
- Ongoing weekly mowing of Township facilities and open space.
- Tree trimming performed in Parker's Reserve, Stockford Road, and North and Southridge.
- Oil and chip resurfacing began yesterday and was completed today.

Planning Commission Report

The Planning Commission Chair reported:

- The Planning Commission's recent meeting focused primarily on:
 - The 2405 Brinton Bridge Road variance recommendation; and
 - The 901 Hickory Hill Road / 1907 Hillendale Road variance/special exception application, both of which were discussed earlier in this meeting.
- No additional substantial applications were reviewed; only one minor matter is anticipated next month.

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- The Chair noted that site visits continue to achieve near-100% participation from Planning Commission members, and expressed appreciation for the Commission's ongoing commitment.

The Board thanked the Planning Commission for its thorough site inspections and review work.

Public Comment

A discussion occurred regarding the former Chadds Peak Ski Area property (foliage clearing, excessive noise from dirt bikes and fireworks, and flooding due to the removal of vegetation). The Township Manager and Engineer confirmed that at present, no formal land development or zoning application has been filed with the Township for the former ski area property. The recent clearing observed by residents consisted of brush and understory removal; no substantial trees appear to have been removed, and no soil disturbance (tilling or grading) was observed by the Engineer during his inspection. Without soil disturbance above ordinance thresholds, the activity is not regulated as land disturbance under the Township code, though the owner was advised of riparian and woodland protections. The Board and staff emphasized that any formal plan submission will require notice to abutting property owners by certified mail, and posting of the property in accordance with Township ordinances and the Municipalities Planning Code.

Supervisor McIntyre noted that bills and payroll checks for the current period were available at the meeting table for Board review and signing.

The Board reviewed the bills and checks prepared for payment for the current period.

A bill list dated June 16, 2026, numbering 2731 – 2759, Road Reserve PLIGIT numbering 215 – 221, were approved for payment by the Board. The Board also reviewed the May bank reconciliation for the General Fund. With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Dan Boyle, Township Manager