

EAST BUFFALO TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
589 Fairground Road, Lewisburg, PA
April 16, 2025

Chair Curtis Barrick called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Members present: Curtis Barrick, Christine Buffinton, Katie Evans, Mary Beth Griffith, Leslie Hosterman, Ryan Maxwell, Angelo Viececi

Also present: East Buffalo Township Manager Jolene Helwig, Zoning Officer (CKCOG) Thomas MacDonald

Visitors: Doug Braunsdorf (Geisinger), Kate Durso (Geisinger), David Hafer, Patrick Jacobs (Geisinger), Jim Knight (EBT Supervisor), Louise Knight, Sara Krome, Justin Madaus, Judith Marvin, Mayur Patel (Laughner & Patel Developers), Tina Prowant, Dexter Rovenot, Joseph Stender (Geisinger), Brent Wesley

Hearing of Visitors:

- Kate Durso spoke to represent Geisinger's request to add health-care facilities as a permitted use in the Highway Commercial zoning district. She noted the description of the Highway Commercial district in §301.8 of Chapter 27 of the Code of Ordinances as "designed to allow for more intense commercial development such as restaurants, large-scale retail, high traffic generator such as office complexes, motels and convenience stores." She would interpret the proposed cancer center use to fall under the permitted principal use of "Business and Professional Offices," but said it would be more unambiguous to add "Health Care Facilities" to the list of permitted uses.
- Patrick Jacobs gave more details on the proposed use as a cancer center, stating that it is not a hospital. The cancer center will have 34 staff and 60-80 patients per day. Much of the space will be "typical infusion bays." He noted that PennDOT had issued a highway occupancy permit.
- Mayur Patel explained that the other building will house an online charter school. Students will not attend in-person at this building, but instructors will teach from cubicles in the building. The developers have not received zoning permits for either building.
- Tina Prowant recalled the former proposed Giant grocery store on the location and the fact that PennDOT would not put a traffic light at the entrance on the hill at that time. She thought that the "in kind" donation instead of taxes will be insignificant. Ms. Prowant also asked how we would know that students will not be going to the charter school building?
- Justin Madaus said he is a member of the Lewisburg Area School Board but was speaking in a personal capacity, not as a representative of the school district. He noted that the school district's sole source of income is property tax and the proposed uses, both non-profit, will take a commercial property and hand it to tax-exempt organizations.
- Louise Knight echoed Tina's concerns and said her concerns also dated back to the prior Giant grocery store proposal.
- Judith Marvin recalled incidents concerning the former Giant proposal. She mentioned that Dick McGinnis (at that time a professor of civil engineering at Bucknell) had contacted a former student working at the PennDOT District 3 office to ensure the road's incline and the entrance on the hill was accurately assessed. PennDOT rescinded their HOP approval.
- Patrick Jacobs said that Geisinger values East Buffalo Township and wants to be in close proximity to its residents.
- Tina Prowant listed chemotherapeutic agents likely to be used in the cancer facility.
- Katie Evans mentioned that the projected 60-80 patients a day could be a high traffic load.

- Jolene Helwig asked Geisinger representatives if they are planning access to the facility from Beagle Club Road. Geisinger representatives answered no.
- Kate Durso compared parking space requirements in the ordinance for a health-care facility (1 for each 2 beds plus 1 per employee in the maximum work shift) to that for a business or professional office (1 for each 400 square feet of usable space plus 1 per employee in the maximum work shift).
- Tom MacDonald said that the layout of the proposed cancer center building has been reviewed. The reviewer determined that it would be considered a health-care facility under the IBC (International Building Code).
- Jim Knight recalled that the project had come to the supervisors because of an initial lack of detail, and that was why they wanted it discussed at a Planning Commission meeting.
- Angelo Viecele mentioned that Kelly Township has an example of a large health care facility, and that we rely on PennDOT as the experts in assessing whether a highway occupancy permit should be issued.
- Motion by Mary Beth Griffith, seconded by Ryan Maxwell, to add health-care facilities as a permitted use in the Highway Commercial zoning district. The motion passed by a vote of 6 to 1 with Katie Evans dissenting.
- After the vote, David Hafer asked about water quality issues at the proposed development, specifically about drainage on the sloping property given the proximity to the Susquehanna River. Curtis explained that the plans must meet the township runoff requirements, and the developer must also have an NPDES permit.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Katie Evans, seconded by Angelo Viecele, to approve the February 19, 2025, meeting minutes as distributed. Motion passed without exception.

Old Business: Zoning Ordinance Review

- PC members considered the April 4th review letter of the draft East Buffalo Township Zoning Ordinance amendment from Shawn McLaughlin, Director of Planning & Economic Development for Union County.
- Jason Brudecki noted that of the 23 items in the review letter, some concern agreement with state law are thus easy to address. Those specific items numbers are 1, 5, 10, 11, 20, and 23.
- Attorney Brudecki will also fix these other items:
 1. #6 provides for a maximum building height of 100 ft above finished grade in A-P should be changed to have a lower maximum for all buildings except silos, which should be called out separately with the 100-ft maximum height.
 2. #19 concerns a reference in §513(3), livestock in A-P, A-R, and W-P zones, to §521 Roadside and Farm Stands. The reference should be corrected.
 3. #22 (reference to an “agricultural district”) requires a clarification to list the specific agricultural zoning districts by name.
 4. #18 refers to recreational trails, bike paths, and nature walks as permitted uses in O-1, the only place where these uses are specifically called out. References to these should be removed from §411.1(d).
- Five items concern open-space subdivisions (O-1). One (#18) is addressed above. The remaining four are:

1. #12 mentions specifically that open-space subdivisions are permitted in R-1 but not in A-R, and questions whether it should be removed entirely from the ordinance or permitted in A-R as well. The item also questions whether there is any example of these being used in Union County.
2. #13 mentions that open-space subdivisions are permitted in the R-U district and states that the most recent Union County Comprehensive Plan discourages this concept.
3. #16 cites §411, which states that the O-1 district includes lands in any floodplain on the EBT floodplain map and is an overlay to EBT's Official Zoning Map. However, floodplains are not depicted on the official zoning map. Also, §411.1(a) states that whatever uses are permitted in the underlying zoning district are permissible so long as they do not conflict with the EBT floodplain management regulations. Could this instead be incorporated into Chapter 10?
4. #17 cites inconsistencies with the fact that agricultural, horticulture, pasturing, and similar uses are permitted in O-1, which conflicts with §411.1 stating the permitted uses are those of the underlying district.

Commission members discussed whether Open-space subdivisions could be eliminated completely as a permitted use. EBT currently has one open-space subdivision, the Windsor development. The open-space subdivision category could be eliminated without affecting the existing homes. The SALDO for this development has been already approved so the smaller lot sizes for future construction would be exempt from current R-1 minima, but building setbacks would have to agree with current R-1 specifications, which would make it prohibitively difficult to build on the lots. Thus open-space subdivisions could therefore be eliminated in R-U, but not R-1.

- The remaining items that will require more commission discussion as they involve permitted use questions are:
 1. #2: Refers to permitted uses in W-P and not in A-P
 2. #3: Breweries, distilleries, wineries, agriculture, and indoor recreation are permitted in W-P.
 3. #4: Why are breweries and distilleries permitted in A-P? Why are riding stables not permitted?
 4. #7: In §402.4(k), farmettes in A-P have no maximum size. They also seem more appropriate for A-R rather than A-P.
 5. #8: Does farmette land count towards permitted non-agricultural development in the table in §402.6 "Subdivision of Land in the Agricultural-Preservation District"? Does this need clarification that a farmettes is a residential use and not an agricultural use?
 6. #9: Why do agricultural development standards in A-R seem more restrictive than in A-P for non-farm development? Why should the township encourage full-scale agriculture (i.e., livestock, CAOs) here? Is crop cultivation a more appropriate allowable use? Farmettes also seem more applicable here.
 7. #14: In §407.1 for the B-U zone, dormitories do not fit within any of the specified housing types. The prior wording of "University owned or operated student housing" should be included as a permitted use.
 8. #15: Section §407.h(4) could be problematic for maximum impervious coverage for B-U zone at 50% of land owned or leased. If land is not leased in a future year, the limit could be exceeded.. Does Bucknell currently have substantial leased land, or could this clause simply be eliminated from the section?
 9. #21: §513(4) specifies what is considered the first building constructed on a farm in A-P and A-R. This needs to be rewritten so that a loophole does not exist in the case of, for example, a 12'x12' ag building on otherwise vacant land that would then establish the "principal agricultural structure."
- Commission discussed whether a third-party should be consulted for another review of the ordinance, with no conclusion.

- Attorney Brudecki will incorporate the specified changes in the zoning ordinance before next month. He predicted that we should have a revised version available for the county by June.
- Planning Commission members should consider the nine items listed above for resolution at the May meeting. Members should also check the revised ordinance for any other necessary changes.

Other business: Tom MacDonald said “the word is out” on doing a new comprehensive plan for the township, so the commission may need to work on this in the future.

Hearing of Visitors: None.

Adjournment:

Motion by Leslie Hosterman, seconded by Katie Evans, to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 PM.

Submitted by Christine Buffinton, Secretary