

The stated meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Township of Abington was held on Thursday, August 14, 2025 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with President Hecker presiding.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Present: Commissioners ROTHMAN, DiPLACIDO, WINEGRAD, YOUNG-GERTZ, HENRY, ZAPPONE, SPIEGELMAN, SCHREIBER, VAHEY, HECKER  
Excused: Commissioners BRODSKY, LANEY-MARTIN, BROWNE, BOWMAN, BOLE

Also Present: Assistant Manager Wehmeyer  
Township Solicitor Clarke

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

## **BOARD VICE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

President Hecker announced that following the conclusion of tonight's voting meeting and Working Session, the Board of Commissioners will be holding an Executive Session to discuss a legal matter.

### Shade Tree Commission Annual Report:

Mr. John Kennedy said the Shade Tree Commission seeks to preserve and enhance Abington's urban forest and the essential ecosystem services that trees uniquely provide. The Shade Tree Commission reached its 50-year milestone this year and later we will be advertising a celebration event. We have five appointed Commissioners as well as associate members.

There were budget increases over the past several years largely focused on the implementation of the Master Tree Action Plan (MTAP) developing pilot projects to help the Township better manage our natural areas. Next year, we anticipate our budget request will decrease as the operating expense for some of these pilot projects will move to the Parks and Recreation Department's budget.

The Township hired consulting arborist in August 2024 to help realize the Master Tree Action Plan and in addition to working with the Shade Tree Commission, the arborist is also being utilized by many Township departments. The proposed Tree Preservation, Protection and Removal Ordinance has been reviewed by the consulting arborist as well as Township staff and Township Solicitor and anticipated to be sent to the Board of Commissioners' Working Session in a few months.

Currently in development is an Invasive Plants Management Plan for Township Parks, and last year, we requested funding for it. This project will provide a blueprint for managing invasive plants of the Township. When it's complete, the Township can apply for an implementation grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Our Native Plant Gardens in Roslyn Park and many of our Township parks have large expanses of lawn that require upkeep, and this project involves converting sections of park lawn into native tree and plant gardens.

The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps for Stewardship sponsored by DCNR is a project that provides young adults with workers to steward parks and natural areas, and last year, we removed invasive plants and replanted areas in several parks and natural areas. We will be doing this again at the end of September.

Due to our ongoing activities and initiatives, we logged in 1,620 volunteer community service hours in 2024 and planted over 100 trees in the parks and natural areas.

The Tree Plantings and Free Tree Giveaway event resulted in giving away 200 trees to date and we will be adding another 300 later in October.

Abington's tree canopy is in decline and canopy loss has continued to accelerate since the 2017 data because of invasive insects and worsening storms. Canopy distribution continues to be inequitable, and we need trees for ecosystems to manage stormwater to help reduce flooding, improve water quality and reduce heat island effect.

The Master Tree Action Plan provides guidance on how to protect and grow urban forest and some of the steps for implementation include: free giveaways, park plantings, native plant gardens for park stewardship, hiring consulting arborist, the proposed Tree Preservation, Protection, and Removal Ordinance, and the Invasive Plants Management Plan. Our existing tree ordinance is outdated and contains gaps, and the proposed tree ordinance reflects current national standards.

In collaboration with Township staff and volunteers, the Shade Tree Commission has made significant progress in stewarding and growing our urban forest and we are actively seeking volunteers to join us.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern about the minutes. She was also concerned that her questions were not answered. Why is Briar Bush not getting any funding? There is an epidemic of broken-down cars on lawns and driveways, and homes with debris piling up and dead trees need to be removed.

Joe Rooney, resident, expressed concern about the agenda item for the medical marijuana dispensary and the grower/processor use ordinance. He does not believe it has anything to do with the health of the residents or good government. Marijuana is a blight on every community and there are no benefits and many negatives. It is bad for kids and everybody, and it is never ok, and it's disappointing.

Steven Kline, resident, said he is in favor of the proposed amendment to Section 1908. This amendment is to allow property owners of legal nonconforming lots to use their property in the same way that those who own conforming lots can use them, and they should not have the burden of going before the Zoning Hearing Board.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern that the amendment to Section 1908 is hurting people who live next to these tiny strips of land that are nonconforming lots, and they don't know who these lots belong to. She asked for this to be amended and not passed, and the neighbors should be notified and have a place to give input such as the Zoning Hearing Board.

#### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve Items a. – d. as listed under the Consent Agenda as follows:

To approve the minutes from the Board of Commissioners Regular Meeting of July 10, 2025.

To adopt Resolution No. 24-026 for a Pennsylvania Commonwealth Financing Authority's Multimodal Transportation Fund Grant application in the amount of \$1,713,253.00 and committing \$110,065 in FY 2025 budget funds for Phase 5 of the Abington Jenkintown Connections Project.

To approve the request of waiver from the Land Development process for LD-25-02 Redeemer Valley Farm Manure Compost Facility.

To appoint Aaron Krauss to the Library Board of Trustees to fill the term ending on 12/31/2025 as recommended by the Library Board of Trustees.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None.

Item BOC-05-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to open the Public Hearing.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0. Public Hearing opened at 7:32 p.m.

A court report was in attendance to transcribe the testimony for the hearing.

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to close the Public Hearing.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0. Public Hearing was closed at 7:44 p.m.

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt Ordinance No. 2232 amending the Code of the Township of Abington at Part II [General Legislation], Chapter 162 [Zoning] at Article II [Definitions], Article XXI [Use Regulations], Article XXII [Parking and Transportation], and the Comprehensive Use Matrix to incorporate provisions for the C-39 [Medical Marijuana Dispensary] and D-18 [Medical Marijuana Grower/Processor] Uses.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

Item BOC-06-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to open the Public Hearing.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0. Public Hearing was opened at 7:45 p.m.

A court report was in attendance to transcribe the testimony for the hearing.

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to close the Public Hearing.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0. Public Hearing was closed at 8:00 p.m.

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to adopt Ordinance No. 2234 amending the Code of the Township of Abington at Part II [General Legislation], Chapter 162 [Zoning], Article XIX [Nonconforming Uses, Structures, Lots and Signs] by amending and restating Section 1908 [Expansion of or Construction on a Nonconforming Lot] to revise provisions for special exceptions.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

Item BOC-07-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to adopt Ordinance No. 2233 amending the Code of the Township of Abington at Part II [General Legislation], Chapter 58 [Animals], to add a new Article, Article VII [Sales of Dogs and Cats].

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

Item BOC-08-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Zappone to authorize advertisement of a Traffic Safety Ordinance amending Chapter 156 – “Vehicles and Traffic,” Article II – “Traffic Regulations,” Section 14 “Stop Intersections” to add “Stop” signs on Fleming Ave. east (northbound) and west (southbound) at Mt. Vernon Ave. and Article III – “Parking Regulations” Section 25 – “Parking Prohibited At All Times; No Parking Between Signs; No Parking Here To Corner; Parking Prohibited Except Certain Hours, No Stopping or Standing” to add “No Parking” on Old Welsh Rd south side from Fitzwatertown Rd. to the property line between 2914 and 2920; No Parking Here to Corner on Tyson Ave. west side 30’ south from intersection with Hillthorpe Ave. and Horace Ave. north side 30’ east of the driveway exit (west side) and “No Parking Between Signs” on Horace Ave. north side in front of the hospital 20’ east and 20’ west of the marked crosswalk and “Parking for Community Center Only” violators fined \$30.00 in the Ardsley Community Center Parking Lot 2828 Spear Ave. Section 28 – “Special Purpose Parking Zones” to add Handicapped Parking at 1013 Maple Ave., 1411 Birchwood Ave., 618 Edgehill Rd. and 1415 Hallman Rd.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners.

Commissioner Henry said she spoke with the neighbors who live where Fitzwatertown Road crosses Old Welsh, and they were a little annoyed that this will change the parking situation but recognize this area has seen its hardships with different traffic issues, so they know it’s a necessary thing to do. Also, the residents from Fleming Avenue and Mt. Vernon were happy to see this intersection become a 4-way rather than two-way.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

Item BOC-09-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Schreiber to award the Roslyn Fire Company Floor Replacement bid to The Ambient Group, LLC in the amount of \$72,000 and authorize the Township Manager to execute the contract.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

Item BOC-10-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to authorize the Public Works Director to execute letters of interest for three chassis refuse trucks.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

Item BOC-11-081425:

Vice President Vahey made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Rothman to approve Indemnification Agreement with Plaza Unit Acquisition, LP and Pavilion Unit Acquisition, LP related to drainage releases for the Abington-Jenkintown Connections Project subject to review and approval by the Township Solicitor.

President Hecker asked for any comments from Commissioners. There were none.

MOTION was ADOPTED 10-0.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

Item FC-01-081425:

Commissioner Winegrad made a MOTION, seconded by Commissioner Spiegelman to approve the June 2025 expenditures in the amount of \$3,579,159.95 and salaries and wages in the amount of \$2,492,571.21 and authorize the proper officials to sign and approve invoices and supporting documentation in payment of bills and contracts as they mature through the month of September 2025.

Roll call resulted in motion being passed 10-0. Commissioners Brodsky, Laney-Martin, Browne, Bole, and Bowman were absent during roll call.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Adele Kubel, resident, expressed concern about many blight situations that remain unaddressed, and homes that are not being kept up to code. There is an epidemic of broken-down cars and trucks sitting on lawns. Tenement apartment developers benefit from the destruction of homes that destroy property values. Destroying affordable homes leads to housing insecurity and poverty. Preserving green space costs far less than assisting developers. Economic development that prioritizes the one percent has left Abington with “rot, slum, commercial areas, and rising taxes.”

Matthew Steph, resident, urged the Board of Commissioners to invest in the Briar Bush Nature Center, which is one of the crown jewels of Abington. Briar Bush has not only taught his daughters about wildlife and nature but helped instill a love for nature. It’s been a privilege to have Briar Bush in Abington as an important community anchor, but it needs more support from the Township. While the number of visitors is higher today, the Township has invested less money than it did before the pandemic. He requested an increased budget for Briar Bush for more staff so that it can keep growing as one of the special places in Abington.

Lea Della Vecchia, President of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Briar Bush, commented that Briar Bush is a special place, a community treasure that has thrived for decades because of a strong and unique partnership with the Township. For years this partnership included a full-time business manager position, and it was eliminated during the pandemic in 2020. Now Briar Bush is serving more people than ever before. In 2024, our programs reached about 3,000 more participants than in 2019.

Our director, development manager, and program director absorb the administrative tasks previously performed by the business manager, so there is less time for fundraising, facilities planning and program development that fuels our long-term success and there is less time for educators to deliver programs to constituents.

In the coming months, Briar Bush Nature Center will submit a budget that includes the addition of partial compensation for the business manager position that will include the same salary breakdown where the Friends of Briar Bush cover 50% of the salary and the Township covering the remaining 50% plus benefits. She hopes during budget discussions you will think of Briar Bush as the community treasure it is and see this position as an investment in the future.

Joe Rooney, resident, reminded everyone that tomorrow is August 15<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the end of WWII. He supports Adele and he suggested providing answers and a timeline that would help the process.

ICE is always welcome in Abington Township. They are doing an essential job. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we honored our first responders and law enforcement agents. Immigration and Customs are the first responders, and they are the law enforcement that protect the boundaries and borders of the United States, and he thanked them for what they do every single day. “If you’re an illegal alien in Abington Township, it is time to go home, come here legally, we welcome you with open arms,” and that must be our policy. Also, the Economic Development Corporation has \$600,000 of our taxpayer money, so how are we making sure we are protecting it?

Denis Efimov, resident, urged the Board of Commissioners to consider passing a Welcoming Ordinance for Abington Township. He was not born in this country but grew up in Abington and he understands that Abington cares significantly about its immigrant communities, and that’s all the more reason to pass this policy. He is a Township employee, and it is very important to pass it. At such a dark hour in this country for vulnerable communities, it is time for our Township to take an explicit and affirmative stance in support of immigrant communities.

Joe Dunn, resident, expressed concern about the crime in his area that seems to be increasing, and we should back our ICE agents and police force.

Ryan Teitman, resident, commented he is in favor of the Welcoming Ordinance, and he thanked the Commissioners who spoke with him personally about it. Many of us are concerned about the conduct of ICE throughout the country, the arrest and the detainment of undocumented immigrants, the many immigrants with legal status as well as U.S. citizens. He urged the Board to add this ordinance to the September agenda and have a robust discussion about it.

Harold Dans, resident, commented that he is a professional engineer who has done municipal work for the past 52 years. There is an urgent situation that needs to be addressed at the intersection of Woodland and Easton Roads where an AutoZone was recently constructed. There was a curb radius installed that does not comply with any regulation. It is much too small for the heavy turn from Woodland to Easton.

As a result from the tight radius, trucks and cars go over the curb to make the right turn and trucks go over the handicapped accessible ramp. This is a very dangerous situation of an accident waiting to happen. He urged to immediately block off the ramp, so no future residents use it until such time that the intersection is properly constructed with proper radius and proper handicapped accessible ramps.

Steven Kline, resident, commented that at some point all of us were illegal immigrants. These illegal immigrant tropes that are thrown out are just a reason to give you somebody to blame for the things that you believe are going wrong in this country. They should look within.

Joe Monahan, resident, commented that he lives at 1442 Edgehill Road and the house at 1450 Edgehill has not been occupied for a year now. The foundation is not there, the owner left a truck with flat tires there, and the property is overgrown.

Commissioner Spiegelman said that property will be going up for Sheriffs Sale on the 28<sup>th</sup>. He has been in contact with Fire Marshal Platz as well as with his code and property maintenance team about it. He agrees this house is completely unacceptable and something must be done.

Andrew Vanderklut, resident, asked the Board to consider adopting a Welcoming Act for Abington Township, an ordinance affirming that we are a community where everyone belongs and feels safe to participate in civic life. We have seen in Montgomery County that welcoming policies are not abstract ideals, they are practical tools for public safety and community cohesion.

In June, the county adopted a policy requiring a judicial warrant before any county employee can share personal information with ICE. A Township-level Welcome Ordinance would take that principle a step further, making it permanent and consistent with proactive outreach. It would mean no one is questioned about their immigrant status unless required by law; no cooperation with ICE without a judicial warrant protecting due process and limiting liability; and no data collection on immigrant status unless it is legally mandated.

It is public safety. When residents fear that a call to the police or visit to the local library or showing up at a township meeting could put them at risk of deportation, they remain silent. Crimes go unreported, witnesses disappear and trust that keeps the community safe erodes.

A Welcome Act builds trust making everyone more willing to engage with local services. Economic and cultural vitality; immigrant and newcomer families start businesses, buy homes and contribute to the local economy. A Welcome Ordinance is a message to perspective residents and businesses that Abington is a place where you can put down roots. Consistency and accountability; county policies can change with leadership, but an ordinance in Abington's books makes our values clear and lasting providing guidance to employees, reassurance to residents and transparency for everyone.

By adopting a Welcome Act, Abington can lead by example showing that strong communities are not built by fear, but by trust, connection and share responsibility. Thank you for your time and for considering a step towards a strong, safer and welcoming Abington.

Nick Harmon, resident, commented that he also supports the Welcome Ordinance, and every single day that we do not have something concrete in place, is another day that the community is unsafe and afraid because at any moment our immigrant community could disappear without forewarning. He provided statistics from the 2023 National Survey reporting that 9.2% of our township is comprised of immigrants, and we need to have something in writing that includes Township employees in that ordinance.

Bernard Epstein, resident, thanked Commissioner Winegrad for his time speaking with him as well as Commissioner Rothman. He asked the Board of Commissioners to consider passing a Welcome Ordinance to protect our communities in Abington. He provided previous case rulings at the federal level regarding withholding funding and welcoming ordinances making it clear that funding could not be withheld as a result of counties and municipalities engaging in legal noncooperation. He thanked the Board of Commissioners for their consideration.

Lora Lehmann, resident, commented that the tiny sliver of lands is of great concern because the people that have them next to them will have a house practically in their bedroom, so it's important to care about the residents.

Ross Abel, resident, commented that he also supports a Welcoming Act as our immigrant residents are a critical part of having a vibrant diverse community. Also, we have spoken previously about a systematic approach to traffic calming, and he heard a policy was being drafted, but months have passed, and there has been no update. In that time, cut-through speeding and aggressive driving have gotten worse and he is concerned about the children getting to school.

On Washington Lane, a traffic survey showed that traffic goes 50-60 MPH, but it is not enough to merit any changes and residents and parents are extremely frustrated by the danger to our children. He asked the Township to form a Citizen Township Traffic Calming Mission so we can identify and fix problem spots together; create mandatory traffic calming zones around every school with slow speeds; and safer crossing and designs that make reckless driving impossible. Partner with adjacent towns, Montco and PennDOT to pursue traffic calming on Old York Road.

Let's commit to an active transportation strategy. It's about saving lives, protecting kids and making our neighborhoods more livable. We have the tools, the examples and the responsibility, so let's make the commitment tonight.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Recording Secretary

The following ordinances and resolution were adopted by the Board of Commissioners on August 14, 2025:

Resolution No. 24-026

Ordinance No. 2232

Ordinance No. 2233

Ordinance No. 2234