

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, December 17, 2025 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with Chairman Nicholas Brown presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:33 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present: BROWN, DICELLO, ROBINSON, BAKER, WEATHERLY
Excused: NEWELL

Also Present: Township Engineer Lee
County Planner Narcowich

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. DiCello made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Brown to approve the minutes of the Planning Commissioner Meeting of October 28, 2025.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

PRESENTATION: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Review LD-24-04 – 221 Moredon Road Preliminary Major Subdivision & Land Development Plans:

Mr. Brown said the applicant is proposing to demolish the existing two-story detached dwelling and all accessory buildings on the lot and to subdivide the existing 228,041 sq. ft. (5.235 acres) lot into four new lots as follows:

Lot 1 will consist of 50,373 sq. ft. corner lot fronting Moredon Road and the proposed new cul-de-sac road.

Lot 2 will consist of 67,551 sq. ft. lot fronting the proposed cul-de-sac road.

Lot 3 will consist of 43,609 sq. ft. fronting the proposed cul-de-sac road.

Lot 4 will consist of 46,240 sq. ft. lot fronting Moredon Road and the proposed cul-de-sac road.

All four (4) proposed new lots will comprise of a new 2,220 sq. ft. detached dwelling with concrete walkway, asphalt driveway, and an attached three (3) car garage to accommodate three (3) off-street parking spaces. Two (2) additional off-street parking spaces are provided on each lot. Additional site improvements proposed include new curbing, sidewalk, walkways, retaining walls, landscaping, and stormwater management facilities. Each dwelling will be serviced by public water and sewer service. Access to the lots is by way of a new cul-de-sac (30-foot-wide cartway and 50-foot-wide right-of-way) to be offered for dedication to the Township.

Mr. John Anderson, PE representing the applicant, said it is a preliminary subdivision plan consisting of four lots and access through a cul-de-sac off Moredon Road. This is approximately 5 ½ existing parcel being subdivided into four lots. Each lot will be in compliance as they are in the R-1 Zoning District and require more than one acre.

We are providing road widening, curb and sidewalk along Moredon. Sanitary service was consulted through the Water Authority and sanitary will come through a utility easement from the north. The applicant has worked out an agreement with the adjoining property owner to have access through a sewer interceptor that we will tie into, so there will be public sewer/water for the four lots.

The plan shows the tree clearing limits for the four dwellings, and in addition to the cul-de-sac, there will be stormwater management for each lot that will be controlled by an HOA, so all responsibility will be borne by the residents.

The plan is compliant from a zoning perspective, and no zoning relief is requested; however, there are three waiver requests.

The three waivers consist of locating all aboveground and underground private utilities within 400 feet of any portion of the site. A partial waiver is being requested as we have located all utilities around the property that would be impacted and we surveyed up to the sanitary sewer connection to hit the interceptor that the system will tie into.

The second waiver is regarding property slopes, and in order to provide a minimal area for stormwater detention and minimal grading around the site, we are requesting relief from the ordinance that cut fill slopes shall not exceed 15% or steeper except as approved by the ZHB. There are areas that we are using retaining walls for additional stormwater detention, and for our aboveground basin and grading, we are asking for slopes to be greater than 15%, a maximum slope of 3:1.

The last waiver is consideration of allowing the applicant to provide additional tree plantings within the area of the ultimate right-of-way and the legal right-of-way. We are providing curb and sidewalk along Moredon Road, and the area between the legal right-of-way and the ultimate right-of-way is being offered for dedication. We are providing 3-5 ft. road widening, and do not anticipate Moredon Road to be widened to the ultimate right-of-way in the near future.

The property is wooded, and we will be disturbing and removing some trees for development. The plan shows all the different trees that will be planted to make up for the tree removal and to be compliant with any additional landscaping. The waiver request has to do with planting of street trees within the ultimate right-of-way as there are none there today. It is not really a waiver, but an approval by the Board of Commissioners for the planting of street trees.

Mr. Brown questioned whether the power lines would be impacted by the proposed street trees.

Mr. Anderson replied the existing lines were surveyed and they are right along the curb line and the street trees will be well beyond that.

Mr. Brown clarified that the power lines are within the legal right-of-way. Is that correct?

Mr. Anderson replied yes.

Mr. Brown questioned whether there are any outstanding comments that need to be addressed by the applicant between preliminary and final approval.

Mr. Anderson replied besides the waiver requests, we are not asking for any zoning relief. It is a by-right plan, and we reviewed the various Township's consultants' comments and will comply, but there are outside agency permits that need to be obtained between preliminary and final.

Ms. Allison Lee said the applicant has addressed all outstanding items and will comply. However, there is a zoning permit regarding the architectural plan that needs to be updated to show the 30% total area of the front building elevation is not being occupied by the garages, and the remaining comments are standard regarding landscaping and plan details as well stormwater details.

Mr. Anderson replied regarding the house architecture, that only applies to Lot 1 because the garage of Lot 1 is a side entry garage and fronts on the cul-de-sac on Moredon Road. For all other buildings, the garage does not face the roadway. We will prepare building elevations to show less than 30% of the building façade for that side of the building.

Ms. Lee said she supports the applicant's two waiver requests pertaining to SALDO.

Mr. Anderson said we will meet with the Shade Tree Commission about the tree issue and go back out to survey the areas where the trees have been removed. We did survey all the trees prior to them being taken down so we have a record of them. We will resurvey the removal area to capture all the trees that have been taken down.

Mr. Brown asked for any comments from members of the Planning Commission.

Mr. Baker expressed concern about the stormwater basin closest to the trail. Will it be hidden as well as protected because it is so close to the trail?

Mr. Anderson replied when it is over a certain height there should be an interior retaining wall. Anything over 30" requires protection in the form of a fence, so we will make sure that gets captured. Our landscaping plan is providing small vegetation to hide it.

Mr. Baker questioned whether there would be any discharge onto the trail.

Mr. Anderson replied we will explore the piping that goes under the trail and the discharge point, which is required for an NPDES permit. It will be addressed in detail in the next plan submission. We will bring the rate control to emulate existing conditions as well as the volume and will meet all requirements in the Township's Engineer's review letter as well as the Montgomery County Conservation District for an NPDES permit.

Mr. Weatherly asked about proposed basin 2 along the cul-de-sac.

Mr. Anderson replied we will capture all runoff from the Lot 3 house within that basin.

Mr. Weatherly clarified that all slopes greater than 15% are within stormwater basins. Is that correct?

Mr. Anderson replied yes, in and around the stormwater basins. We are mitigating the driveway location with a retaining wall to allow for grading, and the majority of the sloped areas are associated with the stormwater basins.

Mr. DiCello asked about renderings of the homes.

Mr. Anderson replied Lot 1 will have a two-car garage, and all others will have three-car garages, and the homes will be two stories with basements.

Mr. Narcowich asked about the culvert underneath the trail that should be addressed to avoid damage or other impacts on the Pennypack trail. A copy of the inspection report was included in his review letter. Regarding trees, the existing conditions plan says that 356 trees are to be provided, and the applicant's landscape plan shows 352.

Mr. Anderson replied our landscape architect resolved that conflict.

Mr. Narcowich said we recommend using care when cutting trees on steep slopes to avoid erosion. Also, we suggest that a note be added where the trail is to show that SEPTA owns that land. Detention basins shall be shown on the plan. And garages are limited to 10 ft. in width.

Mr. DiCello asked about the retaining walls.

Mr. Anderson replied it will be unitary block with tiebacks, split face surface, and a railing.

Mr. Brown asked about gaps between the homes and trails.

Mr. Anderson replied our landscape architect tried to fill in the gaps, especially behind the buildings and there are some existing trees that will be kept. He will also have the architect revisit the trees that will remain and look at understory plantings that would be mutually beneficial to the substantial trees.

Mr. Brown said it might be nice to have several trees along the existing streetscape although there is a concern about impacting power lines. He asked the applicant to address comments made by the Fire Marshal.

Mr. Anderson replied we will comply with comments made by the Fire Marshal and get his approval.

Patricia Gallagher, member of the Shade Tree Commission, said the STC submitted a review letter on January 6, 2025, and we are concerned about the land disturbance and tree removal without approval from the Township. We did a site visit in December of 2024 and observed numerous trees more than 6" in diameter were taken down and there were piles of cut logs. SALDO says, "that no entity shall subdivide or develop land in the Township of Abington unless or until a final plan has been approved in writing thereon by the Board of Commissioners." So, we asked the applicant about it, and they responded by saying "No response required."

The STC would like to know why the applicant felt no response was required, and how many trees have been removed from the site, and if they were accounted for in the tree replacement requirement.

The applicant initially proposed to remove 178 trees, and in their most recent submission, the removal of trees has increased to 195. The STC asked the applicant if there were no alternative layouts possible that would result in fewer than 178 trees, now 195 trees to be removed, and again in the applicant's response letter dated September 29th their only response was, "the tree protection fence has been adjusted to provide full protection of the forested areas to remain."

The requirements of SALDO do not seem to be addressed in terms of alternative layouts and we would like the applicant to explain what alternative layouts, if any, were considered to minimize the removal of 52% of the existing trees.

In terms of the replacement trees and Evergreen trees, we appreciate that the applicant diversified the number of tree species for replacement of deciduous trees, our local trees are under increasing pressure from invasive pests and diseases, and our arborist recommends planting no more than 10% of any one species.

In the latest plan, the deciduous trees are primarily diversified; however, with the Evergreen trees, there is a total of approximately 186, 73 of them Serbian Spruce, 70 are Arborvitae and the remaining are American Holly. The Arborist recommends the applicant diversify the Evergreen trees and suggested adding Picea abies Norway Spruce, Magnolia Grandiflora or additional Serbian Spruce. White Pines were proposed and they do not do well in our climate, so the arborist suggested planting a mix of Evergreen species.

Mr. Anderson apologized for the lack of response and our intent is not to disregard the Shade Tree Commission. We cataloged all the trees in accordance with the ordinance and surveyed trees prior to any type of removal. We can resurvey the area to make sure we are capturing all the trees that were removed as well as any additional trees to be in compliance with tree replacement.

Once that has been completed, we will meet with the STC and present our details and include the applicant's landscape architect to confirm that the species will be modified and diversified to address the concerns made by the STC.

Mr. Brown said this is the preliminary stage, and if this application moves to final stage, he will hold a higher bar for the applicant in a good faith effort to preserve a greater number of existing trees to the extent possible as well as hold a higher standard when considering final approval.

Mr. Weatherly questioned whether the plan as submitted complies with SALDO or any ordinances regarding trees on this project.

Mr. Narcowich replied he would defer to the Township Solicitor to review the section of the SALDO regarding the requirement that "there will be no improvements or development and no subdivision until there is an approved plan," and whether a tree clearing would be an act of improvement.

Mr. Baker said often when a tree company clears a site, once they get going, no tree has a chance. The larger trees are valuable as they can be milled and the wood sold, so there should be a process to preserve those trees as they take years to grow back.

Mr. Brown agreed there should be a process prior to any tree removal.

Ms. Gallagher said when we reached out to staff from Code Enforcement, they replied that unless there is already an official application on file, then it is considered cutting trees on private property. The STC has been working for over five years to try to get a tree ordinance passed that would address it.

The applicant signed the original application in May 2024 and submitted it to the Township in August 2024, and that is when some of the cutting was happening, so there was a land development application in process.

Mr. Brown asked for any public comment.

Lora Lehmann, resident, expressed concern about the cutting of trees and we need to get the legislation changed, so it is more specific, and if Cornerstone has no knowledge or involvement, then someone else should be held responsible. Also, she does not understand why the applicant is not going before the Zoning Hearing Board regarding the cut and fill slopes requirement.

Mr. Brown said there is nothing that needs Zoning Hearing Board approval. It is simply subject to the Planning Commission's consideration of a waiver request.

Mr. Brown made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to recommend preliminary approval subject to the condition that there is a resolution made by the applicant to the comments made in the Fire Marshal's review letter and they should work with him directly. The applicant should show a good faith effort to work with the Shade Tree Commission and the arborist to discuss specifics including specie recommendations; and a good faith effort to explore existing trees in the clear-cutting area that could be preserved, and resurveying would be advisable.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Recording Secretary