

The stated meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Abington was held on Tuesday, October 28, 2025 via webinar and in-person at the Township Administration Building, Abington, PA, with Chairman Nicholas Brown presiding.

CALL TO ORDER: 7:30 p.m.

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

Excused: WEATHERLY

Also Present: Township Engineer Lee
County Planner Narcowich

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Baker made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. DiCello to approve the minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting of August 26, 2025.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

PRESENTATION: None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Review LD-25-03 Noble Town Center South Parking Improvements – Preliminary/Final Land Development Plans:

Mr. Brown said the applicant is proposing to redevelop an approximate 36,289 sq. ft. portion of the existing southern parking lot that will result in a decrease in impervious area of approximately 860 sq. ft. Other improvements associated with this redevelopment include new curbing, sidewalks, parking lot planting islands, a retaining wall, stormwater inlets, and a subsurface stormwater management basin. The applicant is not requesting any variances as part of this land development application.

Mr. Gregg Adelman, Attorney representing the applicant, said we propose a parking lot improvement minor land development at the existing Noble Town Center. The owner of the shopping center is moving forward with getting some high-quality tenants, so there has been a request to level out and extend the southside parking lot. There is a change in grade in the tiered parking area, and the lower tier is not usable for tenants on that side of the building, so we propose improving that area. The applicant has requested waivers and received review letters from the Township consultants.

Mr. Brian Conlon, PE, representing the applicant, presented the site plan showing the overall proposed parking area that will be raised approximately seven feet. Currently, there are three tenants, and we will carve it up into four with one common corridor area that leads to the north side of the property for loading.

Near the loading dock, we are proposing all head-in parking along the frontage where the existing parking is located and continue that row, similar to what is there today. There will be a retaining wall that will hold back the earth as we raise the property seven feet.

We will add three spaces to the overall parking area and decrease impervious coverage by approximately 800 sq. ft. The grading and drainage plan shows the new area where we are raising the parking lot with a subsurface stormwater basin. We are decreasing impervious coverage, and regulations require reductions in rates and recharge volume that will be accommodated by the subsurface infiltration basin.

Most of the utilities are there, but we are improving with new sanitary sewer laterals for the new tenants that will be connected to existing mains in the parking lot.

The applicant will comply with all comments as listed in the Township Engineer's review letter and the landscaping plan will be provided in accordance with the ordinance. The following two waivers requested are from Section 146-11. B. (7) – Existing Features Plan - Utilities and Section 146-28. A. - Off-Street Parking Areas. The ordinance requires 10X20 spaces and we propose 10X18, which exists today.

Mr. Brown asked about the landscaping plan.

Mr. Conlon replied two trees will be removed when we raise the parking lot and all necessary trees and shrubbery will be planted in the new area to meet the requirements. The buffer will be just below the retaining wall to buffer from the new parking lot. Tree species will be provided on the landscape plan and submitted to the Township.

Mr. Brown clarified that this is a preliminary/final land development application. Is that correct?

Mr. Conlon replied yes.

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

Mr. DiCello asked about the materials for the retaining wall.

Mr. Conlon replied we do not have a final design; however, it will be a block-style wall and aesthetically pleasing. There will be no signage on the wall.

Mr. Baker clarified that the retaining wall will not be higher than 6 feet. Is that correct?

Mr. Conlon replied yes. We are looking at alternatives for grading to make it less than 6 feet.

Mr. Baker questioned whether the common area is public or just for the tenants.

Mr. Conlon replied it is for the tenants.

Mr. Brown noted the Fire Marshal made a comment about relocating the fire connection.

Mr. Conlon replied we will coordinate that with the Fire Marshal. Also, we will comply with the EACs review letter regarding the lighting.

Mr. Narcowich questioned whether the planting island will be landscaped, and will there be shrubs on the outside of the wall?

Mr. Conlon replied yes, we will be landscaping the planting islands within the improved parking area, and we will provide the necessary buffer outside of the wall.

Mr. Narcowich noted street trees are required along the access drives.

Mr. Conlon replied we are not altering the access drive as part of this application; however, we are extending the sidewalk, and we may be able to add a street tree.

Mr. Narcowich asked about a crosswalk going over to the cut-thru to the median strip to make it easier for people to walk.

Mr. Conlon replied we intend to do that as well.

Ms. Allison Lee asked the applicant to address the traffic comment as listed in her review letter.

Mr. Conlon replied we are not changing the shopping center as it is today, so there will be zero change in the traffic from an analysis standpoint, and we will follow up. Regarding a traffic safety evaluation, TPD is the Township's traffic engineer, and they will prepare a review that will be addressed.

Mr. Brown asked for any public comment.

Lora Lehmann, resident, questioned whether this parking lot will allow an exit from the back driveway of the Baederwood property.

Mr. Conlon replied this project has no impact on the Baederwood property as our parking lot is in a different location.

Mr. Baker made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Brown to recommend approval of the application including the two waiver requests subject to the applicant providing a satisfactory approved landscape plan.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Mr. Brown said we will discuss the next two items and vote on them separately.

An ordinance of Abington Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, pursuant to Article V of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code amending the Abington Township Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance of 1991 to amend Section 146-51 to permit a waiver from the Land Development Plan approval process for a partial nonconforming structure restoration.

An ordinance of Abington Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, pursuant to Article VI the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code amending the Abington Township Zoning Ordinance of 2017 to amend Section 1904 to allow partial reconstruction of a nonconforming building or structure for a permitted use.

Zoning Ordinance Amendment –

Solicitor Heleniak said due to the recent catastrophic event that caused damage to a nonconforming property, the Township has evaluated the existing regulations for nonconforming properties and identified a weakness in both the zoning code and SALDO to support conforming uses that may be housed in a nonconforming structure. These are wide-ranging amendments that apply to all properties that qualify throughout the Township.

This amendment takes existing Section 1904 of the zoning ordinance and breaks it into two sections delineating the regulations that would apply to a nonconforming structure that houses a

conforming use versus a nonconforming use that houses a nonconforming structure. It will be more generous in supporting those conforming uses.

If the property is destroyed by some type of catastrophic event and it is less than 50% of the replacement value, then that permits the reconstruction. When it is a conforming use in a nonconforming structure, we then recognize that the zoning has already contemplated that this use is appropriate in this location, and to allow it to continue, there is a greater allowance to permit the reconstruction. If the structure is damaged more than 50% of the replacement value, it permits reconstruction, but recognizing that it is still a nonconforming structure, it only permits reconstruction of 75% of the gross floor area that existed prior to the catastrophic event.

SALDO Ordinance Amendment –

Solicitor Heleniak said this is a discretionary process entrusted to the Board of Commissioners to determine whether the process is appropriate for a particular project. This contemplates a property that has already been developed and the restoration of a structure to 75% or less of its existing gross floor area. Improvements contemplated and reviewed in the land development process such as parking, stormwater, traffic circulation, etc., do not need to be reviewed to the extent that a green field development would need to be reviewed, but it provides an option for land development in the instance that they are restoring the use within these parameters.

It is more restrictive than the Township's general waiver process. The partial nonconforming structure restoration has seven criteria that must be satisfied for the Board of Commissioners to consider allowing that waiver of land development approval. It will comply with the applicable setbacks and comply with impervious coverage, building coverage and green area requirements and all buildings and accessory structures will comply with applicable building height requirements.

The reconstructed building and the associated reconstructed improvements will comply with current stormwater management regulations. The reconstruction of the building will comply with current lighting requirements and with all applicable building codes. The new building will not modify the access point to public roads or increase the peak hour traffic volumes generated by the use.

All items normally reviewed in the full land development process, most importantly stormwater, traffic circulation, access roads, and trip generation must be compliant and remain the same or better in order for this process to be utilized. If any of the items do not meet the satisfaction of the Board of Commissioners or any further study needs to be done, the Board of Commissioners can elect not to grant the waiver for this process and move it to the full land development process.

Mr. Brown clarified that in terms of the process, a waiver request will still be reviewed by the Township Engineer as well as by the Planning Commission. Is that correct?

Solicitor Heleniak replied yes, it is still a public process and will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners.

Mr. Baker asked who determines the appraised replacement value, which could be the variable to determine whether it meets the 50%.

Solicitor Heleniak replied there are FEMA regulations pertaining to catastrophic events. The applicant would need to prove that their appraised value meets the threshold and there is a process to verify it.

Mr. Brown asked for any public comment.

A resident expressed concern that when the two ordinances are read together, it can be interpreted to not require changes to existing nonconforming outlets, so the language should be tightened up.

Solicitor Heleniak explained that the specific criteria in the partial nonconforming structure restoration have seven points that the reconstruction building must comply with to be eligible for the waiver.

A resident urged the Planning Commission to review it carefully as it pertains to the environment.

Lora Lehmann, resident, agreed that this needs more review, and why didn't it have to go to the Comprehensive Plan Consistency Committee?

Solicitor Heleniak replied there is no requirement by law that it needs to go before the Comprehensive Plan Consistency Committee.

Mr. Brown made a MOTION, seconded by Mr. Baker to recommend approval of the SALDO revision.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

Mr. Brown made a MOTION, seconded by Ms. Newell to recommend approval of the Zoning Ordinance revision.

MOTION was ADOPTED 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Vile, Recording Secretary