

The regular meeting of the Planning Commission of the Township of Upper St. Clair, duly advertised and posted in accordance with the law, was called to order by the Chairman at 7:31 PM, Thursday, October 16, 2025, in the Township Municipal Building Board of Commissioners' Meeting Room, located at 1820 McLaughlin Run Road, Upper St. Clair, PA 15241.

PRESENT: Yvonne Piecknick
Jeffrey Krantz
Adam McGurk
Robin Weissert
Jake Polochak
David Sirota
David Wade
Adam Benigni, Director of Planning and Community Development
Ashley Puchalski, on behalf of the Township Attorney
Steven Simonetti, Planning and Zoning Assistant
Callie Munch, Community Development Administrative Assistant

ABSENT: None

PUBLIC: Approximately 20 attendees

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE INFORMATIONAL AND REGULAR MEETINGS OF SEPTEMBER 18, 2025.

On motion by Mr. Sirota, seconded by Mr. Krantz, carried by a voice vote, 7 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent, the approval of the minutes from September 18, 2025 were approved as written.

OLD BUSINESS

PLC25-1302 – RECLASSIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY IDENTIFIED AS BLOCK/LOT 321-G-150 TO THE R-4 ZONING DISTRICT BY ZONING AMENDMENT TO THE TOWNSHIP ZONING MAP

David Lucci, Victor Wessel Associates, stated he was present for the second item on the agenda, PLC25-1303.

Jeff Wilhelm, attorney for Dmitri and Ann Shiry of 1309 Wellington Drive, explained that he was present at the previous month's meeting and presented a letter in regard to the rezoning, adding that the letter outlined that the seller failed to develop the Planned Residential Development and gives the Township the opportunity to decide whether the zoning should be reverted to its original zoning district. He stated that

he believes the developer's application should be denied and the Township should follow the process to rezone the area.

Dmitri Shiry of 1309 Wellington Drive introduced himself and his wife, Ann, and stated that for around 10 years they, along with other neighboring homeowners, have repeatedly made it known to Township staff and representatives that the development of the Thomas property in question would pose significant risks to their properties, safety and well-being. He continued by detailing the issues of both the Thomas and Dawson properties which include flooding, steep slopes, grading, landslide and subsidence issues. Mr. Shiry reiterated that the landowner and previous developers failed to execute the prior approved PRD, known as Tuscany Pointe, and created a hole in the Township's planning code that needs to be filled, and the MPC states that Elected Officials and the public have a right to provide input on how the property should be used. He then presented a petition signed by over 120 residents and businesses requesting that the property in question be zoned an R1 Low-Density Single-Family Residential District. Mr. Shiry stated that the 2025-2035 Comprehensive Plan addresses land in the Township that contain steep slopes and recited the verbiage from page 49 of the Comprehensive Plan:

"Slope plays a critical role in an area's suitability for development. Steep grade changes may render a parcel undevelopable due to instability and/or the prohibited expense associated with making a parcel safe for development. The slopes are classified based on standard considerations for development suitability. Following the Township's zoning ordinances, areas where the slope exceeds 40% are considered to have steep slopes, and development in these areas must follow additional standards. Typical development standards usually allow unrestricted development on slopes of 15% or less. Land with steeper slopes will also have lower water infiltration rates and greater potential for runoff. The addition of impervious surfaces on these areas can create significant stormwater management issues. Slopes may be further compromised by the clearing of trees and other vegetation, which help to stabilize the land. And, based on the slope analysis of Upper St. Clair, which can be seen in the slopes map, slopes in the area are generally within the developable range. Slopes in the township range from 0% to over 50%. The steepest areas are scattered throughout the township, but are generally present in some of the northern, central, and western areas of Upper St. Clair, especially in the upper areas of Upper St. Clair near Chartiers Creek and two of the tributaries, McLaughlin Run Road and Painter's Run Road, we have adopted ordinances to regulate and limit the development of steep slopes."

Mr. Shiry asked that the Planning Commission members listen to its constituents and not reward an individual landowner who allowed the PRD to expire and that the residents are aware that communities need to evolve but the residents' perspectives should be considered.

Mr. Krantz asked if he was opposed to development of the property or opposed to the specific proposed plans. Mr. Shiry responded that they were opposed to the construction of any type of dense and impervious complex such as the types of plans that had been put forward.

Ms. Puchalski, on behalf of Township Solicitor, stated it was the Township's position that the Planning Commission can make a recommendation on the application but not their interpretation of the MPC that the Township itself needs to be the applicant to move forward with the reclassification. She continued by explaining that the Planning Commission members will be asked to take action on either making a positive recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to move forward and schedule a public hearing or make a negative recommendation to not move forward or make a recommendation to the Board to reclassify to a different zoning district.

Justine Cimarolli, member of the Bridgeville Planning Commission and Bridgeville Council, stated that everyone was aware that Bridgeville floods consistently and that they had received a \$5.5 million grant in 2024 to do their first phase of flood mitigation but that it had since been rescinded in January and are back at stage one to figure out how to prevent future flooding. She added that this type of development would affect flooding and access to McLaughlin Park.

Mr. Polochak inquired whether the Planning Commission was allowed to take Bridgeville's concerns into account. Ms. Puchalski agreed.

Teresa Rowles, 1417 Deepwood Drive, stated she was strongly opposed to the proposed townhouse development and that she believes the project would have a detrimental impact on the community. She added that the development is too large for the area and the increase in population density would put strain on existing infrastructure, including sewer systems, increased traffic congestion, and noise pollution (pool, clubhouse, and pickleball courts). She then stated that the high-density development of townhouses was incompatible with the existing single-family homes in the area and not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and diminished the aesthetic appeal and property values. Ms. Rowles explained that her home sits above the area to be developed and that looking down at the rooftops, hearing the noise from the pickleball courts and pools, and smelling the emission from over 150 vehicles would not be conducive to a potential buyer making an offer. She then urged the Planning Commission to rezone the property to low density.

Bob Kohlmyer, 1405 Missouri Avenue (Bridgeville), first thanked the Township for including affected Bridgeville residents to the mailing that was sent out about the application and meeting. He then stated his concern was the quality of life that they currently have with the environment and wildlife behind he and his neighbors' properties as well as the decrease in their property values once the development is in and issues of slopes and grading.

Tom Soroka, 1441 Deepwood Drive, explained that his home was one of the first houses built in the Windgate plan and knew the original builder/developer and said that the property had changed a lot from what was originally planned for it, originally a nursing home and later a low-density housing development. Mr. Soroka added that he believes the reason it changed was that it would probably cost over \$1 million to build a bridge over the creek. He then stated his concerns of additional flooding once the impervious highways, townhouses and driveways are built, the additional traffic that would come from having so many units in a concentrated area and the elevation differences/view from the homes behind the development. He concluded by stating that he believed they wanted to build this high-density development to offset the high cost of building a bridge but that it's not what's best for the community.

Bob Kohlmyer returned to state that he also owns 642 Bank Street (Bridgeville) and mentioned that Bridgeville and Upper St. Clair had worked together to study the traffic at the intersection of Lesnett, Bank, Mayview and Chartiers, adding that a roundabout had been looked into but found to be infeasible. He added that flooding was a major issue in the area and he had assisted residents around Baldwin Street three times prior without the development's added impervious surface. He reiterated Ms. Cimarolli's statement that the funding for their flood grant for retaining wall pumps and culverts had been pulled but they were trying to retrieve some of the money for the culverts.

Mr. Krantz stated that during Mr. Shiry's comment, he mentioned the character of the developer's organization and inquired whether it was something that should be considered, Ms. Puchalski replied that the matter that was being taken into consideration was the zoning reclassification, not the Planned Residential Development, and to focus on only the zoning reclassification.

Mr. Wade inquired whether the end of Deepwood was zoned R4, Mr. Benigni replied that it was a PRD but had a base zoning district of R4 and contained only single-family homes. Discussion was held regarding the zoning districts of the surrounding properties, Wellington Drive/Windsor Court are both in R1 and Missouri Avenue/Crichfield Drive (Bridgeville) are both R1/Single Family. Mr. Wade concluded by stating that it would not be unreasonable to reclassify the subject property as an R1 zoning district but would cause issues for the property owner.

Ms. Puchalski explained that if there was a motion to be made, she would advise to possibly make an unfavorable recommendation on the application and recommended the Township Board of Commissioners take further action to reclassify it to a different zoning district - making it two separate motions.

MOTION: THAT the Planning Commission does not forward a positive recommendation to the Board of Commissioners for the matter of PLC25-0003 – Thomas Property – Planned Residential Development – Tentative Approval.

Motion by Mr. Polochak, seconded by Mr. Krantz, carried by voice vote, 5 Yes, 2 No, 0 Absent. Motion Carries.

Mr. McGurk inquired what the plan was for the property as it was now without any zoning district, and it was unethical to take property rights away from the owner and possibly downzone the property.

Mr. Polochak stated he would like to make a motion to recommend that the property be rezoned as an R1, Mr. McGurk replied that that would be considered downzoning and would be taking rights from the property owner. Mr. Wilhelm then explained that if there was not a zoning district applied to a parcel, it was up to the township to decide what it should be zoned. Mr. Polochak added he believed that a lot could still be done with the property zoned an R1, and that it would be consistent with neighboring properties, and the surrounding homeowners would probably be more open to it.

David Lucci, on behalf of the Developer (Victor Wessel Associates), stated that it was his belief that the property was zoned R4, had a PRD overlay and the first matter was removing the existing PRD. Ms. Puchalski stated that it was the Township's position that the existing PRD expired because no action had ever taken place and now currently the parcel has no zoning district, adding that there was an application to rezone it to its original R4 zoning but that the Planning Commission gave a negative recommendation to the board. She continued by explaining that the Board of Commissioners can still hold a public hearing and make their own decision on the matter.

Mr. Wade stated that there was a motion on the floor to reclassify the parcel as an R1 but that it had not been seconded. He added that he agrees that the property owner has rights and by passing this motion, it would be downzoning the parcel, and it would seem reasonable to table the matter. Discussion was held about tabling the motion.

Mr. Polochak then withdrew his motion to reclassify Block/Lot 321-G-150 as an R1 Low Density Residential District. Mr. Wilhelm added that he believed this was the right decision.

Mr. Wade suggested possibly tabling the matter of reclassifying the property. Mr. Benigni and Ms. Puchalski agreed that a motion did not need to be made to do so. Mr. Benigni stated that the Board of Commissioners can decide to hold a public hearing if not the matter will die and the Planning Commission can make a recommendation at a later meeting with the Township as the applicant. Further discussion ensued regarding the public notice timeline.

Mr. Lucci explained that he received the staff report before the meeting and it states that the staff recommends that the Planning Commission forward a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to reclassify the subject property to the prior base zoning of R4 and RM. Mr. McGurk inquired whether the staff report states "recommend approval or recommend denial", reiterating that it states that the Planning Commission is to take action. Mr. Krantz followed by explaining that the staff makes a recommendation

to the Planning Commission and their role is to make a recommendation to the Board of Commissioners who ultimately make the decision.

Bill Spencer, 328 Hollydale Circle, stated that his father purchased 2 parcels, around 7 acres of land, below the development and there was a small bridge that gave them access to the property, but he has not had any access to the property in years since the bridge was removed, and he was hoping with this development that would change. He added that he has been paying taxes on it for 50 years and would like to invest in the property somehow and has made improvements to it to make it look better. Mr. Spencer then explained that where he lived now, there were around 30-40 acres of wooded land that they were told would never be developed but then was developed years later. He added that change is inevitable and when he heard of this development he thought it to be a good, diverse option for the Township. He concluded by stating that many people want to live in the Township but don't want a single-family home and the development company is professional and would make sure it was engineered to handle floodplain issues.

Tom Meiman, 1409 Deepwood Drive, asked for clarification on whether the motion that was passed was a positive or negative recommendation. It was verified that it was an unfavorable recommendation.

Bill Spencer, 328 Hollydale Circle, asked what zoning district his property on McLaughlin Run Road was classified, Mr. Benigni replied that it was an RM (Restricted Light Industrial). Mr. Spencer stated that earlier in the evening someone had made a comment that none of the surrounding properties were RM or R-LI, but he wanted to clarify that his property is.

MOTION: THAT the Planning Commission table the matter of the zoning reclassification of the property known as Block/Lot 321-G-150 to discuss further and make a recommendation at a future meeting.

Motion by Mr. Wade, seconded by Mr. Sirota, carried by voice vote, 6 Yes, 1 No, 0 Absent. Motion Carries.

NEW BUSINESS

PLC25-1303 – ZONING MAP AMENDMENT FOR REZONING OF PROPERTIES IDENTIFIED AS BLOCK/LOT 254-P-005 AND 321-C-155, LOCATED AT 1400 MCLAUGHLIN RUN ROAD FROM R-LI, LOW INTENSITY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT TO R-4, LOW-RISE MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT.

David Lucci, Victor Wetzel Associates, explained that he was present to rezone the neighboring Dawson property from an R-LI to R4 zoning district. He stated that the property is 14.7 acres and is surrounded by an R1 district at the southern side, R4 to the east and R-LI along McLaughlin Run Road. He then showed the location of the 41.6-acre Thomas property where the proposed Planned Residential Development of

109 townhouses in comparison to the location of the 14.7-acre Dawson property. He showed a map containing where the townhouses would be located throughout both properties, where the cul de sac would end at the Dawson property and existing overhead electric lines and steep slopes. Mr. Lucci then presented an excerpt from the 2025-2035 Comprehensive Plan showing a future land use map, marking the subject properties as residential use and it states future residential uses may include other housing types like townhouses. He then added there are issues with connecting the Dawson property to McLaughlin Run Road so connecting through the Thomas property would be the best option. Mr. Lucci discussed that diversifying housing types will allow the aging population to stay in place and will open the housing market to new buyers who may not be interested in single-family homes, which Upper St. Clair is primarily consisted of.

Mr. Krantz asked if the applicant would still be interested in reclassifying the property to R4 if the Planned Residential Development project on the Thomas property does not get approved, Mr. Lucci replied that he would not see a reason to in that case.

Mr. McGurk inquired whether any modifications would need to be made to the Dawson property for the townhouse project. Mr. Lucci stated he was unsure because a preliminary plan was not submitted. Mr. Benigni replied there were dozens of modifications needed for the Thomas property but couldn't say for certain about the Dawson property as a preliminary plan was not submitted for review but being a continuation of the neighboring property, it would be safe to say there would be. Mr. McGurk stated he didn't believe the plan as presented would be a good fit for the parcel, as it was too dense of a project for the land available. Mr. Lucci retorted that the Comprehensive Plan states the Township is looking for residential use in that area and it mentions townhouses specifically. Mr. McGurk replied that it does not specify the large number of townhouses that are being proposed. Mr. Benigni added that the Comprehensive Plan is a guide for development and not the law. Further discussion was held on whether to move forward or table the matter until more information can be obtained.

Bill Dawson, owner of the vacant land located at 1400 McLaughlin Run Road, stated that he has owned the property in question for 23 years and that he has allowed the Boy Scouts to use the land, allowed neighbors to cut trees for wood and has been good to his neighbors. He stated that he has met with Adam and Matt to possibly make the land into a park but it's not possible due to accessibility issues. Mr. Dawson explained that he owns a lot in Bridgeville, on Missouri Avenue, that he did not sell to the developer for the sake of the residents on that street. He added that the developer agreed to allow him to harvest some of the trees on the property and that he has been in touch with realtors who work with relocating Pittsburgh Penguins players who would like to use the property to build \$2 million homes. Mr. Dawson then

discussed flooding issues in the past, around 6 acres of wild space that would be left after the development and the need for more housing in the Township.

Mr. Wilhelm remarked that he believes the best step forward is to table the matter as this is an integrated project where one project can only move forward with the positive recommendation of another, adding that he has concerns that this motion would be over-zoning the property and stated that there will be a point in time in this process where the character of the developer will be discussed.

Justine Cimarolli, Bridgeville representative, inquired how a property can be approved into a higher density when it's not known how many retention ponds will need to be used. Mr. Benigni replied that since this is a rezoning issue, it's hard to consider land use issues when there is not a development application to review. He added that when a development application is submitted, the Township Engineer and DEP would review it before they move forward with their recommendation.

MOTION: THAT the Planning Commission table PLC25-1303 – Zoning Map Amendment for rezoning of properties identified as Block/Lot 254-P-005 and 321-C-155, located at 1400 McLaughlin Run Road from R-LI, Low Intensity Residential District to R-4 Low-Ride Multifamily Residential District.

Motion by Mr. Krantz, seconded by Mr. Sirota, carried by unanimous voice vote, 7 Yes, 0 No, 0 Absent.

Motion Carries.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and carried unanimously that the meeting be adjourned at approximately 8:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Callie Munch

Community Development Administrative Assistant