

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, August 21, 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
David Wade
Robin Weissert
Jake Polochak
David Sirota
Adam Benigni, Director of Planning and Community Development
Chris Cahillane, on behalf of the Township Attorney
Craig Jubic, on behalf of Township Engineer
Callie Munch, Community Development Administrative Assistant

ABSENT: None

PUBLIC: Approximately 15-20 Attendees

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE INFORMATIONAL AND REGULAR MEETINGS OF MAY 15, 2025.

On motion by Mr. Krantz, seconded by Mr. Sirota, carried by a voice vote, 7 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain, the approval of the minutes from May 15, 2025 were approved as written.

CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE INFORMATIONAL AND REGULAR MEETINGS OF JUNE 19, 2025.

On motion by Mr. Krantz, seconded by Mr. Wade, carried by a voice vote, 7 Yes, 0 No, 0 Abstain, the approval of the minutes from June 19, 2025 were approved as written.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS**PLC25-0003 - THOMAS PROPERTY – PLANNED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – TENTATIVE APPROVAL**

Steven Victor, Victor Wetzel Associates, introduced himself and Leslie Peters, legal counsel, to the Planning Commission members. Mr. Victor stated that he had a presentation on the proposed Planned Residential Development of Townhouses containing 109 units. He then explained that he understands that before the PRD can be approved, as per the MPC, a zoning map amendment of the property must be applied for and approved as the property reverted to the original zoning when the previous PRD expired. He explained that the Township Solicitor had stated that both actions can run concurrently. Mr. Benigni stated that he received the application and checks for the zoning reclassification earlier in the day and that item would be heard at the September 18, 2025 Planning Commission meeting. Mr. Victor replied that he expects that no formal actions would be made on the PRD item and would be continued to the September meeting as well. He added that although they would be requesting to table later in the evening, he would still like to present and receive any comments and concerns about the project.

Mr. Victor began his presentation by showing a site plan of the property, pointing out the size, the portion located in Bridgeville, floodplains, overhead electric lines and topography/elevation changes.

He showed the proposed singular access from McLaughlin Run Road where there would be a safe sight distance and least amount of disturbance to the floodplain area, adding that the project would be done in two phases: phase one to the left and phase two to the right. He then presented the street pattern, all of which would be private streets and the clubhouse location including pickleball courts and a swimming pool which would be located on the Bridgeville parcel.

Mr. Victor then described the two model types of the proposed townhouses, a two-story model and a three-story model and explained the decision for the layout of the townhouse models in relation to the surrounding elevation differences. He then described the sidewalk plan stating the sidewalk would begin at McLaughlin Run Road and come in on one side of the street until it reaches the townhouse area and the sidewalk would be on both sides of the street.

Mr. Victor explained that in Gateway Engineer's review, Mr. Jubic stated it would be appropriate to install turnarounds/cul-de-sacs at the end of the streets for emergency services and that he believes that hammerhead turnarounds would be appropriate for the private streets in the proposed plan and is included in one of the many modifications requested. Additionally, there was discussion of the Townhouse units having both a two-car garage and driveways that would fit two cars, along with scattered visitor parking throughout.

Mr. Victor stated that the distance between the front doors of the townhouses would be an 80' separation. He added that this includes either an 18'/20'/22' cartway, 4' wide sidewalks on both sides and then 25' from the inside of the sidewalk to the front of the building (driveway). He moved on to the grading of the existing topography adding that there is an elevational difference from the backyards of the existing homes above and the first row of townhouses is a 70' drop, adding that the views of the existing homes above would not be obstructed by the development as the townhouses would be 35' tall, half the distance of the slope.

Ms. Piecknick expressed her concern regarding the steep hillside separating the existing houses above and the development and Mr. Victor replied that the steepness of the slope meets the township requirements of a 2:1 slope. He added that the grading activities would be done under a NPDES permit that is regulated by both Allegheny County and the DEP to ensure proper erosion control as well as a geotechnical engineering report that include on-site inspections throughout the process.

Mr. Victor then presented the stormwater retention plan which includes diverting stormwater into detention basins in both the phase 1 and phase 2 areas, adding that he believes there is a small detention facility near the clubhouse area as well. Mr. Wade stated that Mr. Sirota inquired about retaining walls; Mr. Victor answered that there would not be retaining walls included in the project.

Mr. Jubic then asked for clarification whether there would be an additional geotechnical investigation for the other half of the site as well as the intent to review the previous geotechnical report that was done to ensure that it meets the new development standards, Mr. Victor agreed that it would be completed.

Discussion was then held between Mr. Victor and planning commission members regarding the grading plans showing where on the development they would be cutting into the hillside and where they would be filling with dirt to balance, adding details of the locations of natural buffer yards, preservation of existing vegetation, undisturbed woodlands and possible additional trees to be planted.

Mr. Sirota inquired whether the applicant had planned to do a detailed landscaping plan as most of the existing trees have been dead for some time. Mr. Victor asked if a tree survey was required and if it was, they would take an inventory of the site, Mr. Benigni replied that he would have to review the ordinance to see if it was required but if the Planning Commission recommends that a developer conducts a survey, it would be prudent to look into as it was a concern for citizens in the past with this property. Further discussion was held regarding buffering and tree surveys.

Mr. Polochak then inquired about accessing the site during the grading phase and the intent to build a bridge over the creek to move the heavy equipment needed. Mr. Victor explained that before they applied they had to access the site to do infiltration testing so they obtained a stream crossing permit through the DEP and was able to bring an excavator across the stream with their permission, adding that to do a large

scale excavation they would most likely need to build a bridge or culvert and it would have to be one of the first elements to be constructed to allow any construction or emergency vehicles to the site.

Mr. Wade inquired if there were any plans for the proposed bridge, Mr. Victor stated that the plans had not been engineered yet and they have just worked on preliminary engineering at this time, but they may have something to present at the September meeting.

Mr. Jubic inquired if they had any further conversation with DEP regarding what Chapter 105 or other permits are required for the crossing on McLaughlin Run Road, Mr. Victor replied that they had not but acknowledges that it will be a major means of access that will require full DEP and Allegheny County reviews.

Mr. Krantz inquired whether they had had any conversations with the highway department about how traffic would be dealt with. Mr. Victor replied that they had a traffic engineer, Wooster and Associates, conduct a study that was submitted to the township. He explained the HOP permitting process and how they are about 2 years away from starting construction so starting the HOP process now would not be required but that the traffic engineers have looked at the site distance stating that it meets PennDOT criteria.

Mr. Victor moved on to list a few of the requested PRD modifications needed for the development including:

1. Minimum one-acre lot (Proposed .20 acres)
2. Minimum lot width of 110' (Proposed 88' feet)
3. Perimeter setback of 150' for multifamily (Proposed varies per lot)

He showed that some of the units would encroach the 150' perimeter setback by only around 10'. Ms. Weissert inquired why the site couldn't be shifted 10' to stay in the required setback even if it meant losing a couple units of the townhouses, Mr. Victor explained that shifting the project wouldn't coincide with the grading of the property and could possibly cost losing around 7-9 units. Ms. Weissert stated that she just wondered if any other configurations were considered. Mr. Krantz inquired about an "open space" shown on the plans and asked if additional units could be built there. Mr. Victor replied that it wouldn't be possible due to some grading being done in that area.

Mr. Polochak then stated that there hadn't been any discussion regarding lighting in any of the documents and with potentially hundreds of new residents moving into that small area, he asked what the plan was to make sure that existing residents in the area were not disturbed. Mr. Victor explained there would be a post lamp in either the front yard of every unit or every other unit. The post lamp is high, would have a shield on it and would be downward casting, he added that it would also be screened out by the height of

the 35' tall townhouses. He also stated that there are no streetlights proposed in the plan other than potentially at the entrance at McLaughlin Run Road or at the intersection separating the two phases.

Mr. Krantz asked about the lighting at the proposed pickleball courts, community pool, and parking lot located at the central clubhouse. Mr. Victor replied that he couldn't answer that now but would investigate it, adding that typically the pickleball courts and pools have not been lit because they are used during the seasons when there is natural light until around 8:30-9:00 PM.

Discussion was then held about noise suppression for the pickleball courts and whether a noise study would be done, Mr. Benigni added that the St. Clair Country Club had recently moved their paddle courts and did multiple noise studies to confirm that there would not be any excessive noises that would disturb neighboring properties, and the results were then presented to the Planning Commission members.

Mr. Benigni then asked Mr. Victor if he had spoken with a representative for Bridgeville to discuss the zoning of the portion of the project that is in their municipality because their current code does not allow for a community center in the current zoning district. Mr. Victor stated they had not, and Mr. Benigni suggested that he reach out to Bridgeville and see what needed to be done.

Mr. Victor went on to discuss the three different street widths/cartways throughout the plan (widths of 22', 20', 18') adding that the entrance road coming across the bridge to the first intersection would be 22', the roadway going up into phase one would be 20' (with an 80' diameter cul-de-sac), phase two would be a 20' road up to the final T intersection, and then within all of the other minor streets within that area, it would be 18'. Mr. Wade stated he was concerned with the road widths as, even with designated visitor parking, people will still park along the road, and it would be impossible for emergency vehicles to get through.

Mr. Benigni stated in Chapter 99 in the Township code, public roads require a 50' right-of-way which includes a 26' wide roadway (13' per lane of traffic) and two 13' township rights-of-way which measure from the curb, sidewalk and then projecting into the yard. Mr. Victor replied that they have a 70' wide zone that includes the street, sidewalks and utility easements and 80' between buildings and believes that they can easily comply. He then added they considered narrower streets for the traffic calming as people normally don't speed on tight roads.

Mr. Krantz inquired if there had been any pre-marketing to see if the development would be sellable and if they had any thought to the price points of the proposed townhouses. Mr. Victor answered that there was found to be a demand in the area and although the price points were not established, he wouldn't be surprised if they were \$400,000-\$500,000 per unit.

Mr. Wade asked if this was a land lease or a sale contingent on the approval of the development from Mr. Thomas. Mr. Victor replied that the purchase agreement was provided to the township that states that this

would be a purchase and upon receiving all local and state approvals, a closing will take place, and a land development would occur.

Mr. Sirota reiterated that it was said earlier that it would probably take 2 years to begin construction then asked how long construction of both phases would take as it would cause disruption to the existing neighboring properties to which Mr. Victor said he believed 2 ½ years would be a conservative guess.

Mr. Krantz then asked to hear more about the water retention plan. Mr. Victor explained there are three water sources to consider: McLaughlin Run stream, the upstream stormwater management facility that comes through a drainage way and rainwater picked up in the streets, put into the storm sewers and taken to a detention facility. He then explained the DEP's requirements of stormwater infiltration and discharge and that there would be catch basins and storm drains located along the high side to gather the water. Discussion was held about a third creek that runs behind the property and Mr. Jubic referred to comment 16 of the Stormwater Management comments on the Gateway Engineer's review letter regarding the riparian buffers of McLaughlin Run and other existing watercourses onsite.

Mr. Victor advised the members of the Planning Commission that between application and the current meeting, the applicant acquired the rights to purchase the neighboring Dawson property which would extend the cul-de-sac another 600' and add 43 more units to the development, adding that this would be contingent on that property to also be rezoned. Discussion was held about the current zoning of the Dawson property, the lack of access to the existing dwelling on the lot, and the options of a possible second access point from McLaughlin Run Road. Mr. Benigni shared his concerns about the overall density but suggested that they make application for the rezoning of the Dawson property if the applicant would like to receive comments on the matter. Mr. Wade, Mr. McGurk and Mr. Cahillane agreed.

Mr. Sirota asked for more information regarding the 70' hillside drop between Deep Wood Drive and the proposed development, more specifically the finding that it would not affect the line of sight for the existing neighbors above. Mr. Victor replied that he could prepare a series of cross sections. Discussion was held by Mr. Wade and Mr. Victor about the elevations, the natural buffering of the existing trees, the visibility through the existing trees, and the possibility of adding more trees for buffering.

Ms. Piecknick then invited anyone from the audience to make public comments.

Tom Meiman, 1409 Deep Wood Drive, inquired about the stormwater detention pond on the south edge of the drawing and asked if the new development would include access to it. Mr. Victor replied that access to the detention facilities would be solely from the subject property and that there is currently an access off of the cul-de-sac that comes through the property to the other facility. Discussion was then held further between Mr. Meiman, Mr. Victor, and Mr. Benigni.

Mr. Meiman then asked what the next steps of the process are. Mr. Benigni explained that the Township Solicitor has been researching several cases, and the applicant will need to go through the zoning reclassification/amendment process and have that approved before they can move forward with the application for the development. He added that the applicant can ask for a recommendation for approval to the Township Board of Commissioners without the zoning reclassification but that since the property is not zoned R4 for a PRD, it would not be approved, thus the reclassification process must be completed first. Mr. Benigni then stated that the September 18, 2025 Planning Commission meeting agenda will include the zoning reclassification and there will be a public comment portion for residents to make their concerns known and that residents are invited to attend every meeting.

Mr. Meiman inquired whether any of the townhouses would have utility compressors on the roofs, Mr. Victor stated they would not.

Mr. Wade asked Mr. Benigni to give rough estimate of the upcoming meeting schedule, to which Mr. Benigni stated that the matter would most likely be tabled at this meeting and if the Planning Commission members recommend approval for the zoning reclassification at the September 18, 2025 meeting, then the advertising process, required by state law, will then begin. He continued by explaining that the Township would set a public hearing date in front of the Board of Commissioners which is scheduled two months ahead because it must be advertised in the newspaper for 30 straight days which would take the Public Hearing date to the first meeting in December. The second Public Hearing date would be the first meeting in January. The Planning Commission would then make their recommendation for the zoning reclassification at the Planning meeting held on the 3rd Thursday of January. If the Planning Commission members also recommend to approve the Planned Residential Development at the January meeting, the Public Hearings would be held at the Board of Commissioners meetings in March 2026 and April 2026 as long as the matter isn't tabled at any time, adding this was the best case scenario.

Mr. Wade then explained the differences of a "rezoning" and a "zoning reclassification" and reiterated that the subject property would be a reclassification as per the PA Municipalities Planning Code ("MPC").

Elizabeth Soroka, 1441 Deep Wood Drive, explained to the Planning Commission members that her street recently had two gas leaks and had flags placed in their yards for over two months, the residents did not know what they were for. The residents had then heard it was Comcast who would be putting lines through several of the marked homes, adding that some residents received the message and some did not. She stated she had wondered if the Township had known the Comcast lines were being installed, as the contractors showed up without notification to begin installation. She added that there was then a gas leak which led to a neighbor losing part of their new concrete driveway and 3-5 other neighbors had their lawns

torn up. Ms. Soroka then stated that the gas company arrived and fixed the leak in hours but not long after the gas line was struck again which led to yards being torn up once again and that the gas company had not been communicative with the residents. Mr. Polochak stated that they must stay at task for the meeting but would listen to her concerns further after the matter at hand had been discussed entirely.

Jim Jenkins, 1880 Painters Run Road, voiced his concerns with the flooding in and around Upper St. Clair in the past due to developments and inquired whether the applicant could even acquire the sewer taps for this project (townhouses, clubhouse and swimming pool) as there is extensive sanitary sewer problems in the McLaughlin Run watershed.

He then stated that he thought the 150' perimeter setback was a positive thing as he believes it's not necessary to develop all empty land and it's good to have green space. He added that a tree inventory should be completed as there have been many fallen trees and if there are to be 109 townhouses being built in the area, there will probably be children playing around them and for safety reasons, any dead trees should be removed.

Mr. Jenkins then voiced his concerns about emergency vehicles being able to maneuver around 18' roadways, Mr. Benigni replied that the Applicant's traffic engineer did an auto-turn analysis using a garbage truck as an example, but the Township requires that it's longest fire truck (41' long) be used for the analysis so the applicant will need to have that updated.

Mr. Jenkins asked if there had been any core sampling done on the property as the Applicant earlier stated that there is an open-source mineshaft located in the basement of the house on the Dawson property. He then added that Bethel Park School District is currently dealing with a \$3 million dollar issue at the site of their new school due to pyrite. Mr. Jenkins ended his public comment by adding that pickleball does omit a lot of noise and there have been many complaints due to the courts located in Bethel Park.

Jeff Wilhelm, attorney for Ann and Dmitri Shiry, 1309 Wellington Drive, stated that he believes that the project would be considered a "rezoning" and not a "reclassification" as stated in earlier parts of the meeting. He stated that a reclassification, which is what is in 53-1070-711e, which is what the solicitor is referring to also must be read within 10-605, which is classification zoning districts. He added that there is a "hole" and that hole doesn't need to revert to an R4, it can revert to whatever the township decides. Mr. Wilhelm stated that if the township wanted to put it as ROI, like the other property, they would be able to and if the township wanted to give the residents some relief from the density and intensity, they are able to make those considerations. He continued by explaining that it is considered new zoning, there

is no reliance on the “hole” and the township is allowed to rezone this, stating that it is not a reversion or an overlay district.

Mr. Willheim then stated that it is an amendment of the township zoning code pursuant to Article 6 that the map amendment must be sent to Allegheny County and county has 30 days for any amendments. Mr. Benigni replied that he had just received the map amendment application at 3:30 PM before the meeting and had not had a chance to send it to Allegheny County for their review. Mr. Willheim reiterated that the county had 30 days to review and there were not 30 days between the current August 21, 2025 meeting and the following meeting of September 18, 2025.

Mr. Willheim ended his public comment by stating that a PRD is a unique zoning tool under the MPC and is not the plan of the developer, adding that when a PRD is enacted, it is essentially an act of the community and that resident stakeholders have just as much say as the developer or anybody else in that PRD. He then explained that he believes that the residents’ opinions should be heard as to what the appropriate zoning for that parcel ought to be as Mr. Thomas failed to deliver on the previous Planned Residential Development.

Mr. Cahillane explained that he believes it was the Applicant’s intention to request to table the matter and that a formal letter would be signed and returned to the Township.

MOTION: THAT the Planning Commission accepts the applicant’s request to table PLC25-0003 – Thomas Property – Planned Residential Development – Tentative Approval until the September 18th, 2025 meeting.

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

Mr. Victor added that based on the timeline that Mr. Benigni has outlined, his firm will not have time to do the Planned Residential Development Public Hearing within the allowed 60-day period and will work with Mr. Benigni to fine-tune that timeline including granting an extension well in advance of the September meeting and any other extensions needed for the PRD process, stating that there is no timeline set for the rezoning/reclassification process therefore extensions will not need to be granted.

Mr. Polochak then invited Ms. Soroka back to the podium to address her concerns regarding the utility work on Deep Wood Drive. Discussion was held at length regarding the work that had been done, the extent of the Township’s knowledge of the work and the rights of the PUC. Mr. Benigni stated he would get in touch with the Public Works department for more information and would reach out.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and carried unanimously that the meeting be adjourned at approximately 9:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Callie Munch

Community Development Administrative Assistant