

**HELLAM TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES OF MARCH 12, 2026**

Chairman Devin Winand called the meeting of the Hellam Township Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m., beginning the proceedings with the Pledge of Allegiance. In attendance were Chairman Winand, Vice Chair John Kokiko, and Commissioners Robert Searer, Steven Fetrow, Rick Cooper, and Mike Shillott, along with Alternate Adrienne Johnson (via Zoom). Representing Township staff were Manager Corina Mann, Zoning Officer Jason Test, and Code Compliance Field Coordinator Shane Coolbaugh.

Following the call to order, the floor was opened for public comment; no comments were offered regarding matters outside of the scheduled agenda.

Approval of Minutes

The Commission considered the minutes of the February 26, 2026 meeting. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

Z-2026-04

Under new business, the Commission first reviewed Zoning Case Z-2026-04 for the property located at 500 Ridgeway Drive (UPI #31-02-207), involving a variance request for the installation of a residential pool and associated improvements. The property was described as a corner lot with two front yard areas, creating constraints for placement of the proposed improvements. The applicant indicated that the design was intended to comply with ordinance requirements to the extent possible while maintaining privacy. The Commission discussed whether the location could be considered differently due to the dual frontage condition.

Significant discussion focused on stormwater management and the potential impact on adjacent properties. Concerns were raised regarding increased impervious coverage associated with the pool and the proximity of improvements to neighboring properties. It was noted that the lot is relatively small, with approximately 30% lot coverage and no existing stormwater mitigation measures. The applicant indicated that existing roof drainage is managed by gutters and acknowledged the need for additional stormwater controls. The possibility of incorporating infiltration systems, such as a subsurface pit or French drain, was discussed, and it was noted that multiple systems could be utilized if necessary. The Zoning Officer clarified that adequate stormwater management would be required during the permitting process and that the project could not proceed without it.

Additional discussion addressed site layout, including the retention of an existing six-foot wooden fence, removal of excavated material from the property, and access to the rear yard. A neighboring property owner expressed support for the proposal. While some concern was expressed regarding the extent of setback relief requested, other members noted that the unique configuration of the corner lot created a hardship that supported consideration of the variance.

Following discussion, Commissioner Shillott made a motion to recommend approval of the variance, contingent upon submission of a stormwater management plan and the reinstallation or maintenance of the wooden fence. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Searer and carried unanimously.

Z-2026-01 and Z-2026-01(A)

The Commission then reviewed Zoning Cases Z-2026-01 and Z-2026-01(A) for the property located at 599 West Market Street (UPI #31-06-01-A0), involving a conditional use application and variance request to repurpose an existing bank drive-through facility into a Dunkin' Donuts. The applicant explained that the site is already designed for drive-through use and that only minor façade changes and interior modifications are proposed. It was noted that most ordinance requirements are met, with the exception of requested relief related to site layout.

Discussion focused on the proximity of the drive-through order station to nearby residential properties and the potential for noise impacts, particularly during extended hours of operation compared to the previous bank use. Members raised concerns about customer noise, speaker volume, and headlights from vehicles potentially affecting neighboring homes. The applicant indicated that the existing building layout limited relocation options but stated that the design prioritizes efficiency, with the majority of business expected to occur through the drive-through. The Commission also discussed potential congestion from mobile orders and stacking capacity within the drive-through lane.

Additional concerns were raised regarding traffic circulation, including the ability to safely exit the site and potential restrictions or requirements from PennDOT. Suggestions included limiting certain turning movements or installing physical controls if required. Screening and buffering options, including fencing and landscaping, were discussed as potential methods to mitigate noise and visual impacts. The presence of other nearby commercial uses with extended hours was also noted as part of the broader context.

Following discussion, a motion was made by Commissioner Shillott and seconded by Commissioner Searer to recommend approval of the conditional use, subject to the condition that the applicant further evaluate and address noise mitigation measures related to the drive-through order station. The motion carried with one opposing vote by Alternate Commissioner Johnson.

A separate motion was then made by Vice Chair Kokiko and seconded by Commissioner Shillott to recommend approval of the associated variance request. That motion also carried with one opposing vote by Alternate Commissioner Johnson.

Z-2026-05 and Z-2026-06

The Commission reviewed Zoning Cases Z-2026-05 and Z-2026-06 for a parcel located east of Bairs Mill Road and south of Lincoln Highway (UPI #31-LL-51-E0), involving a conditional use and variance application for a proposed development.

Discussion included the anticipated need for a traffic study during the land development process and the importance of evaluating full build-out conditions rather than individual phases. Stormwater management was identified as a key concern, with acknowledgment that soil conditions and site geology may present challenges requiring further analysis. Potential downstream impacts, particularly along Bairs Mill Road, were also noted.

The Commission discussed the proposed use, including expected activity levels, timing of events, and potential impacts on surrounding roadways. Questions were raised regarding site access,

internal circulation, and the location of the primary entrance. Broader traffic considerations included peak usage periods and comparisons to similar facilities that may require traffic control measures.

Additional discussion focused on landscaping and buffer requirements, including a requested variance related to perimeter buffering. Concerns were raised regarding the intent of buffering along Lincoln Highway as a scenic corridor and whether the requested relief was appropriate. The relationship between buffering, visibility, and stormwater management was also discussed. Further considerations included impervious coverage, phased development, potential transfer of development rights, public transportation accessibility, and parking layout and placement.

Public comment included concerns regarding lighting and stormwater runoff associated with the proposed development.

A motion was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Shillott to recommend approval of Conditional Use Application Z-2026-05 to the Zoning Hearing Board, with the condition that the applicant minimize impervious surface to the greatest extent possible. The motion carried with Alternate Johnson abstaining.

In the matter of Z-2026-06, a motion was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Shillott to recommend denial of the applicant's request for relief from Section 490-44C(1)(f) regarding access point separation along Lincoln Highway. The motion carried by a vote of 4-3, with Commissioners Johnson, Winand and Searer dissenting.

A separate motion was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Shillott to recommend approval for relief from the shared access requirement under Section 490-44C(2)(b). The motion carried by a vote of 4-3, with Commissioners Johnson, Winand and Searer dissenting.

A final motion was made by Commissioner Cooper and seconded by Commissioner Shillott to recommend approval for relief from the shared access easement requirement under Section 490-44C(2)(e). That motion carried unanimously.

Old Business / Ongoing Business

Ongoing business remains unchanged. The Planning Commission yearly report will be prepared for a future meeting. Discussion included a sample warehouse and distribution ordinance, particularly regarding air quality, and the potential need for a standalone ordinance for battery energy storage systems. An update was provided on the open burn ordinance, with further discussion planned for April with relevant officials. Due to limited agenda items and member availability, the second meeting of the month was canceled, with the group set to reconvene at the first April meeting.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Chairman Winand and seconded by Commissioner Cooper to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Jason Test, Zoning Officer