

ROSS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

MONTHLY MEETING

September 16, 2025

The Ross Township Planning Commission Meeting, scheduled for September 16, 2025, was called to order by Chairman Roger Christman at 7:00pm. The meeting was held at the Township Municipal Building.

In attendance were the following Planning Commission Members: Chairman Roger Christman, Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell, Lauri Lapping, Roger Green Jr, David Labar and Frank Piraino Jr.

Planning Commission Member Herb Stecker was absent.

Also in attendance were Attorney Michael Gaul, of the King Spry Law Firm, Planning Commission Solicitor and Township Engineer Russ Kresge, from Keystone Consulting Engineers.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 19, 2025 meeting as presented was made by Roger Green Jr and seconded by Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell. The motion carried unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

Gateway Industrial – Lot Consolidation Plan & Land Development Plan

Marty Smith was present at the meeting as a representative for the applicant and stated they had submitted a request for a time extension. Attorney Gaul stated he had a copy of the request and Mr. Smith then shared an original with Secretary Melissa Monaco to have on file.

Mr. Smith stated they were in receipt of the Township review from their first submission and that they anticipate submitting a revised plan shortly. As they would not be able to complete all items to be before the Board before the 90 day time limit ran out, they were now seeking the time extension.

Attorney Gaul asked if they had received a copy of the Zoning Officer's determination to which Mr. Smith answered he had not. Secretary Melissa Monaco stated she would make a copy for Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith stated they were currently in the process of revising the Plans to address the Township Engineer's comments. Their goal is to have items submitted again by the end of the week to allow for a month of review time from the Township prior to the October meeting.

Chairman Roger Christman asked if there were any questions regarding the Gateway Plan and then asked if there were any motions to recommend acceptance of the extension request. David Labar made a motion to recommend acceptance of the extension request. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell and carried unanimously.

Attorney Gaul confirmed with Secretary Melissa Monaco that the extension request would be added to the October Board of Supervisors Meeting Agenda.

Data Center Zoning Amendment & Solar Commercial Facilities Zoning Amendment

Chairman Roger Christman asked if everyone had a chance to read over the drafted Data Center and Solar Commercial Facility Ordinances. Attorney Gaul stated he had reviewed and spoke with the Township Solicitor about the ordinances. He also stated there was a formal amendment process which would trigger a response deadline and that the Planning Commission was currently only be asked for the review and comment. As there was currently no set timeline, the Planning Commission could opt to take more time to review and discuss at the next meeting.

Attorney Gaul stated the draft Solar Ordinance contained blanks in regards to the Zoning Districts where the centers would be an allowed use. He stated the current Zoning Ordinance already has Solar Farm provisions which would need to be deleted, or revised, to prevent two sets of regulations on the same subject matter. The current zoning regulations would most likely be removed and the new regulations substituted in their place..

Attorney Gaul stated Solar Farms are currently a Special Exception under RR and are permitted in General Commercial under Zoning. With the drafted new ordinance, Solar Farms would no longer be a Special Exception and instead be listed as Conditional Use, but the Zoning Districts where this would be allowed were currently blank. He also stated the drafted ordinances had come from Chestnuthill or Jackson Township.

Chairman Roger Christman asked if there were any comments or if they would prefer to review and comment the following month. Howard Beers was present at the meeting and asked to address an item in regards to the ordinances. He stated he is strongly against allowing Solar Farms or Data Centers in the RR Zone and feels they should only be allowed in Commercial as allowing them in the RR Zone would be in the same areas of local farms. Mr. Beers also asked that since they were in the process of reviewing ordinances for the Solar Farms and Data Centers, did that start a six month moratorium which would not allow for either to come in during the review.

Attorney Gaul stated his understanding would be such a moratorium would only trigger if the validity of the ordinance and amendment had been challenged which would allow for the right to stop applications on the issue until addressed. Township Engineer Russ Kresge stated Mr. Beers may have been thinking of the Pending Ordinance Doctrine to which Attorney Gaul responded that would be once the ordinance had been finalized and was being advertised for adoption, but that they were not yet at that point. He also stated it would be the decision of the Board of Supervisors for when that would be advertised.

Engineer Russ Kresge stated his understanding of the urgency to begin the new ordinance process within the Township was coming from Data Centers having already been approaching individuals to purchase land. Mr. Beers asked when the timeframe started to which Engineer Russ Kresge said it would be up to the Board of Supervisors to have a Public Hearing and decide they were going to adopt the ordinance. Attorney Gaul also stated he had asked the Township Solicitor if this was the start of the formal amendment process, to which he was told it was not. Attorney Gaul stated starting the formal process would also include sending the ordinance to the County for review. Mr. Beers stated he had been at the last Board of Supervisors Meeting where a motion had carried to submit to the County, Regional Group and Planning Commission for review.

Attorney Gaul reiterated a Public Hearing would still need to be held to adopt the ordinance and that the Planning Commission would need to be allowed 30 days to comment, but didn't know if the Planning Commission was ready for comment. No transmittal letter had accompanied the draft ordinances providing guidance on the intended review process. Chairman Roger Christman stated he

had received, and brought back, about the ordinances from CJERP two months prior to be added to the agenda. He stated a letter was sent last month about the two ordinances needing to be reviewed/adopted and that Secretary Melissa Monaco had confirmed with him who the items needed to be sent to for review at CJERP and the County. Chairman Roger Christman then stated the ordinances are documented in other surrounding townships and that it would transferring the ordinances into Ross Township, but that there were blanks present.

Attorney Gaul stated the blanks were only in the Solar Farm ordinance, but that he would have comments from a technical standpoint that would result in revision of the ordinances. If any revisions were made, an ordinance would then need to be sent back to the County Planning Commission, at least, with another 30 day allowance for review before adoption.

Engineer Russ Kresge stated his understanding of the intent was to adopt the current version of the ordinances and then allow for further review, and amendments, at a later time. Chairman Roger Christman stated Polk Township had added adopting the current ordinances to their agenda to have something in place as companies were already coming into the area.

Attorney Gaul asked if the Planning Commission would like to further discuss in an Executive Session or make a comment that evening and then stated he had not had the chance to review as thoroughly as he would have liked within time constraints. It was discussed an Executive Session could take place after the other items on the Meeting Agenda had been addressed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Minor Subdivision – 185 Hemlock Lane

Chairman Roger Christman asked Lauri Lapping to display a copy of the Plan on the board to be visible to the meeting. Attorney Gaul asked if an application had been filed or if was just up for discussion to which it was stated there was an application submitted.

Members of the Planning Commission reviewed the map and items which had been provided. Chairman Roger Christman asked Secretary Melissa Monaco if a check had been received to which she answered all had been paid for. She was also asked to send copies to Engineer Russ Kresge and Attorney Gaul for further review.

A representative for the property owner applicant stated he understood the Planning Commission was only reviewing for acceptance at the meeting with their intent to be for a minor subdivision for which ownership would later be transferred. He stated Mr. Scott and the Five Earth Group own the properties with the intent to create a 30 acre lot.

Engineer Russ Kresge asked about an existing lot that would become an “island” to which the representative answered the lot may be erased at a future date, but would remain a separate property for the time being. Engineer Russ Kresge confirmed the intent was to adjoin the Proposed Lot 2 to the existing Scott properties. The representative stated Proposed Lot 1 and 210 Hemlock Lane would become ownership of the neighboring property which could lead to future lot line consolidations. This would also make Proposed Lot 1 more conforming by adjoining it to a property that had frontage considered standard.

Attorney Gaul asked if Lot 2 would be added to anything to which the representative stated it would at some point be consolidated with the current intent to leave it as is. Engineer Russ Kresge asked about access to Lot 2 and the representative stated the access would still run through the Hemlock property

with access agreements which could be provided. Mr. Beers stated, if not combined now, the lots would not meet the Zoning Code. The representative stated the lots currently do not meet the code as there is no frontage, but that they would do housekeeping to make the tracts conform to Zoning.

Another attending representative for the property owner applicant, offered to show the Planning Commission on the map the location of the current access point for the property. Engineer Russ Kresge stated the properties had access from Mountain Road and then from the private road off Hemlock Lane, but that the adjacent property should be added into the current plan to meet Zoning. The representative stated they could do that as the main goal would be to have them adjoined to protect the Ross Common Property while still allowing access.

Engineer Russ Kresge then stated two of the Tax Parcel ID Numbers were the same, 15.21.47, which is incorrect after looking at GIS and would need to be corrected. Attorney Gaul asked that plan would then be to move the one lot line which he was answered yes. Attorney Gaul then asked about combining other areas into one which they stated they would need to discuss with the attorney for the land transaction first to make sure that would work.

The representative stated he would revise the Plan to eliminate the lot line on the South end, along with addressing the Parcel ID Number, and resubmit for comment. Attorney Gaul then stated the Plan would then only be a Lot Line Adjustment instead of a Subdivision and Engineer Russ Kresge stated it would be a Partial Subdivision, for Lot 2, and then Lot Line Adjustment. Engineer Russ Kresge stated they would have the potential to merge the 2 acre lot into Lot 1 at the same time on the same Plan if they would like to complete all at once. The representative stated it may be the case, but that they would still need to discuss the transaction as a whole with the lawyer first.

Attorney Gaul stated a motion that evening would be to accept the Plan for review as the application had been submitted and paid for.

Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell made a motion to accept the Plan for review. The motion was seconded by Roger Green Jr and carried unanimously.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:

None

PENDING:

None

Chairman Roger Christman asked if there was a motion to enter an Executive Session to further discuss legal matters with the Solicitor.

Lauri Lapping made a motion to enter an Executive Session to discuss legal matters with the Solicitor at 7:33pm. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell and carried unanimously.

At 8:10pm a motion was made by David Labar to return from Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell and carried unanimously.

Chairman Roger Christman asked if there would be a motion to table further discussion of the ordinances for Solar Farms and Data Centers. A motion to table the discussion was made by Vice Chairman Rick Meixsell and seconded by Roger Green Jr. The motion carried unanimously.

Secretary Melissa Monaco asked if the Board of Supervisors would be informed of further review and Attorney Gaul stated an advertised Public Hearing would still need to first be held. Secretary Melissa Monaco stated the ordinances had been sent to the Planning Commission, County Planning Commission and CJERP. It was stated that further reviews and revisions needed to occur, as there were errors within the drafts, along with the rest of the process. Attorney Gaul stated he would be speaking with the Township Solicitor and that the earliest an ordinance could be adopted would be the Supervisor's November Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:13pm. The motion to adjourn was made by David Labar, seconded by Frank Piraino Jr, and carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lizzy Stortz
Temporary Recording Secretary