



Chester County Planning Commission

Workshop Minutes

March 10th, 2025

ADMINISTRATIVE

1. Attendance

- a. Commission: Chairman Shawn Hough, Commissioner Nancy Walley, Commissioner Israel Bunting, Commissioner Todd Love.
- b. Staff: Jeremy Ward, Mike Levister.

2. Approval of Agenda

- a. Motion: none.
- b. Vote: none.

3. Approval of Minutes from 2/28/2025 Meeting

- a. Motion: made by Commissioner Walley to approve the minutes conditional on adding her name on the attendance; seconded by Commissioner Bunting.
- b. Vote: 4-0 to approve.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Discussion of Draft Subdivision Codes

- a. Staff Introduction: Mr. Ward introduced the subject at hand, outlining the projections for growing prominence of subdivisions in the county. He discussed the intensity of regulation in the county. These draft ordinances are based off of the individual talks with the Planning Commission and County Council over the past few weeks, public input from our comprehensive plan.
- b. First item of discussion: prohibiting build-to-rent subdivisions.
 - i. Discussion: Chairman Hough asked for some of the reasoning behind this, as well as about tiny homes. Mr. Ward explained the goals behind the proposal, and that tiny homes, not being prohibited in Chester County, may need to be examined in a separate ordinance. Chairman Hough discussed the expense of lot sizes being prohibitive for tiny homes, and Mr. Ward replied that any change to that could be a whole new zoning

district. Chairman Hough was unsure about where the line should be with the duplex neighborhood model and particularly minor, possibly also medium, subdivisions. Commissioner Bunting also spoke to the importance of allowing rental property, particularly with duplexes and quadplexes. Commissioner Love spoke about some of the problems with build-to-rent that he had seen if the renters let the property go. Commissioner Bunting spoke about corporations buying homes for rentals. Chairman Hough discussed that build-to-rent subdivisions and multi-family housing are very similar, and Mr. Ward explained the technicalities of the definition. Commissioner Love stated that the definition was for upfront rentals, not if someone came in to buy them after the fact, and Mr. Ward stated that that was the way it was written now and that may be something to think about.

- c. Second item of discussion: subdivision classifications.
 - i. Discussion: Mr. Ward explained the classifications. Commissioner Love asked about minor subdivisions for families particularly. Commissioner Bunting also asked purchasing lots and how they become subdivisions. Mr. Ward explained that minor subdivisions are not regulated heavily, primarily being for road access. Chairman Hough gave his strong recommendation that the upper end for minor subdivisions should be higher and should be extended to nine. Mr. Ward stated that gravel streets were one of the trickier issues. Chairman Hough stated that homeowner's associations could take care of that and gave some examples within the county, as well as the cost of paving roads that impacts affordability. Commissioner Love asked about the minor subdivisions again, and Mr. Ward explained about current regulations regarding private gravel streets, family streets, and new regulations about deed restrictions or maintenance agreements. Commissioner Walley asked about a family subdivision of property, and Mr. Ward explained the current requirements for the size of roads. There was more discussion from Commissioner Walley, Chairman Hough, Commissioner Love, and Mr. Ward on minor subdivisions and gravel streets. Commissioner Walley and Chairman Hough both stated that they thought the minor subdivision limits should be increased to nine. Commissioner Love asked more questions about gravel streets and lot sizes, and then there was discussion over County maintenance of streets. Chairman Hough explained the lack of infrastructure, and that it would be cost-prohibitive for developers to build paved roads for small subdivisions. Mr. Ward explained the issues with maintaining private roads.

There was discussion about subdivision bonding, and Mr. Hough explained that he thought bonding was not that expensive and was helpful, being another layer of accountability.

- d. Third item of discussion: waiting period.
 - i. Discussion: Mr. Ward explained the purpose, and Chairman Hough asked about the period for minor subdivisions and individual subdivisions. Mr. Levister gave an example from Chester County's recent history. There was further discussion on interior driveways, internal streets, and minor subdivisions between Mr. Levister, Chairman Hough, Commissioner Love, and Commissioner Walley. Commissioner Walley asked about the lengths of waiting periods, and there was discussion regarding this and adjacent minor subdivisions. Commissioner Walley stated that a subdivision exception to the waiting period for families would be helpful, such as up to five lots. There was discussion about the correct length of time particularly for minor subdivisions, and if a second tier possibly with a numerical value for lots for the waiting period, especially for minor subdivisions, would be helpful with a smaller waiting period. Mr. Ward stated that he would revisit this and get another recommendation for draft #2.
- e. Fourth item of discussion: infrastructure and design standards.
 - i. Mr. Ward gave an overview of the major infrastructure standards changes. The Commission was favorable to the name change requirement. Chairman Hough recommended that sizes be specified for the amenity areas. Chairman Hough asked about required open space and why rural areas would be required to have a larger open space requirement when lot sizes would presumably be bigger. Commissioner Love recommended just leaving it at 20% open space for all subdivisions, or even flipping it so that those within public water and sewer would have 30%. There was then discussion about road frontage buffers, and if they would be external or internal roads. Mr. Ward confirmed that they would be external roads. Commissioner Love expressed his concern that the requirements were too much, and there was discussion on this topic. Waterway buffers were also discussed, particularly allowances with vegetation maintenance, tree cutting, decks, docks, and the size of subdivisions. Chairman Hough particularly agreed on the roof pitches; Commissioner Love liked the diversity of building materials; and Commissioner Walley liked the side and rear-loading requirements. Chairman Hough asked about the requirement to have the siding be primarily vinyl. There was further

discussion about vinyl siding, including Commissioner Love discussing safety hazards he had seen with vinyl siding.

5. Adjourn

- a. Motion: none.
- b. Vote: none.