

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of May 20, 2026**

Present: Craig Melograno, Chairman
Rich Valiga, Vice-Chair
Danielle Porreca
Michael Mrozinski
Craig Adams
Robert Sawyer

Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Jamie Worman, Asst. Township Manager
Ed Brown, Gilmore & Associates
Chad Dixson, Bowman

Absent: Maureen Nunn

Call to Order:

The meeting of the Lower Gwynedd Township Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Minutes: April 15, 2026

A motion was made by Mr. Adams and seconded by Ms. Porreca to approve the minutes of the Lower Gwynedd Township Planning Commission from the meeting of April 15, 2026. The motion carried unanimously.

Waiver of Land Development:

#26-07WLD

Rise Up Towers LLC. – Proposed cell towers

900 N. Bethlehem Pike (Andy's Diner) and 401 Gwynedd Ave. (Penllyn Woods)

Township Assistant Manager, Ms. Jamie Worman presented a memo regarding Rise Up Towers LLC's request for a waiver of land development for two proposed cell tower locations: 900 North Bethlehem Pike (Andy's Diner) and 401 Gwynedd Ave. (Penllyn Woods Park, in the storage area near the community building). She noted that this application has been in progress for an extended period, and that the township recently amended the relevant ordinance earlier in the year. While the ordinance technically requires land development, the physical disturbance at each site is minimal. Township staff supported the waiver, with both sites proceeding through grading and building permit processes instead.

Mr. Brown stated that Gilmore & Associates reviewed both plan sets and noted that most comments were minor. There were two substantive issues identified: a zoning comment referencing a maximum 6-foot fence height was noted to be incorrect, as the telecommunications overlay district permits fences up to 8 feet; and the Andy's Diner plan depicted an outdated site layout that does not reflect current conditions,

including an easement that passes through an overhang of the existing structure, which will require modification.

The PC confirmed that while the two applications involve separate plan sets, separate grading plans, and will result in separate building permits, they are being constructed simultaneously and were reviewed together for convenience. One parcel is township-owned, and the other is privately held. The PC found little basis for extensive deliberation given the limited scope of disturbance at both sites.

A motion was made by Mr. Adams and seconded by Ms. Porreca to recommend approval of the waiver of land development for both applications (900 N. Bethlehem Pike and 401 Gwynedd Ave) to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) based on the following condition:

1. The applicant is to comply with township staff and Gilmore’s review letter dated May 15, 2026.

The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.



Rezone/Text/Map Amendment & Conditional Use
321 Norristown Rd.
BT 309, LLC

#26-06RZ/CU

Applicants’ counsel Ms. Christen Pionzio of Hamburg, Rubin, Mullen, Maxwell & Lupin appeared on behalf of BET Investments, accompanied by the applicant's representative, traffic engineer, civil engineer, and architect. She opened by noting that since the prior month's meeting, the team worked extensively with township staff, revised the proposed ordinance, and reached a position acceptable to the applicant. She advised the PC that the conditional use application and declaration would need to be separately amended and would return at a future meeting; accordingly, the focus of the evening's discussion was limited to the text amendment and map/rezoning amendment.

Ms. Pionzio summarized the key changes reflected in the revised ordinance redline:

- Additional conditional use master plan standards were added at the suggestion of the Montgomery County Planning Commission.
- Drive-through facilities were removed from the permitted bank/financial use.
- Transportation impact study and post-construction transportation impact study requirements were substantially expanded with detailed procedural provisions, including revision triggers and a post-development study protocol.
- Side yard setback increased from 50 feet to 75 feet to mirror the MF-3 standard, as recommended by staff.
- Density was reduced from a base of 10 du/acre (with a bonus to 11.5) to a base of 9.5 du/acre with a workforce housing bonus of 1.5, yielding a maximum of 11 du/acre – a reduction of 14 units from the prior proposal.
- Workforce housing was newly defined as units available only to individuals employed at least 40 hours per week.
- Off-street parking and loading standards were added.

- Outdoor display provisions were clarified to permit Sprouts-style seasonal displays on sidewalks, while prohibiting merchandise for sale in those areas.
- Special conveyancing language was clarified and updated, borrowing from Upper Dublin Township's ordinance, to clearly allow financing and conveyancing to single-purpose entities within the site.

Transportation Impact Study Discussion

The PC reviewed the newly added transportation impact study provisions in detail. Mr. Melograno highlighted a key provision under which the BOS may require a revised study if the development size or type is modified, the opening year is significantly delayed, or proposed mitigations are found to be unimplementable.

The PC also discussed the post-development traffic study requirement, which is triggered when requested by the township after the retail and apartment buildings reach an aggregate occupancy rate of 75%. The study must be submitted at the applicant's sole cost. A critical provision requires that if actual site trip generation exceeds the approved traffic impact study estimate by 10% or more, a revised traffic analysis must be completed for the site access and adjacent signalized intersections, with scope determined by the township traffic engineer.

The applicant's traffic engineer, Mr. Matt Hammond from Traffic Planning and Design (TPD) proposed two textual clarifications to the post-development study section: (1) adding the word "traffic" to clarify that the requesting party is the township traffic engineer; and (2) restructuring the sequencing within the post-development study provisions so that the 90-day deadline to prepare and submit plans to PennDOT runs from the date of agreement on recommended improvements between the township and PennDOT – rather than from mere completion of the study – to account for PennDOT's review turnaround time. Township staff agreed with both clarifications, with the further specification that the agreement should be between the township and PennDOT only, excluding the applicant from that determination.

Mr. Valiga sought clarification on the purpose of the post-development study, asking whether it could be used to limit further development on the property. The traffic engineer confirmed it is intended solely to evaluate whether additional roadway improvements are needed, not to restrict the extent of approved development. He also noted that in his experience, post-development studies have consistently shown that projected trip generation equaled or exceeded actual generation, meaning the initial studies have been conservative.

A resident, Eric Bruno, of Redstone Lane, questioned whether the study's scope adequately accounted for congestion on Bethlehem Pike north and south of the 5 Points intersection. Township Traffic Engineer, Mr. Chad Dixon, clarified that all legs and traffic volumes at the 5 Points intersection are fully included in the study, and that the scope – which exceeds PennDOT's minimum requirements – was specifically expanded at the township's request to include the McKean Road and 5 Points intersections. Mr. Hammond further confirmed that the study accounts for existing traffic, projected background growth, and other anticipated nearby developments.

Front Yard and Side Yard Setbacks

A brief discussion addressed a setback provision applicable to lots adjacent to Route 309. Because Route 309 is a right-of-way, it is technically classified as a front yard under the ordinance, resulting in a 50-foot setback on that frontage – rather than the 75-foot side yard setback applicable to the other side of the property. The PC accepted the explanation that this distinction is a technical consequence of how the ordinance classifies frontages, not a substantive departure from the intent.

Building Height

The PC identified a redundancy in the building height provisions. Item 3 stated that for buildings with a front yard setback of less than 200 feet, the maximum height is 35 feet and 2 stories – applicable to retail and restaurant uses near Norristown Road. Item 4 separately stated that for all other buildings and structures, the maximum height shall be 35 feet and 2 stories. Since the apartment and office buildings at the rear of the site are addressed separately under other height provisions, Item 4 was found to be duplicative of Item 3. The PC agreed to retain Item 3 and strike Item 4.

Parking Structure Orientation

The PC reviewed a provision stating that the exposed portion of any parking structure shall face "only the internal portion of the mixed-use development or Route 309." Mr. Melograno noted that the use of the word "or" could theoretically permit the parking structure to face Norristown Road, if that could be characterized as facing the internal portion of the development. The PC agreed the word "or" should be changed to "and" so that the parking structure must face both the internal portion of the development and Route 309, consistent with the site plan as currently drawn and ensuring it cannot be oriented toward adjacent residential properties.

Site Lighting

The PC reviewed a provision permitting exterior lighting fixtures to exceed the standard 14-foot maximum height – up to 25 feet – when set back at least 300 feet from adjacent residential properties and 200 feet from adjacent non-residential properties. Mr. Brown explained that taller fixtures in central parking areas provide more uniform coverage with fewer standards, reducing visual clutter compared to a proliferation of shorter poles. Additional language regarding lighting plan standards, prepared by the township engineer and previously circulated, was accepted and confirmed for inclusion.

School District Impact

Several residents raised questions about the projected impact on the Wissahickon School District. Ms. Pionzio noted that a fiscal impact and tax revenue analysis had been submitted with the original application and is available on the township website. The study, based on the Rutgers study specific to Pennsylvania, projected approximately 16 school-age children from the development, based on the predominantly 1- and 2-bedroom unit mix. Township Assistant Manager, Ms. Jamie Worman confirmed that the township communicated directly with Wissahickon School District representative Mr. Tim Bricker, who indicated that the school district's experience with similar developments was consistent with BET's projections.

Township Manager, Ms. Mimi Gleason noted that the combination of unit size (1 and 2 bedrooms) and anticipated rent levels (approximately \$2,500-\$3,000/month) strongly suggests the resident profile will skew toward retirees and working professionals rather than families with school-age children. BET's representative further noted that an analogous development in Upper Dublin Township projected 26 students for 400 units and ultimately saw fewer than 19. The fiscal analysis projected a net annual revenue surplus to the school district of \$651,000 from the development. Residents requested confirmation that the school district's review was substantive and not merely cursory, which staff indicated it would follow up on.

Density and Workforce Housing

The PC addressed the proposed density and workforce housing bonus. The base density of 9.5 units/acre may be increased by 1.5 units/acre – to a maximum of 11 units/acre if the applicant provides workforce housing constituting at least 10% of total units. Workforce housing units are reserved for households earning approximately \$80,000-\$100,000 annually, with monthly rents capped at 30% of the area's median household income. The applicant confirmed that these units are offered at cost, with no profit margin, and that the additional market-rate units generated by the bonus help offset the cost of shared amenities throughout the development.

Residents questioned whether the workforce housing bonus was proportionally balanced, noting that the 1.5 units/acre bonus represents a 15.7% increase over the base, while the workforce housing obligation is only 10% of total units. The Chair explained that approximately three-quarters of the bonus density is consumed by the workforce housing units themselves, with only approximately 8 additional market-rate units accruing to the developer. Applicants' counsel declined to remove or restructure the workforce housing component, characterizing it as a central and non-negotiable element of the ordinance.

A resident asked why the baseline density was not set at 8 units/acre, consistent with the Hunt Club Apartments – currently the highest-density residential development in the township. Ms. Pionzio responded that Hunt Club was developed in the 1970's and 1980's, and that contemporary mid-rise apartment development standards generally call for densities of 11-15 units/acre. She referenced prior presentations to the BOS regarding the township's fair share housing obligations under state law.

Residents also raised questions regarding virtual meeting access. Staff acknowledged that the Zoom link had not been included on the printed agenda but was posted on the website for meeting access. Staff committed to including it on future agendas. A recording of the meeting will be available on the township website.

The PC confirmed that the conditional use application and declaration are not part of the current action and will be addressed at a future meeting following amendment of those submissions.

A motion was made by Ms. Porreca and seconded by Mr. Mrozinski to recommend approval of the zoning map and text amendment with the following conditions:

1. The applicant's traffic engineer's minor text clarifications to the transportation impact study section, with the post-development study agreement language to reference the township and PennDOT only be added;
2. Deletion of building height on Item 4 and retention of Item 3;
3. Change of "or" to "and" in the parking structure orientation provision;
4. Inclusion of lighting plan language as requested by the township engineer

The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.



ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30

P.M. Respectfully submitted,

Patty Furber

Patty Furber, Secretary