

June 12, 2025

The East Hopewell Township Planning Commission held its regular meeting at the Municipal Building at 7:30 p.m. Members present were Rob Davis, Mike Kosmicki, Scott Garvey, and Sam Georgieff. Also attending the meeting were solicitor Mike Craley, Sam Craley, Laura Vasold, Todd Warner, Fran Setz, Ed Cockey, John Gray, Terrilynn Mallory, Scott Powell, and Lawrence Vasold.

Laura Vasold, the Township Secretary, announced that the meeting would be recorded and that residents must state their name and address when they speak to the Planning Commission.

Rob Davis opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mike Kosmicki made a motion to approve the agenda. Sam Georgieff seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

Mike Kosmicki made a motion to approve the minutes of May 8, 2025, as read. Scott Garvey seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

The discussion started with a focus on zoning regulations for special event venues and agricultural processing establishments. First, a review of sample definitions for agricultural processing establishments was conducted, which included examples such as milk processing plants, creameries, cheese or yogurt facilities, grain mills, slaughterhouses, canning houses, and wineries. Concerns were raised about defining terms like "enterprise," "slaughterhouse," "grain mill," and "winery" to avoid ambiguity and unintended consequences. The conversation then transitioned to a debate on whether to rename "Agricultural Processing Establishment" to focus solely on "Winery." The group debated whether to retain the broader term, which could encompass other activities such as cheese or yogurt production, or narrow it down to "Winery." Ultimately, the consensus was to simplify and focus on "Winery" as the term, using the Shrewsbury Township ordinance as a model for definitions and regulations. This decision was made to avoid opening the door to other types of agricultural processing establishments that might not align with the township's rural character.

The discussion on establishing regulations for special event venues centered on balancing the township's rural character with the need to manage such venues to prevent nuisances and unintended consequences effectively. Some members questioned whether the township should allow additional special event venues at all, given concerns about noise, traffic, and the impact on neighbors. Others emphasized the importance of having clear regulations in place to control their operation. The group reviewed Section 742 of the township's ordinance, which currently governs "Temporary Outdoor Amusement or Event," and suggested amending it to include "Special Event Venues" rather than creating a new ordinance. This approach would streamline the process and ensure consistency across similar uses.

Key regulations were discussed, including increasing the minimum acreage requirement from five to ten acres to accommodate larger events better and reduce the impact on surrounding properties. Setbacks were also considered, with suggestions to align them with those established for wineries, such as maintaining a 500-foot distance from residential zones. Members supported limiting the number of special events per venue per year, with a suggestion of six events annually, and restricting the duration of each event to no more than four consecutive days. Noise levels and hours of operation were emphasized, with a proposal to align with existing rules for Pine Ridge, such as requiring music to stop by 10 p.m. Parking requirements were discussed, with suggestions to base the number of spaces on the venue's size or the expected number of attendees. Additionally, there was support for requiring the owner or an employee to be present during events to ensure compliance with regulations.

Other considerations included food preparation, with a preference for catered food over on-site preparation, and trash management, such as requiring commercial-sized dumpsters and requiring their removal within 48 hours after the event. Emergency access was also a significant concern, particularly for venues located on narrow or difficult-to-navigate roads. It was suggested that the fire department should approve access and egress to ensure emergency vehicles could reach the site if needed. The group agreed to review Section 742 and propose amendments to address these issues, incorporating relevant elements from other township ordinances, such as those from Shrewsbury and Windsor, to fill gaps in the current regulations. Overall, the discussion aimed to create a framework that would allow special event venues to operate while minimizing their impact on the community.

Next, there was a review of the proposed Alternative Energy Ordinance, which was returned by the York County Planning Commission (YCPC) with a recommendation not to adopt the ordinance as written. The YCPC had reviewed the ordinance in April 2025 but failed to send their feedback directly to the township, which delayed progress. The YCPC provided several comments on the township's draft alternative energy ordinance, highlighting both technical and policy-related concerns. One of their primary recommendations was that the ordinance should be integrated into the main zoning ordinance rather than being kept as a standalone appendix. They argued that incorporating it into the zoning ordinance would provide greater clarity and consistency. However, the township preferred maintaining it as an appendix for ease of reference and organization.

The YCPC also raised questions about whether alternative energy systems, such as solar and wind facilities, should be permitted by right or require a special exception. They noted that the draft ordinance did not specify this, and the East Hopewell Township Planning Commission members clarified that the intent for these systems was to require a special exception, ensuring thorough review by the zoning hearing board.

Specific technical issues were identified, including incorrect references to sections of the ordinance, as well as typographical errors and inconsistencies in the draft, which required correction.

Additionally, the YCPC expressed concern about accessory systems, noting that the ordinance's language could unintentionally result in the loss of dwelling rights for small-scale systems intended for personal use. They recommended revising this to ensure accessory systems are not penalized.

Regarding solar energy facilities, the commission noted that some requirements appeared to apply to all types of systems, while others were specific to ground-mounted or roof-mounted systems. They suggested clarifying these distinctions to avoid confusion. They also flagged potential issues with the decommissioning section, recommending that the language be reviewed for accuracy and completeness.

Overall, while the YCPC provided valuable technical feedback, they recommended against adopting the ordinance in its current form, primarily due to its format as an appendix and the need for revisions to address the identified issues. The East Hopewell Township Planning Commission members agreed to have the township solicitor review and revise the ordinance based on these comments to ensure it is ready for adoption by the Board of Supervisors.

The meeting was then opened to public comment.

During the public comments, the solicitor discussed the recent decision by the Board of Supervisors to establish an Agricultural Security Committee (Ag Security Committee) to review applications for inclusion in the Agricultural Security Area (ASA). The committee will evaluate applications and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The process involves publishing a public notice in a newspaper with circulation in the ASA and posting the notice in five conspicuous locations near the property. The public will have 15 days to submit comments after the notice is published. Following the public comment period, the Ag Security Committee will meet within 15 days to review the applications, and the Planning Commission will also provide its recommendations. The Board of Supervisors is expected to vote on the applications in October or November, as the 180-day review period ends in late October. The commission discussed potential locations for posting public notices, such as the township building, local churches, and other nearby landmarks. They emphasized the importance of adhering to legal requirements, ensuring transparency, and involving the public in the process. The following steps include preparing and publishing the public notice, as well as coordinating meetings for the Ag Security Committee to review the applications.

The discussion then transitioned to concerns regarding noise and activity from Pine Ridge Farms, a special event venue located in the township. A resident expressed that while they personally did not mind the music and lights from the venue, they acknowledged that others, including a neighbor, had raised concerns about the noise being disruptive, even to the point of interfering with their ability to hear their television.

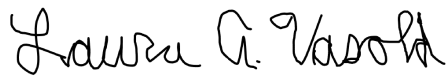
Another resident mentioned that they could hear the music from Pine Ridge Farms at their home, which is located over a mile away, and noted that the venue's location and surrounding trees might not fully mitigate the noise. The discussion highlighted differing opinions on the impact of the venue on the community, with some residents being more tolerant of the activity and others expressing frustration.

The conversation also touched on broader concerns about maintaining the rural character of the township and the potential implications of allowing more special event venues. There was a general sentiment that the township should carefully regulate such venues to avoid opening the door to excessive development or disruptive activities.

The public comment period concluded without any formal decisions, but the concerns raised reinforced the importance of the Planning Commission's ongoing work to revise and clarify regulations for special event venues.

At 9:35 p.m., Scott Garvey made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sam Georgieff seconded the motion, which was unanimously carried.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura A. Vasold". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura A. Vasold
Secretary