

**PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
March 16, 2026**

The regular monthly meeting of the Plainfield Township Planning Commission was held on Monday, March 16, 2026, at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, located at 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Chairperson, Robin Dingle, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

The Pledge of Allegiance was performed.

ROLL CALL:

The following Commissioners answered roll call: Chairperson, Robin Dingle, Commissioner, Glenn Geissinger, Commissioner, Allen Schafer, and Commissioner, Joseph Colosi. Commissioner, Terry Kleintop, was absent.

Also present were Township Manager, Paige Stefanelli, Solicitor, David Backenstoe, and Township Engineer, Mike Muffley. Zoning Officer, Elizabeth Amato, was absent.

Approximately 12 members of the public were in attendance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approval of the February 16, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes- DRAFT

ACTION: Motion was made by Robin Dingle and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to table the February 16, 2026 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public. Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

CURRENT/NEW BUSINESS:

ACTION: Motion was made by Robin Dingle and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to amend the March 16, 2026 agenda. Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public. Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

ACTION: Motion was made by Robin Dingle and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to add "Appointment of Planning Commission Secretary" to the current agenda. Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public. Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

1. PC-2026-002- 40 Green Knight Drive- Special Exception and Site Plan Recommendation to ZHB (Application Received: February 13, 2026; Expires: March 30, 2026):

Kate Durso, Esquire, appeared on behalf of the applicant and presented the request for approval of a food processing facility under the special exception use provisions. Attorney Durso noted that there are no specific requirements applicable to the proposed use under the special exception category, that the volume of truck traffic associated with the facility would be significantly less than might otherwise be expected, and that the proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses and intended development in the area. Commissioner, Robin Dingle, inquired about potential issues related to noise, odors, and other nuisances. Attorney Durso responded that the specific type of food processing involved would utilize equipment designed to mitigate odors and that the processing operations are contained on site. Solicitor, David Backenstoe, asked for clarification regarding the nature of the food processing operation.

Craig Milburn appeared on behalf of the applicant and explained that the facility would manufacture ingredients used in livestock feed, which would then be sold to livestock feed manufacturers such as companies like Cargill for distribution to farmers. He further explained that the raw materials consist of goods that would otherwise be disposed of, that the process involves drying those surplus or unused goods, and that the finished product is then shipped elsewhere for use in feed products. He confirmed that there is no butchering or processing of meat at the facility.

Commissioner, Robin Dingle, asked for clarification on the definition of a food processing center as it relates to the Zoning Ordinance. Solicitor, David Backenstoe, and Township Manager, Paige Stefanelli, noted that the definition would need to be updated in the Zoning Ordinance.

Township Engineer, Mike Muffley, addressed the Commission and noted that his review focused on whether the proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area. It was indicated that plan revisions are anticipated and that the applicant is therefore seeking only a recommendation to the Zoning Hearing Board regarding the Special Exception at this time. Once plan revisions have been completed, the applicant will resubmit the site plan to the Planning Commission for formal review and action.

Following discussion, the Commission moved to recommend approval of the special exception with conditions. Commissioner, Robin Dingle, noted that the application did not contain a high level of detail beyond general representations of compliance, but acknowledged that the proposed use is likely appropriate given the location, its proximity to Route 33, and the character of the surrounding area. She indicated that while she was prepared to support the recommendation at this time, she would expect more substantive supporting detail in future submissions of this nature.

ACTION: Motion was made by Allen Schafer and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to recommend the Zoning Hearing Board approve the Special Exception Use, as

proposed. *Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public.*

Resident, Millie Beahn, asked what ingredients are contained in the feed product. Project Manager, Jim Vozar, appearing on behalf of the applicant, explained that the raw materials consist of goods sourced from stores that would otherwise be destined for the landfill, which are instead processed at the facility. He clarified that the product serves as a component ingredient within a larger feed formulation rather than a complete feed product on its own. Attorney, Kate Durso, added that the product is compliant with applicable feed regulations. Project Manager, Jim Vozar, further confirmed that the product is fully compliant and is processed in a manner that ensures it is safe and healthy for animal consumption.

Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

2. Approval to Advertise Ordinance No. 432 Regulating Data Centers:

Township Solicitor, David Backenstoe, indicated that data centers are present in the surrounding area and that he had researched the matter thoroughly. He noted that he was pleased to find that several other municipalities have adopted updated legal language pertaining to data centers. He explained that the proposed ordinance language would make data centers a Conditional Use in the Industrial Business Park (IBP) and General Commercial (GC) districts unless the proposal would be found more detrimental to the community, in which case it would otherwise be permitted in another district. He further explained that special exception uses are always heard before the Zoning Hearing Board, while conditional uses come before the Board of Supervisors, noting that some uses are considered significant enough that the Board prefers to retain oversight rather than defer to the ZHB. He indicated that the proposed language provides criteria addressing a range of requirements including fencing, utilities, stormwater management, aesthetics, parking, and emergency management, among others.

Commissioner, Glenn Geissinger, expressed disagreement with Solicitor, David Backenstoe's, analysis, stating that the current generation of data centers is less detrimental than the ordinance language assumes. He raised questions regarding several items within the proposed criteria, including references to prisons and similar uses, and noted that the decibel requirements as written may be unrealistic given that a standard tractor operates at approximately 90 decibels. He noted that requiring a building to produce fewer decibels than a tractor could present a significant compliance issue and suggested that the requirements should be more reflective of the realities of next generation data center operations. He also raised the question of the cost and scope of a sound study. Solicitor, David Backenstoe, responded that the intent of the decibel provisions is to protect the Township.

Commissioner, Glenn Geissinger, further noted that he does not believe the Township currently has sufficient power infrastructure available to attract data centers and expressed doubt that such facilities would be coming to the Township in the near term. Commissioner, Robin Dingle, raised the issue of backup power, indicating that she would want data centers to utilize backup generators to the greatest extent possible. She also raised water quality as a concern, specifically referencing the need for quality and quantity surveys of nearby wells. Solicitor, David Backenstoe, confirmed that those provisions are already included in the proposed language.

Commissioner, Robin Dingle, further questioned how an escrow mechanism could be established to protect residents in the event of a significant water or related issue. Solicitor, David Backenstoe, indicated that the Public Utility Commission is examining that matter and noted his desire for the Township to adopt regulations in that area, referencing a pending state senate bill that could establish a statewide framework. Commissioner, Robin Dingle, also raised concerns regarding as-built plan requirements, vibration levels, noise monitoring, and annual reporting, and suggested that a seasonal baseline should be established prior to any monitoring program. Solicitor, David Backenstoe, noted that a property owner would also retain the right to pursue legal action directly against a data center operator in the event of harm.

ACTION: Motion was made by Robin Dingle and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to recommend adoption of Ordinance No. 432 Regulating Data Centers with the notion that the Planning Commission will be working on additional changes in the near future. Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public. Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

3. Ordinance No. 433 Regulating Solar Energy Systems:

Solicitor, David Backenstoe, provided a detailed overview of proposed Ordinance No. 433 regulating Solar Energy Systems. Solar Energy systems would be a Permitted Use by Special Exception within the Farm and Forest Zoning District. No substantive comments were received from the Commission. Minor changes and typographical corrections were noted and will be incorporated at a later date. The Planning Commission will also be compiling their recommended amendments, which will likewise be addressed at a later date.

ACTION: Motion was made by Allen Schafer and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to recommend adoption of Ordinance No. 433 Regulating Solar Energy Systems with the notion that the Planning Commission will be working on additional changes in the near future. Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public. Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

4. Discussion and Appointment of (2) Delegates for Long-Range Planning Committee:

Solicitor, David Backenstoe, noted that the Board of Supervisors has held multiple meetings to discuss the formation of the Long-Range Planning Committee and has passed a resolution establishing the committee. He explained that terms will be three years in length and will be staggered, and that committee membership is intended to include Planning Commission members, Board of Supervisors members, and members of the public.

Commissioner, Glenn Geissinger, and Commissioner, Robin Dingle, both indicated their willingness to serve as delegates. Commissioner, Joe Colosi, was also suggested as a potential delegate.

Commissioner, Glenn Geissinger, asked Supervisor, Jane Mellert, how frequently the committee meetings would be held, whether monthly, quarterly, or otherwise. Supervisor, Jane Mellert, indicated that meetings would be held on a monthly basis and would be focused primarily on the development of the Comprehensive Plan.

ACTION: Motion was made by Allen Schafer and seconded by Robin Dingle to recommend the appointments of Robin Dingle and Glenn Geissinger to the Long Range Planning Committee. *Prior to the vote, Chairperson, Robin Dingle, asked if there were any comments from the governing body or the public.* Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT – AGENDA/NON-AGENDA ITEMS:

Commissioner, Robin Dingle, requested that a standing agenda item be added to future Planning Commission meetings to provide a running update on the status of the Comprehensive Plan.

Supervisor, Jane Mellert, expressed significant dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Board handled the Comprehensive Plan discussion. Commissioner, Robin Dingle, indicated that she does not consider the Comprehensive Plan consultant selection to constitute professional services and that she does not agree with Solicitor, David Backenstoe's, interpretation of such.

The Planning Commission requested Ms. Stefanelli follow up on the following items: distribution of an email to the Commission containing all current ordinances along with the recommendation letter previously prepared by former Secretary, Amy Kahler; obtaining the conditional use language from South Whitehall Township; and noting that the next Zoning Hearing Board meeting is scheduled for April 1st, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the motion was made by Robin Dingle and seconded by Glenn Geissinger to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved. Vote 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paige Stefanelli". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line crossing through the middle of the name.

Paige Stefanelli
Township Manager
Plainfield Township