

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2025**

SUPERVISORS:

Danielle A. Duckett, Chairman
Michael Twersky, Vice Chair
Janine Martin
Tessie McNeely
Jimmy Chong

STAFF:

Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager
Michelle Farzetta, Office Manager
Neil Stein, Esq., Solicitor
Fred Zollers, Director Public Works
Paul Kenny, Police Chief
Jim Hersh, Township Engineer, Gilmore
Chad Dixon, Traffic Engineer, Bowman Company
Melinda Haldeman, Finance Director
John Farrell, Project Manager/EMC

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:07pm at the Lower Gwynedd Township Building and virtually on Zoom and led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) met in executive session on August 12, 2025, and prior to tonight's meeting to discuss matters of potential litigation related to zoning, code enforcement, and pensions; matters of real estate related to parks; personnel matters, and Board training.

The final concert of the summer series is (re)scheduled at a new time for Wednesday, August 27th at Pen-Ambler Park, featuring Mike Greer & Co. The music starts at 6 pm, with food, drinks, and a face painter available at 5:30.

Fall Fest is on Saturday, September 13th, noon to 6 pm on Houston Road by Wissahickon High School.

Police Department demonstration of new virtual reality taser by Officer Chris Swenson

Officers Chris Swenson and Jamie Sharkey demonstrated the Police Department's new virtual reality taser system. The new Taser integrates with a VR headset for virtual reality-based training simulations. The integration of VR and firearms training allows for more realistic and cost-effective training. The officers discussed the advancements and advantages to the new system, including the ability for officers to integrate the training into their daily shifts instead of separate training sessions. By the end of the year all the officers will have completed the training and be able to use it. Cathy Pagano, 411 Brookside Ave, asked if other municipalities are using this and do they have any feedback. Officer Swenson responded yes, there are other municipalities using this taser and all have had success with it.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

BUILDING AND ZONING

Appoint David Dratch as an alternate to the Zoning Hearing Board

The BOS received the application of David Dratch to fill the position of alternate on the Zoning Hearing Board. There were no questions or comments. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to approve the appointment of David Dratch to the Zoning Hearing Board. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion about Ambler Yards' proposed development and ordinance amendment

Christen Pionzio from Hamburg, Rubin, Mullen, Maxwell and Lupin was present to represent Ambler Yards. They are proposing a 43-unit apartment building and a 609-unit storage facility. The self-storage facility will be 84,000 square feet, three stories, and have climate-controlled units. It will be architecturally pleasing and have security measures in place. The apartment building will have 9 two-bedroom, 18 one-bedroom, and 16 one-bedroom plus den units.

These proposed improvements will require text amendments to the existing zoning ordinance for the F-Industrial District, and a zoning map amendment to shift the industrial zoning district line to encompass the entire Ambler Yards Property. Three community meetings have been held with residents in the area surrounding Ambler Yards to promote an open dialogue about the proposed changes and address concerns raised by community members. Matt Sigel and Marc Policarpo of Station-Partners stated that the meetings with the residents were very helpful in planning the development. Attendance consisted of 12- 20 people each time. The discussions focused on traffic, the quality of the apartments, affordability, and aesthetics.

Concerns from the BOS included traffic impact, parking, and the potential for hazardous materials being stored in the storage facility. There were questions regarding the number of parking spaces and how they would be allocated for the apartments and businesses.

Jack Downey, 421 Marion Ave has concerns with traffic and the number of cars that would travel down Houston Road. He is also concerned with campers/vehicles being stored in the storage units, therefore causing fire hazards.

Sandy Silbiger, 416 Brookside, also has concerns about traffic, as well as the plantings near track 2. People walking from the apartments might not be seen and it could be dangerous.

Rich Ryan, 426 Brookside, is concerned that zoning changes could affect changes in the future to their street, increasing traffic and changing the feel of the neighborhood.

Ron Charmin, 429 E. Francis Avenue, is concerned about the impact on infrastructure and utilities. Will the apartments affect water pressure, sewage drainage, powerlines and internet utility lines?

Mr. Sigel and Mr. Policarpo said that the proposal includes measures to address traffic concerns and improve the esthetics of the development. Tim Woodrow, engineer for the project, said that Ambler Yards will have to confirm sufficient utility capacity as part of land development.

Consider authorizing initiation of the adoption process and advertisement of a legal notice for a zoning ordinance amendment to update accessory uses and other minor revisions

The BOS was provided with a redlined version of proposed amendments to the Zoning Ordinance. These adjustments will address consistent issues that occur when applying the code on a regular basis. The proposed changes are for Chapter 1250-Definitions, Chapters 1257, 1258, 1259, 1260 and 1298 General Provisions. Staff are asking for BOS authorization to begin the formal ordinance amendment process and allow advertisement of the proposed ordinance. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to start the adoption process and advertise the legal notice for a zoning ordinance amendment. Motion passed 5-0.

Review revised sketch plan for gas pumps and a convenience store at 1100 N. Bethlehem Pike and provide feedback to applicant

Mr. Robert Blue spoke on behalf of his clients about this proposed sketch plan for 1100 N. Bethlehem Pike. Mr. Blue stated that changes have been made to accommodate the wishes and concerns of the BOS. The proposal includes a commitment to improve the esthetics of the facility and address traffic concerns. They have reduced the number of gas pumps from six to three, they have increased the parking spaces from three to nine, and the building is smaller and relocated further from the property line. Mr. Blue has a meeting scheduled with PennDOT to discuss the building and the traffic patterns for the driveways. There is a signed sale agreement that will expire in November, so they are hoping to work through the issues by then.

The supervisors all thanked Mr. Blue for his work on the project and the changes he made. However, they also expressed their concerns about increasing traffic and pedestrian congestion if a gas station and convenience store are added to the service station. The intersection is already busy and adding this type of business in such close proximity would only complicate an already high traffic intersection. There are also concerns about the small lot size and the challenges of managing deliveries and traffic. Vendor deliveries would need to be controlled to mitigate traffic issues. The concern is not the type of business, the issue is the location, it is not the right space for it. Mr. Blue is going to meet with PennDOT and will provide an update regarding the entrance and their input on the project.

GENERAL BUSINESS

Consider approval of Township Forest Evaluation and Strategic Management Plan

John Farrell introduced the forest evaluation and strategic management plan and explained that a desire to prudently use the proceeds from developer contributions in tree bank led to this plan. Val Liggett, a certified arborist from Gilmore and Associates presented the findings from the evaluation of selected township-owned forested areas, identifying hazardous trees and areas in need of reforestation. The areas evaluated included the Dager Road Trail, Penn Oak Trail, Trewellyn Trail, the Meadowbrook/Foxfield Equestrian Trail, the Centennial Trail, and Pen-Ambler Park. The method used in these evaluations will assist with developing a priority list for future planting projects. Ms. Liggett outlined policy and procedure recommendations for tree removal, invasive species management, and reforestation plantings. The BOS discussed the importance of maintaining public property and ensuring the safety of residents. Mr. Zollers explained that some of the work can be completed by our Public Works Department, but some will need to be subbed out. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to approve the forest evaluation and strategic plan for priority areas. Motion passed 5-0.

Consider approval of parameters for tree giveaway program

The EAC has held a successful Tree Giveaway the last three years. An issue that has come up in past years is in relation to Homeowner Associations (HOA) asking for large quantities of trees through this event. A different but somewhat related practice is that sometimes residents will get a free tree through the Giveaway and donate it to their HOA to be planted in common open space. The EAC would like feedback from the BOS regarding the HOA's receiving and requesting the trees.

The BOS debated the pros and cons of allowing HOAs to bulk order trees, ultimately deciding to maintain the current individual sign-up process with no restrictions on planting the tree on the homeowner's property versus HOA open space. In the coming year we will evaluate the program's effectiveness and consider future adjustments to accommodate HOA involvement. The BOS agreed to explore ways to encourage HOA's to participate in reforestation efforts while ensuring fairness in the tree giveaway program.

Appoint Obermayer Rebmann Maxwell & Hippel LLP as Bond Counsel

Staff are anticipating the potential need to issue tax-exempt bonds at some point in 2026 to finance the new Public Works facility. In June the BOS approved an RFP for law firms to serve as bond counsel for the Township. After reviewing the proposals staff are recommending Obermayer, Rebmann Maxwell and Hippel LLP be appointed as bond counsel. The BOS was provided with their proposal. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to appoint Obermayer as bond counsel. Motion passed 5-0.

Consider authorization to advertise bid for budgeted Bethlehem Pike / Penllyn Pike traffic signal mast arm replacements

A recent traffic signal evaluation identified that the traffic signal poles at Bethlehem Pike and Penllyn Pike require replacement. Bowman is asking for authorization to advertise the bidding for this project. The bid would be for two 20-foot traffic signal mast arms, replacement for the existing four signal heads

and related wiring currently located on the two poles. The bids would be advertised in September or October of 2025 with a bid award recommendation at the October 28 BOS meeting. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve the advertisement of the traffic signal mast arm replacement at Bethlehem Pike and Penllyn Pike. Motion passed 5-0.

Resolution #2025-14 Restating 401a Retirement Plan

Mission Square is the current administrator for the non-uniformed employees 401a money purchase retirement plan that the Township contributes to on behalf of the employees hired since 2014. The BOS authorized the changing of the plan administrator in March and Ms. Gleason has executed the required documents. Resolution #2025-14 is required to fully execute the change. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve Resolution #2025-14 adopting the restated plan for the 401a non-uniformed money purchase retirement plan. Motion passed 5-0.

Resolution #2025-15 Restating 457b Retirement Plan

Mission Square is the current administrator for one of the non-uniformed employees 457b deferred compensation retirement savings plans that all employees have the option of contributing to. The BOS authorized changing the plan administrator in March and Ms. Gleason has executed the required documents. Resolution #2025-15 is required to fully execute the change. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve the Resolution 2025-15 adopting the restated plan for the 457b deferred compensation retirement savings plan. Motion passed 5-0.

Financial report – July 2025

The BOS received the financial report for July of 2025. There were no questions or comments.

Approval of invoice report August 26, 2025

The BOS received the invoice report for checks dated July 22, 2025, totaling \$675,034.40. There were no questions or comments. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. McNeely, to approve the invoices dated July 22, 2025. Motion passed 5-0.

Traffic Engineer Report – August 2025

Prior to the meeting, Mr. Dixon provided Bowmans Project Status Report for August 2025. There were no questions or comments.

Approval of minutes – July 22, 2025

The BOS received the meeting minutes from the July 22, 2025, BOS meeting. There were no questions or comments. Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Ms. Martin, to approve the minutes. Motion passed 5-0.

SUPERVISOR LIAISON REPORTS

The BOS received the Reports for the Planning Commission and the EAC. There were no questions or comments.

STAFF UPDATES

There were no updates from the staff.

SUPERVISORS COMMENTS

Supervisors thanked the staff for their continued work. There have been many projects planned and in the process of being completed. They appreciate all the staff's efforts that go into planning and completing the work.

Adjournment

Ms. Duckett made a motion, seconded by Mr. Twersky, to adjourn the meeting at 9:36pm. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Farzetta
Office Manager