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Newsletter of the Pa. Association of Zoning Officials

February 2022

Latest News

PSATS Offering “Fundamentals of Zoning” Class for Township Supervisors in March

On March 22, PSATS will be hosting a virtual class aimed at supervisors and others looking for a basic understanding of the “how and why” of zoning. Please encourage any township officials or staff who may benefit from this class to register. More information is in the Educational Opportunities section below.

Zoning for Charging Stations and other Green Things

In a recent blog post, Esch McCombie of Solicitors Association sponsor McNeese Wallace & Nurick LLC wrote about the recent effort of the Latrobe City Council to amend its zoning ordinance to establish criteria for electric vehicle charging stations. To read more about this emerging land use, click [here](#).

Need a Mentor? Or Looking to Become One?

PAAZO is still gauging interest from members about a potential program that will allow for mentoring relationships among zoning officials in different municipalities. If you are interested in becoming a mentor or being mentored, please contact Kathy Kronicz at kkronicz@psats.org.

Training Opportunities

[Where We Ride: Bicycle and Pedestrian Networks and Improvements – 2/23/22 \(Webinar\)](#)

Do all streets and roads need to be “complete”? Not all do, but enough to create a network that allows bicyclists and pedestrians to travel to their regular destinations. The process of selecting township roads for the network and prioritizing locations for improvement needs to build on previous planning efforts and current usage, assess the level of improvement needed to make biking and walking feel comfortable, and consider facility maintenance responsibilities. In this session, Michelle Brummer, AICP, of Gannett Fleming, Inc. and Randy Waltermeyer, AICP, of

Traffic Planning & Design will review recent examples of upgrades to bicycle and pedestrian networks, including the prioritization of 26 crossings of Route 30 in Lancaster County, and discuss best practices for the planning process.

[Providing for “Missing Middle Housing” Options – 3/9/22 \(Webinar\)](#)

Recent publications by Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design, along with policy changes from around the country have spurred a renewed interest in so-called “missing middle housing.” Missing middle housing includes a diverse set of housing types that were fundamental building blocks of pre-1940s neighborhoods. Today, typical single-family zoning often prevents a range of housing options in a given district or proposed residential development.

This presentation will review how Cranberry Township in Butler County has worked to create greater flexibility and remove regulatory barriers imposed by typical Euclidean zoning. Specifically, the presentation will examine the township’s recently adopted Planned Neighborhood (PN) Overlay and its elements. The webinar will also present important metrics to consider as other communities analyze their existing housing stock and plan for long-term solvency and financial sustainability.

[Demystifying Grant Seeking: Tools & Tips for Success – 3/10/22 \(Virtual Class\)](#)

Join fundraising master trainer, Chad Barger, CFRE, for a session focused on seeking grant support for township projects and programs. The session begins with an overview of the role of grant funding in an organization and the prerequisites for seeking grant support. Chad will then provide insight on how to identify grant opportunities, tips for writing a successful grant application, and tools for managing the grant seeking process.

[Duties of a Zoning Hearing Board – 3/15/22 \(Virtual Class\)](#)

From making decisions on contentious public issues to learning the ins and outs of the Municipalities Planning Code, being a member of a zoning hearing board can be a challenge. In this virtual class, Elam Herr, retired PSATS’ assistant executive director and the chair of the East Hempfield Township, Lancaster County, zoning hearing board, has a wealth of experience to help you better navigate this challenge. Topics will include procedures for deciding variances and special exceptions, handling hearing-related questions, Ethics Act requirements, and much more. Attendees will also learn specific, practical tips that will leave them better prepared for their next meeting or hearing. While this course is geared toward newer zoning hearing board members, those looking for a refresher on their obligations will also benefit.

[Fundamentals of Zoning – The Why and How of Zoning – 3/22/22 \(Virtual Class\)](#)

Supervisors who enact zoning ordinances must understand the purpose and function of zoning. This workshop explains why we have zoning, how we implement it, and the tools it affords townships to protect the public’s health, safety, and welfare. The workshop is intended to educate both the newest supervisors and the ones who have seen it all. We will discuss the legal roles of supervisors and others, zoning hearings (*including conditional uses*), and several other important aspects of zoning ordinances that are often overlooked or misunderstood.

[Fair Housing Fundamentals for Townships – 3/30/22 \(Webinar\)](#)

Learn from the fair housing team at the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission about practical steps that you can take to comply with fair housing laws and promote equitable housing opportunities in your municipality.

[PAAZO Spring Educational Forum – 4/24/22 \(In-Person Seminar\)](#)

This educational forum explores issues that zoning officers and planning and zoning officials face on a regular basis and discusses effective strategies to address them. Specific agenda topics include ways to encourage controlled and collaborative development, housing, addressing resident complaints and short-term rentals, and best practices for ensuring proper written decisions under the MPC.

Legal Update

Court Rejects Due Process/Spot Zoning/ERA Challenge to Natural Gas Overlay District

In *Murrysville Watch Committee v. Municipality of Murrysville Zoning Hearing Bd.*, No. 579 C.D. 2020, 2022 WL 200112 (Pa.Cmwith. Jan. 24, 2022), the Commonwealth Court rejected a citizens group's challenge to an "oil and gas recovery overlay district" located across numerous residential zoning districts in the municipality because the overlay district was enacted to encourage greater economic development and there was no evidence that the use was incompatible with the other uses or character of the zoning districts. The court found that the municipality "properly balanced" all rights implicated by the overlay district and that it has "rejected any presumption that [unconventional oil and gas drilling] will have an adverse effect on the environment or the population or that it is incompatible with residential zoning districts."

This monthly newsletter for members of the Pennsylvania Association of Zoning Officials focuses on news and matters of interest to zoning officials, lists upcoming training opportunities, and provides a snapshot of zoning-related legal decisions. To access past newsletters, log in at psats.org and choose the Newsroom tab. Email comments and suggestions to Managing Editor Brenda Wilt at bwilt@psats.org or PAAZO Program Manager Kathy Kronicz at kkronicz@psats.org.



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