

**HARRIS TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Meeting Minutes
September 14 2026**

Board Members in Attendance: Frank Harden, Vice Chair
Nigel Wilson
Tracey Moriarty
Chris Murrell

Staff in Attendance: Mark Boeckel, Township Manager
Todd Shea, Zoning/Ordinance Enforcement Officer
Debbie Lang, Administrative Secretary – via Zoom

Public in Attendance: Fred Henry
Martin McGann
Lee McGann
Andy Yablonsky
John Tennis
Julia Ranney
Dorothy Blair
Dan Alters
Lysa Holland
Maddie Gooch
Bonnie Dailey
Fred Dailey
Diane Farr
Sharon Stitzer
Galen Dreibelbis
Jenna Wargo, Principal Land Use Planner, CRPA

**Public in Attendance
via Zoom:** Kelly Wolgast
Aaron Borstein

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

Vice Chair Harden called the September 14, 2026 meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

2. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Supervisor Moriarty moved to approve the August 10, 2026 public hearing and the August 10, 2026 regular meeting minutes. Supervisor Wilson seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0-0.

3. CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Dan Alters of 632 West Main Street stated he has seen several close calls pulling onto Route 45 at the end of West Main Street. He said it was difficult to see cars heading west on Route 45. He said it is also difficult to see the West Main Street entrance when you are heading east on Route 45. He was wondering if some enforcement could take place in this area of perhaps a blinking light to bring to the attention of people that there is an intersection in this area.

Lee McGann of 155 Emma Court said the speed limit on Emma Court close to South Academy Street is 25 mph, however, just a few houses down on Emma Court closer to Springfield Commons, the speed limit is 15 mph. She requested or suggested that the Board consider lowering the speed limit on this section to 15 mph to keep the speed limit on this street consistent since it is all the same street. Mr. Boeckel said to change the speed limit, the Board would have to change the ordinance. If the Board was in favor of this request, it could be incorporated into an upcoming ordinance related to establishing speed limits on the roads in Rocky Ridge. He also pointed out that per the Motor Vehicle Code, in this circumstance, a 15-mph speed limit is not enforceable.

Vice Chair Harden also asked Mr. Boeckel to respond to Mr. Alters concerns. Mr. Boeckel said he could reach out to the State College Police Department regarding speed enforcement in this area, but they could only do that if they have the sight lines necessary to set up vascar. He also stated that since Route 45 is a State highway, a blinking light and any type of signage changes would need to be approved by PennDOT. He said he will reach out to them about these requests.

4. NEW AGENDA ITEMS:

There were no new items to add to the agenda. Vice Chair Harden reported that item f. will be removed from tonight's agenda as some issues were found at the eleventh hour, so we are not ready to receive those streets. The Board will probably be looking at a special meeting in the next week or two to do that.

5. TOWNSHIP BUSINESS:

a. ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Vice Chair Harden announced the Board of Supervisors held an executive session on August 25th to discuss a legal matter. No decisions were made or actions taken.

b. JOHN W. TENNIS MINOR SUBDIVISION PLAN:

Mr. Shea explained that a minor plan proposing to combine two existing lots owned by John W. Tennis at 117 Boal Avenue was submitted to the Township. No development of this property is currently proposed. Mr. Tennis has nearly completed the process of establishing the property as a licensed short-term rental.

John Tennis asked about the required bike/pedestrian path along Boal Avenue. He said there are

no other sidewalks or paths in this area, and he asked if this was something that would need to be completed now or could they be added later when work is done on Boal Avenue. Mr. Shea explained that a few years ago when the Village Commercial zoning district was created, the Board felt this was an important item to include in the regulations. He said Mr. Tennis's property is the fourth property that has been required to install the bike/pedestrian facilities since the ordinance was enacted. He said the other three properties have complied with the regulations. Mr. Tennis asked when he would be required to install the path and Mr. Shea said it is typically done in close proximity to the plan's approval. He said he knows Mr. Tennis is in the process of getting a surety estimate and the Township could not approve and sign the plan and it couldn't be recorded until we receive the surety or the improvement is installed. Mr. Tennis said he did not see any paperwork on whether this has to be a sidewalk or a bike path and he asked what the specifications would be for either option. Mr. Boeckel stated a shared use path width is 10 feet wide and could be asphalt and a sidewalk is 4 feet wide and must be concrete.

Vice Chair Harden closed the public comment.

Supervisor Wilson moved to approve the John W. Tennis Minor Subdivision Plan contingent upon satisfactory completion of comments from the August 13, 2026, letter of the Township Engineer and the September 1, 2026, letter of the Zoning Officer. Supervisor Moriarty seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0-0.

c. REQUEST TO AMEND THE SHORT-TERM RENTAL ORDINANCE:

Mr. Boeckel summarized the request received by the Board of Supervisors from Galen Dreibelbis and Lyle Yablonsky to amend the short-term rental ordinance. They requested that the Board consider amending the ordinance to permit non-owner-occupied short-term rentals in the rural zoning districts where their properties are located. At the Board's direction at the July meeting, Staff requested an opinion from the Township's Special Counsel, which was previously provided to the Board.

Galen Dreibelbis said he had made his comments previously and there was no need to repeat them again. He said the problem is that the ordinance now makes it illegal for him to have a short-term rental at this property. He said five times in the ordinance, it mentions neighborhood residences and that was where the problem was and the Township dealt with that and he understands why. He said the problem wasn't in rural and it wasn't in forest area land. He said he doesn't want to tell the Harris Township Sportsman's Club that they are now not allowed to leave any of their guests stay overnight or charge them for food and overnight rental. He said he also has a friend who rents their cabin to turkey and deer hunters and it is now illegal if the Township doesn't prepare something for that now. He said what the Township did is okay and he is not complaining about it, but he thinks it created a little problem that needs to be dealt with satisfactorily. He said he doesn't think we need to change the ordinance. He thinks all the Township has to say is the ordinance is correcting the problems they had in the neighborhood residences. The Township didn't have that in zoning of agriculture or forestry or natural areas. Therefore, it could be an ordinance to cover everything except the rentals on agriculture or forest areas. He said he did not think the Township wanted to do that to the Harris Township Sportsman's Club or the cabins that are up Bear Meadows Road or on the other side of the switchback.

Andy Yablonsky said he has lived on Sharer Road for 20 years. He said his son Lyle Yablonsky is building a house on Sharer Road and has spoken twice at monthly meetings requesting to amend the short-term rental ordinance 382. He said Lyle could not be here tonight due to a previous commitment, and he is speaking for the both of them. He said they respectfully suggest that extending the owner-occupied short term rental ordinance on the downtown areas to all districts, including the rural ones is a bridge to far due to the distinct factors that make up each zoning district's individuality. He said his son's property and Mr. Dreibelbis's property have little in common with the land use metrics in the downtown residential zone. He said these major differences in zoning districts call for local regulatory appreciation and for treating all people fairly by adapting to their different needs and conditions rather than applying the same rules to everyone in all districts. He said they believe that the assigning of short-term rental ordinance 382 to all districts has unnecessarily created an undue burden of restrictions and missed opportunities for those in the rural districts. He asked if a permit system exclusively for rural districts for non-owner-occupied short-term rentals could be an option to the Board or would it be agreeable or authorized by the Board for a rural district vacation home to have an authorized manager living next door at their own primary residence for 8-12 months of the calendar year to oversee the vacation home property and any short-term rental activity. He said they are willing to work with the Board toward a fair and reasonable solution. He thanked the Board for their consideration and valued service to the Township.

With no other citizens wishing to comment, Vice Chair Harden closed the public comments.

Supervisor Murrell said he disagreed with Mr. Yablonsky's comment that the regulations were for the denser parts of the Township. He said our agricultural areas are neighborhoods but are not nearly as densely populated as the residential districts but they are neighborhoods as well. He said the Board worked to find an equitable way to deal with this issue. We did not want a Township full of non-owner-occupied short-term rentals. He said there are people who are caught in unfortunate situation and he thinks Lyle is one of those people. He said the residents of the Township overwhelmingly wanted owner-occupied short-term rentals. He said with regard to the forested areas and what are truly hunting cabins, there are State regulations for these properties. He said if we were to make any changes to the ordinance, it would be specifically for hunting cabins, and the language should mirror what the state regulations are. However, he said he is pretty reluctant to go down that path. Mr. Boeckel noted there may be some camps/clubs in the rural/natural areas that may be non-conforming because they were established prior to our current Natural Areas district regulations. Supervisor Murrell said as far as agricultural areas are concerned, that really opens up a can of worms that we don't want to try to fight. It almost creates a tiered system, like a different class of citizen within the Township. That is a very problematic precedent to set.

Supervisor Moriarty said she could mirror what Supervisor Murrell says. She added that she is concerned this does not stop in an agricultural area. She has concerns about someone buying an agricultural plot just to set up an AirBNB. She was also concerned about how many houses and how many units you could build on that agricultural plot or that rural zoning district. She said she just doesn't want to go there at all.

Supervisor Wilson said the biggest problem we have is that there a lot of neighborhoods in the Township that are built on agricultural land. If we make changes to this ordinance, those properties could become little hotels. He said he does not want to tweak this ordinance at this time.

Vice Chair Harden said when we looked at doing this ordinance, non-owner occupied was the big issue. If we were to change it in one of the other zones, we open our methodology to all those other zones and we open ourselves up. He said we do have some non-owner-occupied properties in the Township because they were grandfathered and we could not stop those. He said the ordinance does have requirements for a manager of the site that has to be very close and be accessible. He said he does not see a way that we can change anything in the agricultural districts. He said something inside him says we can do something with the rural or natural areas; but he doesn't know what that is. He said until we can figure out what that is, he doesn't want to open this can of worms up again. He said until then, he did not want to move on or discuss this further at this point.

Mr. Dreibelbis asked if the Township charges the cabins on forest lands taxes. Mr. Boeckel said he was not sure about that. He said we get a payment in lieu of taxes from the State for all the forest land in the Township which includes those cabins. Mr. Dreibelbis said that is not the private cabins. He was asking about the owned cabins on State land. Mr. Boeckel said he was not sure we do. Mr. Dreibelbis said if the Township does get taxes for these privately owned cabins, the ordinance would apply to them. Mr. Boeckel said he could check into this. Vice Chair Harden asked Mr. Boeckel to check on this and let Mr. Dreibelbis and the Board know. Mr. Boeckel pointed out these cabins may not have been built as single-family use. They may have been built as a different land use under a different zoning ordinance so they may be something that is non-conforming and allowed to continue. Vice Chair Harden said in our agricultural zones, we already have a short-term use called a farm stay. Mr. Boeckel said active agricultural operations can have agritainment uses including a farm stay and non-farm workers are allowed if it is an active farm operation.

d. CENTRE REGION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN—HARRIS TOWNSHIP
FUTURE LAND USE MAP (FLUM) SUMMARY REVIEW:

Ms. Wargo from the Centre Region Planning Agency (CRPA) was present to review the outcomes of the May 11, 2026, Harris Township Board of Supervisors meeting, and present the attached updated staff memorandum summarizing both the April 22, 2026, joint Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Meeting and the Board's subsequent policy direction from the May 11, 2026, meeting.

Ms. Wargo discussed the goal prioritization, approved unit inventory, and residential permits issued between 2022-2025 both within and outside the Regional Growth Boundary and discussed vacant land/designated growth areas. She also discussed long-term sewage planning considerations and discussed the Village of Shingletown and potential sewage problems that may arise in this area. She reviewed criteria considerations for growth and criteria for RGB/SSA

inclusion and criteria for staff analysis. She also briefly reviewed benefits of shared land uses that are allowed in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Board had concerns about sewer capacity within the RGB and increasing traffic capacity on our streets.

Vice Chair Harden said we have to keep this flexible. We can't look to legislate more than about 5 or 10 years down the road. If we go 20-30 years down the road too many things change in that time frame. Also, if developers meet all the requirements of the ordinance in place at the time of development, the Board cannot tell them they cannot do what they are proposing to do. He also said he thinks we have to allow low- medium- and high-density uses. Lastly, he said he has never been a fan of the RGB and SSA being tied together and has always felt they should be segregated.

Supervisor Murrell moved to forward a recommendation to the Centre Regional Planning Commission (CRPC), which will inform the draft FLUM and associated policy language brought to the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG) prior to public adoption proceedings. Supervisor Moriarty seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0-0.

- e. PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 386 – PROHIBITING PARKING ON A SECTION OF OLD BOALSBURG ROAD:

A public hearing was held on this item earlier in the evening.

Supervisor Wilson moved to approve Ordinance No. 386, prohibiting parking on the section of Old Boalsburg Road defined in the ordinance. Supervisor * seconded the motion.

Sharon Stitzer said parking in this area has been a problem since the brewery went in. She said last Thursday, she went to the cemetery and could barely get in because there were six cars parked in this area and one of the cars was almost out on the road.

Dan Alters said they have gone to the brewery and parking is difficult and there is no good solution to parking on that street.

Diane Farr questioned where cemetery visitors are supposed to park.

Vice Chair Harden called the question.

The motion passed unanimously.

- f. RESOLUTION 26-14: ADOPTING THE DEED OF DEDICATION FOR ROCKEY RIDGE ROAD, EAST KAY STREET, DEREK DRIVE, AND JENSEN DRIVE:

Vice Chair Harden said this item was pulled from the agenda.

g. ESTABLISHING A MAXIMUM TOWING AND IMPOUND FEE ORDINANCE:

Mr. Boeckel briefly explained this ordinance request. It was the consensus of the Board to have staff work with the State College Borough Police Department and the Township Solicitor to prepare a draft ordinance for review at a future meeting.

h. AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE FOR BID – SALE OF STANDING TIMBER:

Mr. Boeckel provided background on the parcels that were donated to the Township.

In order to sell standing timber, the Township would need to advertise and solicit competitive bids along with a date by which the timber must be harvested. The advertisement could be for dead timber only or include dying trees that have value. The Board of Supervisors could award the sale of timber at a future meeting.

If the Board is interested in pursuing the sale of timber on these parcels, the Township should do the following:

- The properties in question are landlocked, so the Township would need to obtain temporary easements from at least one property owner and permission to use the private portion of South Academy Street from applicable property owners. The Township Solicitor could assist with these matters.
- The Township should also consider engaging a consulting forester to mark appropriate timber and provide an estimate of the volume and value of the timber.

Lysa Holland said she lives on Academy Street and she has been subjected to the run-off issues that have happened to Academy Street. She said if the Township disturbs that property in a greater way, and having less trees is going to cause less infiltration, the run-off is going to increase and it is going to be muddier. She said she is also concerned with trucks hauling the timber using Academy Street and the amount of traffic that could be created on this street.

Vice Chair Harden closed the public comments.

The Board discussed whether or not the removal of the dead and dying trees would create a more robust forest, whether this would have any environmental impact and potential traffic on Academy Street.

Following these discussions, it was the consensus of the Board to obtain a professional forester's evaluation of the timber before moving any further on this matter.

- i. RESOLUTION 26-15: APPROVING THE TOWNSHIP'S MINIMUM MUNICIPAL OBLIGATION FOR ITS PENSION PLAN FOR 2027:

Supervisor Wilson moved to approve Resolution 26-15, approving the Township's minimum municipal obligation for its pension plan for 2027. Supervisor Moriarty seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6. MANAGER'S REPORT:

Mr. Boeckel said since the Rockey Ridge roads item was pulled from this agenda, he was wondering if the Board could hold a special meeting at 6:00 PM on September 23rd to take action on this item. He said he would need to check with the engineer to see if the legal descriptions would be ready by that date before readvertising the meeting.

He said he also received an email from PennDOT regarding the potential 35-mph speed signs on Earlstown Road in relation to the current SCAC design. He said it is just a letter he needs to sign saying yes, if they put those signs in, we will maintain them. This is just in the section where the roundabouts are.

With regard to item number 3 in his report, he asked if the Board had any concerns with staff taking a tougher stance on enforcement of short-term rentals at the beginning of the year where properties cannot be rented until all required licenses and permits are issued. The Board did not express any concerns with this approach.

He also reminded the Board they will hold their budget review meetings on Thursday, October 22nd and Wednesday, October 28th at 7:00 PM.

Vice Chair Harden said the eagle scout candidate should not be soliciting donations for materials for the installation of the Liberty Bell on the Diamond. He said he should submit a list of materials and costs needed to the Township and the Township should purchase and pay for these materials. Mr. Boeckel said he would reach out to the eagle scout.

Supervisor Moriarty said she is having problems with the limits that have been set with the recommended zoning amendments for the village area.

7. APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS:

Supervisor Murrell moved to approve voucher transmittal sheet No. 2026-8 in the amount of \$296,297.52. Supervisor Moriarty seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-0-0.

8. COG COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Executive Committee: Chair Hameister was not present to provide a report.

Land Use, Sustainability and Infrastructure Committee: Chair Hameister was not present to provide a report. Mr. Boeckel noted the Tussey Mountain DRI would be on the October General Forum agenda.

Parks Capital Committee: Supervisor Moriarty said the MOUs started to come out. She said one of the things they talk about is capital projects and everyone seems to have a different agenda. She said regardless, anything that is capital related will come back to us and all capital projects should be supported by the Townships rather than COG. She also said that after the MOUs come out, this committee is done with everything it is doing. She said she disagrees. She said a lot of the municipalities continue to add a lot of parks space with the expectation that the COG is going to take care of the park space. She said the COG isn't very forthcoming with how we are supposed to maintain all this park space. She said we need to think about who should be responsible for this added municipal park space. She does not believe this committee should be dissolved.

Parks Governance Committee: There was no report from this committee.

Centre Region Parks Authority: Supervisor Murrell said this group discussed the Millbrook Marsh Boardwalk survey that went out. This boardwalk is unrepairable. The survey results will be used to try to drive grant applications to offset costs as much as possible.

Spring Creek Watershed Commission: Supervisor Murrell said this group will meet on Wednesday.

Public Safety Committee: Supervisor Wilson said this committee did not meet.

Centre County MPO: Vice-Chair Harden said they did not meet and will meet this month.

State College Area Connector Project: Vice-Chair Harden said the Board had an update meeting on this project with PennDOT at the end of August.

Finance Committee: Vice Chair Harden said we have a major problem. He said the COG budget calls for an 8 percent increase without anything from the SGSI and a fourteen or fifteen percent increase if we put the SGSI on it. He said this is getting out of control. The numbers are ridiculous. He said there is a twenty percent increase in wages over past 3 or 4 years. He said we can't sustain this and at some point, we have to say no. The Schlow budget is the only budget that doesn't spend more than they bring in. He said he would like the Board's support when he goes to the budget meeting on Thursday to tell COG that Harris Township will not approve anything in the SGSI because the operating budget grew too much and he would also like to tell them that Harris Township will not support any budget over a percentage agreed to by the Board. The Board discussed the costs and revenues of various programs. Vice Chair Harden said we have to put our foot down and this starts in our committees. He asked the Board to give him a percentage number that they are willing to approve for the budget and he will stand by that and also lobby other townships to do the same. He said COG is getting too big. They were meant to be a co-op for us to help us leverage more services. And now, we don't get a say in a lot of

things they are doing. Vice Chair Harden said it is not the COG in general that is the problem. He said if an agency is an enterprise agency, they should be making money. The Board discussed that the people of this region do expect to pay for parks and pools because those are things that do affect the property values and enhance the quality of life so there are going to be expenses that are not going to come back on a break even. They also discussed rather than raising pool membership fees, COG is expecting the cost to be passed on to the taxpayers. It was noted that moving forward, we have to be very selective about what we are looking at. We are paying for a lot of growth that happened in the past and a lot of maintenance for things that were added in the past. If we really want to change the direction of the COG, we have to come in demanding smaller percentage increases. Moving forward, we need to be more strategic about where and how we expand.

9. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Supervisors, Supervisor Murrell moved to adjourn and Supervisor Moriarty seconded the motion. Vice Chair Harden adjourned the meeting at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark Boeckel, AICP
Township Secretary