

COVERT TOWNSHIP

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 17, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

6:30 P.M., COVERT TOWNSHP HALL

Call to Order / Roll Call / Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Rendell called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Members Present: Robert Brown, Tom Bury, Luke Dennison, Austin Harding, Jena Johnson, Wayne Rendell, Lonzey Taylor

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Rebecca Harvey, Township Planning Consultant

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Dennison, seconded by Bury, to approve the agenda of the December 17, 2025 regular meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes – *November 19, 2025 Regular Meeting*

Motion by Bury, seconded by Brown, to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2025 regular meeting, with the correction of adding a quotation mark after 'private' on page 2 (end of 4th bullet, Section 2.02 - Definitions). Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

New Business

Preliminary Site Plan Review (+ Clearing/Grading) – 27780 Blue Star Highway (Holtec)

Chair Rendell stated that the next matter to come before the Commission was the request of Steven Mitchell, Holtec Palisades LLC, for Preliminary Site Plan Review of proposed development (warehouse, fabrication, batch plant, parking) in service of construction and operation of SMR units at 27780 Blue Star Highway (Palisades Nuclear Power Plant), pursuant to Section 13.02, *Permitted Uses, I Industrial District*. The Preliminary Plan Review includes a request for approval of proposed tree clearing and limited site grading to support the proposed development. The subject site is located at 31253 Blue Star Highway and is conditionally-zoned I Industrial District.

Harvey provided an overview of the applicable review process/standards. She noted that the preliminary plan is presented to demonstrate the applicant's proposed use/build-out of the site and to serve as the vehicle through which 'grading and removal of trees or other vegetation' on the site may be approved, pursuant to Section 23.07.

Stephen Mitchell and Jeff Gehrelin were present on behalf of the application. Mitchell stated that the initial phase of the project will include the proposed tree clearing/rough grading . . with access to the site to be provided by the existing driveways.

In response to Commission questions, Mitchell and Gehrelin noted the following:

- The site was previously used as a sand mine; consequently, there is not much quality tree cover on the site.
- The existing building on the site will remain during the initial phase.
- Geotechnical, wetland, and cultural surveys have been performed for the site and will be presented in a complete environmental report at the time of final site plan review.
- The next phase will include the development of an engineered site plan.

At the Chair's request, the applicant provided a detailed overview of the concept plan for the site. The following elements were highlighted:

- Setbacks will exceed Zoning Ordinance standards; a 35 ft perimeter buffer is proposed.
- Vegetation and grades along the abutting roadways will be used to visually block view of the site from the roadways.
- Work will occur during daylight hours only.
- Use descriptions of proposed buildings/work areas.
- Phase proposal elements.

Commission questions/comments were raised regarding the need for fill; compliance with the noise ordinance; steepness of grades and the need for retaining walls (primarily along the west boundary); visibility from abutting roadways; where construction equipment will be parked during the initial phase; and the time frame of the initial phase.

Following discussion of the questions/comments raised, the applicant committed to the following:

1. The initial phase is estimated to be completed by the end of May (tree removal by April 15).
2. A 35 ft perimeter setback will be employed (per the concept plan).
3. The bulk of the clearing will occur largely in the middle of the site (within the 'bowl'); clearing will not occur 'up' the side hills; the sides will remain vegetated.
4. All clearing/grading will be limited to the site; the existing trees within the abutting road rights-of-way will remain.
5. Visibility from abutting roads will be limited to driveway areas.
6. The proposed parking area was previously used for parking/building. Equipment will be staged within the proposed parking area during the initial phase.

Following review and discussion, motion by Chair Rendell, seconded by Bury, to recommend Township Board approval of the proposed Preliminary Site Plan, and the issuance of a grading/clearing permit on the basis of said Preliminary Site Plan, based upon the statements of assessment set forth in the Staff Report (dated December 17, 2025) and the findings of the Planning Commission, and conditioned upon the elements of commitment presented by the applicant. Motion carried unanimously.

Ongoing Business

Discussion: Text Amendments Related to 'Lot Area & Bulk Requirements' (Draft #2)

Chair Rendell reminded that in November the Commission reviewed/discussed Draft #1 - Zoning Ordinance Amendments related to Bulk & Area Requirements presented by Harvey to address existing areas of inconsistency or vagueness.

Harvey was directed to modify the draft amendments related to Bulk & Area Requirements as discussed by the Commission for consideration in December.

Harvey provided an overview of Draft #2, noting where and in what manner each of the Commission's points of consensus had been addressed.

Following discussion, Commission members agreed the draft text had been revised as requested. Motion by Chair Rendell, seconded by Johnson, to accept the draft text as revised and to hold same for public hearing. Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion: Private Road/Land Divisions on Private Roads

Chair Rendell reminded that the basic question posed/discussed last month on this subject was:

- Are existing 'private roads' in the Township that predate the Township's private road ordinance and do not exist in compliance with any current private road standards, private roads by definition? In other words, do these substandard roads lawfully provide the access and frontage required by the Ordinance for existing and/or future lots?

The Commission reiterated their support for allowing private roads within the Township, but continued to express concern with how to address the numerous access roads that exist within the Township that were likely never approved as 'private roads' and certainly are not up to private road standards, including future land divisions on these roads.

Harvey suggested that a road that was established prior to the private road standards but was established pursuant to standards existing at the time, such as through platting, etc. would seem to be a lawful nonconforming road. But she shared concern with the ability of a substandard road with existing access concerns to be used to support additional lots through land division. She suggested the matter be discussed with the Township Attorney for thoughts and direction.

The Commission agreed that legal consultation was appropriate and requested that Harvey have the initial conversation with the Township Attorney prior to the next meeting to allow for continued discussion in January.

Communications

No communications were offered.

Public Comment

No public comment was offered.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rebecca Harvey, AICP, PCP
(McKenna)Township Planning Consultant

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