

JENKINTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday, March 18, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.
Virtual ZOOM Meeting
APPROVED MINUTES

Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission members present on ZOOM:
Jon McCandlish, Eric Horowitz, Phil Zimmerman, Peter Van Do

Public present on zoom: Maxine Marlowe, Claire Warner from Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC), George Locke (Borough Manager, and Zoning Officer), Jean Thompson, Steve Spindler, Anthony McAlister, Deborra Sines Pancoe, Joanne Bruno, Marc Bickerton P.E. (Borough Engineer, -Pennonni)

Names listed above may be listed by initials in the following minutes.
Others were present on Facebook as the meeting was livestreamed.

Call to Order

Jon McCandlish (PZ) called the meeting to order at 6:35

Public Comment

Debora Sines Pancoe expressed interest in the ongoing discussions about directional traffic on West Avenue. The commissioners acknowledged that they were also awaiting more information on the matter. The topic is on the agenda this evening.

Reports/Actions

- JBPC Meeting Minutes Approval – JBPC Secretary, Eric Horowitz

The commission then moved on to the approval of minutes from previous meetings. JM (PVD) for December 2024 and January 2025. There was some discussion about the abbreviation used for the Planning Commission, particularly whether it should be "JPC" or "JBPC" (Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission). The consensus was to standardize the abbreviation as "JBPC" in future minutes. Following this, the minutes from the two meetings were approved unanimously without further comments.

New Business / Business for Discussion

- 459/471 Old York Road LLC, Land Development. Apartment Building, Commercial, Mixed Use.

A presentation was initially proposed for this evening but it was postponed to likely present next month. GL provided an update on the status of the development project at 459-471 York Road. The project had been under review by the county, but the engineers were still working on refining the plans. A meeting was scheduled between the applicants and the engineers to review and address any issues before proceeding. An MCPC letter was sent out a few months ago regarding land development to JBPC for review. The commissioners were advised to check the borough's public website for any updated documents or reviews related to the project.

- MONTCO 2040 Implementation Grant Application
(Pedestrian, Vehicular Safety Improvements)

GL summarized the MONTCO 2040 Implementation Grant the borough applied for. He noted the borough previously focused on smaller-scale projects such as the pedestrian safety project at Walnut and Runnymede. However, after feedback from the county, the grant application team decided to broaden the scope of the project application to encompass several areas throughout the borough. The goal was to address pedestrian and traffic issues in five identified locations: Walnut and Washington, Summit and Wyncote, Linda Vista and Cheltena, and an intersection near Vernon and Vista. These areas had long been discussed in JBPC meetings, and the goal was to improve pedestrian safety while calming traffic in those zones.

Marc Bickerton (borough engineer) and Claire Warner (MCPC) provided additional details about the proposed improvements. The plan included installing accessible pedestrian signals (APS) at key intersections, such as York and West, which would help visually impaired pedestrians navigate safely. Additionally, improvements were proposed for intersections such as Washington and Walnut, where raised crosswalks and traffic calming features would be implemented. These crosswalks would force drivers to slow down and increase the visibility of pedestrians.

The team also discussed the cost of these improvements. Though the borough had only received smaller grants in the past (typically under \$100,000), they were hopeful about securing a larger amount—\$250,000—for this project. Marc emphasized that the grant application was comprehensive, with a strong narrative, along with detailed drawings and cost estimates. The goal was to make the streets safer for all pedestrians, including those with disabilities, while also improving the traffic flow in high-risk areas.

The application was submitted with the assistance of Claire and her expertise in writing grant narratives. George expressed cautious optimism about the outcome of the grant, given that the borough had not yet received such a large amount in previous applications. However, the detailed proposal, which included input from residents, planning meetings, and committee reviews, made it a strong contender.

Key Project Areas as described by MB and GL:
Wyncote and Summit-

The area has a high volume of pedestrian traffic, especially children and people coming from the train station. Proposed improvements include raised crosswalks, warning signs, and pavement markings. One challenge is managing stormwater, as introducing a vertical obstruction (raised crosswalk) could lead to ponding and icing on the road, requiring additional stormwater infrastructure. Some improvements on Wyncote are already completed, including new crosswalks and a double yellow line.

Linda Vista, Cheltena, and Cedar:

This large intersection has poor pedestrian accommodations. The proposal seeks to utilize unused roadway space to improve pedestrian access. The design remains conceptual, and more survey work is needed to determine feasibility. The goal is to create safe pedestrian pathways to all corners of the intersection. The project may not involve an “all way”-stop configuration but would focus on improving pedestrian visibility and access.

Vernon and Vista:

Recent improvements include curb extensions and ADA ramp upgrades as part of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). Complaints were received regarding cars using Vernon against traffic flow. Adjustments to improve signage and road layout have

been made to discourage illegal traffic patterns. The main remaining task is adding an additional ADA-compliant crossing.

Hillside and Walnut:

This intersection is identified as a candidate for pedestrian improvements, though no specific sketch was available. The potential for a raised crosswalk or other traffic calming features were discussed with PennDOT, and there is some optimism about gaining approval for the project. It has some challenges such as a significant grade. This would require a PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit.

York Road and West Ave

The proposal outlines a signalization upgrade that includes a Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) as part of the push button upgrade. This feature gives pedestrians a head start, allowing them to enter the crosswalk before vehicles begin moving, while the signal holds traffic for a few additional seconds. Marc said Studies have shown that this approach reduces crashes and fatalities, as it is recognized by the FHWA as an effective safety countermeasure. The pedestrian interval, which will be either 22 or 25 seconds, will only be activated when the pedestrian presses the button. If the button is not pressed, the signal will provide a minimum of seven seconds for turning traffic, without holding extra time for pedestrians. The signal would also be activated not by pushing a button but by waving a hand.

Other information based on JBPC questions:

The funding for these projects may come from a county grant, with announcements expected in the summer or fall. If awarded, these projects could be implemented by 2026. The grant application includes a clear cost estimate for each location, and if the full funding is not received, the county could still approve partial grants for some projects. The borough and JBPC can work together to prioritize projects based on the partial funding that may be granted.

All proposed projects take into account ADA accessibility, with particular attention to ensuring pedestrian ramps and sidewalks are compliant with ADA Standards. Raised crosswalks, for example, provide an advantage as they don't require much sidewalk real estate, making them a viable option for enhancing pedestrian safety. There is potential for the borough to apply for additional funding through programs like WalkWorks, which support pedestrian improvements. The JBPC could help by providing letters of support for such grants. The timeline for some of these projects may involve collaboration with state agencies, such as PennDOT. The Hillside project, in particular, requires approval from PennDOT due to its location on a state road, and this process may take longer. There is a PennDOT philosophy change where pedestrians are being looked at more strongly than in years past as well as vehicular safety.

Ongoing Business

- Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) - Historical marker program. Peter shared updates for the historical marker application to PHMC for architect Horace Trumbauer. The application was approved by the borough and supported by the Old York Road Historical Society. The application highlights Trumbauer's significant architectural contributions to Jenkintown, including buildings like the Jenkintown Bank and the Jenkintown Train Station, as well as his national influence on universities like Penn, Harvard, and Duke. He lived at 325-27 Hillside Avenue.

The proposed historical marker will be located at 400 York Road, in front of the former Jenkintown Bank building, honoring his contributions to the borough's architectural history. The marker's fabrication will be funded by the PHMC, while the borough will be responsible for its installation. Feedback from the PHMC has been largely positive, noting the thoroughness and significance of the application, with only a minor issue regarding the source excerpts that was later addressed.

Peter emphasized the importance of the Old York Road Historical Society's support in uncovering and preserving local history. The committee discussed potential funding for installation, with suggestions for the JBPC to assist if necessary. The next step is awaiting final approval.

- Bike and Pedestrian Safety (Sub-Committee update)

There were no updates to report.

- Jenkintown 2035 Comprehensive Plan Implementation Audit – MC Planner

2035 Comprehensive Plan Implementation Audit:

CW shared a nearly complete draft of the comprehensive plan's implementation audit. This document serves to highlight the progress and successful projects undertaken since the completion of the 2023 Comprehensive Plan. Notable achievements include various community improvements:

Preservation: Development of parks, pollinator gardens, gateway treatments, and community gardens.

Economic Development: Opening of new businesses, enhancements to the Old York Road corridor, and the activation of public spaces like the town square.

Environmental Sustainability: Landscaping upgrades, electric vehicle charging stations, recycling initiatives, and clean-up efforts organized by community groups.

Transportation: Completion of traffic calming measures, pedestrian safety improvements (e.g., near the new Giant shopping center), and school zone expansion for traffic management.

The document will be shared for review, with copies intended for borough staff, the JBPC, and the borough office for public access. Claire emphasized that this audit serves to celebrate accomplishments and inspire continued progress on community projects.

Members of the JBPC expressed appreciation for the positive work accomplished over the past seven years and the professional presentation of the document. There was a suggestion to share the draft more widely, possibly through social media and other channels to showcase these successes.

- Approved Plant List:

This item was deferred to the next round of implementation audits and was not discussed in detail due to Lucinda's absence.

- West Avenue Direction of Travel Concept:

The idea of making West Avenue one-way to Walnut Street was presented as a concept aimed at addressing concerns raised during parking planning discussions. The borough began gathering data on traffic volumes and speeds to assess its feasibility. The concept would convert West Avenue into a one-way street running west toward Walnut, with a focus on parking availability along West Avenue. However, challenges were identified, such as potential increases in traffic on nearby streets like Cedar, Summit, and Greenwood, which are narrow and residential. Further traffic

studies are planned, and more concrete proposals will be shared once the data collection is complete.

Members of the JBPC expressed concerns about the impact on local traffic patterns and questioned where eastbound traffic would be diverted. The conversation briefly touched on the lack of bike lanes in Jenkintown and although the West Avenue one way plan was presented as potential for adding parking lanes, such improvements with an alternative having bike lanes would benefit the borough. The JBPC agreed to wait for more detailed findings before offering final opinions.

Upcoming Webinar on Trucks on Local Roads:

Peter mentioned an upcoming webinar hosted by the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs (PSAB) on April 9th, focused on managing truck traffic on local roads. The session is free for PSAB members and would be a good opportunity for the planning commission members to learn more about this issue. GL offered to register any interested members through the borough's membership.

A discussion about the no truck signs along certain streets in the borough raised questions about their enforcement. It was noted that there are several locations with no truck signs, but these are not backed by ordinances, making enforcement difficult. GL said the chief has been reviewing these signs and their effectiveness in managing truck traffic through residential areas.

- **181-141 Off-Premises Signs Ordinance:**

This item, regarding the off-premises signs ordinance, remains tabled for future discussion, with no updates provided pending the outcome of a current legal proceeding in the Commonwealth Court.

Other Business

Upcoming Grocery Store Opening: The opening of the new Giant grocery store on April 4th was highlighted as an exciting event. There will be a ribbon-cutting ceremony, and the first 50 shoppers will receive a grocery bag. However, there was some confusion regarding borough involvement in the event, as not all local officials had been contacted. Despite this, the store's opening was seen as a positive development for the borough.

JBPC was involved with a number of suggested improvements which were implemented. A JBPC committee also proposed traffic calming measures, some of which were recently installed on Washington Lane. Borough Manager George Locke, Borough Engineer Mark Bickerton, and others are also exploring funding options through grants and working on pedestrian safety improvements, especially at the intersection of Walnut and Washington Lane, with input from the JBPC.

Development and Transformation in the Borough:

The transformation of the intersection at 501 Washington Lane with apartments and a Giant grocery store and other new developments such as the Church View Apartments, was discussed. GL reported the York Road Church View apartments are seeing a strong leasing response, with 25% leased and expectations to reach 50% by early May. This development is viewed as a success in line with the 2035 Comprehensive Plan, contributing positively to the borough's growth.

Adjournment

The meeting concluded with a motion to adjourn JM (EH) at 8:00 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for April 15, 2025.