



JENKINTOWN BOROUGH PLANNING COMMISSION
Tuesday September 16, 2025 - 6:30 p.m.
Virtual ZOOM Meeting
APPROVED MINUTES

Meeting attendees present from JBPC: Jon McCandlish, Peter Van Do, Eric Horowitz, Allison Shertzer, Rob Ghormoz, Phil Zimmerman

Not present: Lucina Bartley

Also attending on Zoom: George Locke (Jenkintown Borough Manager and Zoning Officer), Claire Warner (Montgomery County Planning Commission), Steve Spindler, Maureen Lucak, Danny Moynihan(briefly), among others from the public on Zoom and livestreamed on Facebook.

Names may be referred to by initials in the following meeting summary.

Call to Order

Jon McCandlish (chair) called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm JM (AS) and it was livestreamed on Facebook

Public Comment Reports/Actions

There were no public comments.

P.C. Meeting Minutes Approval – JBPC Secretary, Eric Horowitz

The commission reviewed the July minutes, all suggested changes were approved unanimously. JM (AS)

Next came the August minutes, prompting a more detailed discussion. Several changes were proposed. Commissioner Allison suggested removing the word "allegedly" in reference to historic preservation. Commissioner Jon recommended changing the reason cited for people moving to Jenkintown from "housing types" to the more accurate "neighborhood character," based on a 2035 borough comprehensive plan survey where 65% of respondents cited it as a key factor. August minutes were approved with those changes. JM (AS)

Jon noted that during public comments made in August by a borough council member, a statement was made that was inaccurate. Jon's information this evening is that the planning commission has autonomy in initiating discussions not explicitly directed by Borough Council. Allison shared insights from a webinar about the role of a planning commission, which confirmed that they can take on topics of interest without waiting for borough council initiative. In further discussion of role of the PC Peter suggested developing a "Standards of Operations (SOPs)" folder in the PC Dropbox account. This would be for new and current PC members to access. Potential items in the folder could be the JBPC section of the Jenkintown Borough E-code, Sunshine Act (concerning general communications and quorum), and other similar references.

New Business / Business for Discussion

Street Tree Inventory

Peter explained he had migrated relevant materials into the shared Dropbox and shared a helpful series of short YouTube videos that outline best practices in tree inventory management. He encouraged everyone to review them for background.

Peter then introduced a complementary idea proposed by Lucinda, who had suggested looking beyond just street trees to consider overall canopy coverage across the borough. Her idea centered on encouraging residents to plant more trees on private property, using canopy mapping as a community-wide goal—potentially tracked through satellite data or other digital tools. She also proposed creating educational materials on native species and tree maintenance.

Jon noted that canopy mapping tools—such as LIDAR or satellite-based systems—are available and already used in institutional master planning. He volunteered to investigate this further and share resources with the group. Phil shared this canopy mapping tool: <https://outtrees.itreetools.org/#/report?longitude=-75.12578839999999&latitude=40.0958453&tab=benefits>

Peter emphasized that this shouldn't replace a goal of conducting a street tree inventory, which would provide much-needed data about the condition of existing trees, empty wells, or maintenance needs along public corridors. The inventory would support urban planning, safety, property values, and community well-being.

Ideas emerged for crowdsourcing tree data through a community survey—inviting residents to report on their street's tree conditions or identify areas needing attention. Eric added that some regional GIS maps already contain tree data for various municipalities. In one such map, Jenkintown had only one tree cataloged—coincidentally, on his neighbor's property. He offered to look into the source of that map, possibly from the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, and report back.

There was discussion of the DCNR (Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) tree inventory tool, which offers practical benefits like tracking carbon capture and financial value of trees. It's free for municipalities, and possibly for residents as well, although some questions remain about data accuracy and account permissions. Claire shared this web address: <https://padcnr.treekeepersoftware.com/index.cfm>

Claire from MCPC provided insights on how the tool is used by municipalities, while questions were raised about whether individuals can reliably input data. The idea of volunteer arborists or student interns helping with identification and data verification was well received.

Maureen shared that while the borough as a whole cannot achieve arboretum status, the Jenkintown School District might qualify if they have 25 or more trees and integrate tree care into education — offering another way to engage youth and reinforce environmental awareness.

John and Peter agreed to collect all relevant resources — including training videos, DCNR materials, and previous meeting links — into a central Dropbox folder for JBPC to access and contribute to. They emphasized the importance of capturing both quantitative (tree data) and qualitative (personal or historical value) aspects of trees.

Ongoing Business

Jenkintown 2035 Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Historic Preservation

In this presentation, Jon revisits a document originally shared with the Planning Commission and Borough Council in June 2019, developed in response to a Borough Council request to update Jenkintown's historic inventory. At the time, the borough had around 80 historically designated properties, primarily within specific zoning districts where such designations are permitted.

The goal of the project was not just to add properties to the registry arbitrarily, but to examine how historic designation worked in practice, assess its effectiveness, and consider how other municipalities approached preservation. The process involved community surveys, letters to property owners, and coordination with the Montgomery County Planning Commission (MCPC) and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).

Key outcomes included a formal presentation to Borough Council, specific property recommendations for landmark or historic designation, and some updates to the zoning code. Notably, the Gateway Commercial District was added as a zone eligible for historic designation—this allowed for protection of buildings like the Strawbridge building and others that had previously fallen outside the scope of eligibility.

Jon outlined the three-tier system used for designation—landmark, historic, and contributing structures—highlighting some limitations and ambiguities, especially around the “historic” and “contributing” categories. Recommendations included redefining “historic” to focus more on cultural and historical significance rather than architectural character, and eliminating the vague “contributing” category. However, these changes were not adopted.

The presentation also explored two primary approaches to preservation: the current zoning-based method and the potential use of Pennsylvania's Act 167, which allows municipalities to create formal historic districts. Jon advocated for considering the district approach to preserve not only individual buildings but the broader historic fabric and character of Jenkintown's downtown. Benefits could include added protections, grant opportunities, community branding, and stronger local control over the built environment.

Several new designations were proposed and many adopted, including iconic structures like 400 York Road, 215 York Road, various churches, and the highway marquee. Unfortunately, the historically significant GE neon sign was damaged during its relocation and had to be reconstructed in LED, though it remains an important visual element downtown.

Jon noted that while some goals were achieved, such as landmarking key properties and adjusting zoning, others—like creating a historic district or adopting new designation criteria—remain opportunities for the future. The Planning Commission often functions as an informal Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB), and Jon expressed a desire to see adaptive reuse and historic preservation more strongly incentivized through policy.

In closing, Jon emphasized the personal nature of the work—having developed the materials and presentation independently—and affirmed its persuasive intent: to foster informed discussion and lead the Planning Commission toward thoughtful recommendations to Borough Council.

The discussion centered on the historical resource inventory and the broader question of whether updates or changes are needed to better protect Jenkintown's historic assets. The conversation opened with a question about whether anything remains outstanding from the commercial side of the historic resource inventory. In response, participants reflected on three main considerations: whether the zoning code still aligns with the borough's preservation goals, whether the structures on the list are correctly categorized, and whether the inventory remains accurate overall.

It was noted that the inventory was first developed in 2009 and updated in 2019. At that time, there was a deliberate decision not to remove any properties or reevaluate existing ones. There was a strong sense that any further updates should be approached carefully and thoughtfully—not arbitrarily adding or removing structures.

A key concern expressed was that the current protections primarily cover demolition, leaving many buildings vulnerable to alterations that may compromise their historical character. Some examples were cited—without naming specifics—where additions or changes to historic properties were allowed and left some participants feeling that more robust mechanisms should be in place. The idea of stewardship emerged as a guiding principle: a desire to thoughtfully manage Jenkintown's historical assets, not just react to issues as they arise.

Discussion then shifted toward the potential of creating a historic district, particularly on York Road, where the borough might gain more influence in dealing with agencies like PennDOT. The idea was that if the borough demonstrates its commitment to preservation through formal designation, it could gain more leverage when advocating for changes along York Road. Some participants acknowledged the historic district idea with caution, expressing concerns that such designations—particularly in residential areas—can limit homeowner agency and contribute to inequities.

Eric shared a missed opportunity involving a developer who chose not to rehabilitate a large historic property in Jenkintown after learning it was not within a designated historic district—highlighting how such designations can unlock financial incentives like tax credits. Ardmore, Pennsylvania, was presented as a case study in successful historic preservation, where the establishment of a historic core helped spark economic revitalization, dense residential development, and a vibrant downtown.

The group expressed interest in learning more about the benefits and trade-offs of historic districts from a neutral source—perhaps a representative from PHMC or an existing webinar—rather than relying solely on personal recollection or emotionally invested viewpoints. The idea of collecting data first, such as through surveys or studies, was well-received, with an emphasis on using this information to potentially improve zoning codes and planning decisions.

Later, the conversation turned toward residential properties. A suggestion was made to expand the inventory to include residential buildings—possibly focusing on those 50 years or older—using volunteers to help gather data, much like a program seen in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Participants acknowledged that even if a full historic district wasn't created, having

this data could still be valuable for informing zoning decisions, improving architectural quality, and guiding development that respects neighborhood character.

Peter confirmed that all relevant resources are compiled in a shared folder. That folder will be distributed the following day so members can review materials, including videos, before the next meeting. Peter also shared this link from the discussion: <https://www.broomfield.org/Faq.aspx>

Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission (PHMC) - Historical marker program.

Peter shared that they expect to hear back from PHMC within a month regarding the application. He thanked Eric and Jon for their collaboration in identifying the correct house associated with Trumbauer. Eric found a document confirming that Trumbauer's sister, Clara V. Trumbauer, owned the house—clarifying earlier confusion over the property number and a typo in her middle initial. Jon also utilized Montgomery County's online deed portal to confirm details.

Peter brought up a related issue: the possibility of fundraising in anticipation of approval. Marion Rosenbaum, a contact with the Old York Road Historical Society and informal collaborator on the project, suggested this might be a good time to fundraise given the approaching holiday season. She has potential support from local organizations like the Kiwanis and Rotary Club. Peter asked the commission whether they are permitted to fundraise directly or whether Marion would need to do so independently. He also raised the need to estimate installation costs, since PHMC would cover the marker itself, but the borough would be responsible for installation.

George noted the cost would depend on several variables, such as the need for excavation, a concrete footing, and the materials involved. It could be expensive, but if PHMC has standard installation guidelines, those could help determine a ballpark figure. Peter agreed to follow up with PHMC to get those details and share them with George for a cost estimate.

Bike and Pedestrian Safety (Sub-Committee update)

Eric gave an update on pedestrian and bike safety efforts. He has begun reaching out to community members, engineers, and planners, including some from the planning commission, to participate in discussions related to the borough's 2035 Comprehensive Plan. Five to six people have expressed interest so far, and Eric will continue outreach and share more details soon.

Approved Plant List – (update)

There was no update on the approved plant list as Lucinda was absent.

Town Center Street Parking and Traffic Study - West Avenue (update)

Off-street parking inventory is being conducted by Borough Engineer, Marc Bickerton (precursor to parking study) The off-street parking inventory is ongoing, with George confirming it is still in progress. The West Avenue traffic study is awaiting updates from Marc Bickerton, who will share results once ready.

181-141 Off-Premises Signs Ordinance (Tabled – ongoing discussion)

The ordinance on off-premises signs (181, 141) remains tabled.

Other Business

None reported

Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 8:35 with a reminder for members to review the distributed resources and consider next steps on historic preservation and street tree inventory items. The meeting was then adjourned. JM (EH)