



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

Meeting attendees present from JBPC: Phil Zimmerman (acting chair), Eric Horowitz, Allison Shertzer, Phil Zimmerman, Lucinda Bartley, Peter Van Do, Rob Ghormoz. Not present: Jon McCandlish

Others present on Zoom: Joanne Bruno, Claire Warner (MCPC) George Locke (Borough Manager and Zoning Officer), Steve Spindler, Maureen Lucak, Thompson, Maxine Marlowe

Above names may be referenced by initials below.

Call to Order

The November 2025 meeting of the Jenkintown Borough Planning Commission was called to order at 6:35 and it was livestreamed on Facebook JM (EH)

Public Comment

There was a request for public comment, of which there was none.

Reports/Actions

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

Eric relayed an email comment from Peter requesting a minor edit to the document related to the Street Tree Assessment. The commission reviewed the October minutes, all suggested changes were approved unanimously. JM (AS)

New Business / Business for Discussion

No new business was submitted for the month.

Sub Committee and Initiative Updates

- **Standard Procedures Resource (PV)** Peter then introduced a draft reference document intended to serve as a shared set of standard procedures and resources for the planning commission. He explained that the document was designed to be periodically referenced and to orient future members, noting that it was a resource he wished had existed when he first joined. He walked through the table of contents, which included excerpts from the Municipalities Planning Code, the commission's powers and duties, officer roles and terms, agenda and calendar requirements, Sunshine Act obligations, professional development opportunities, and planning tools such as zoning, subdivision and land development, and the official map. All section titles were hyperlinked directly to source materials.

- **Historic Jenkintown / PHMC Marker (PV)**

Regarding 400 York Road, Peter Van Do outlined that the proposed marker location on the street had been carefully considered, factoring in visibility, pedestrian access, and potential obstructions such as trees and street infrastructure. The final location near the center entrance of the former bank building was chosen to avoid visual clutter and ensure the marker would not be lost among traffic signals, utility boxes, or landscaping. Others confirmed this reasoning and agreed the location made the most sense.

Cost considerations were reviewed, with confirmation that Public Works would handle installation and that the borough was willing to cover related expenses, eliminating the need for fundraising. Attention then moved to the required dedication event, which cannot be scheduled until the marker is delivered. Once delivery occurs, it will serve as the trigger for planning the ceremony, which is anticipated to take place in 2026 or possibly later, depending on timelines.

Questions were raised about timing, and it was explained that the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission advises allowing at least four to six months after the marker is received to plan the dedication. The installation and dedication must be coordinated closely, often occurring within a day of each other, and the marker must remain covered until the ceremony.

Ideas for the dedication event were discussed, including keeping it simple, coordinating with existing community events, or partnering with local groups. Questions were raised about available resources such as chairs, sound equipment, and whether email invitations would be sufficient to keep costs minimal. George indicated there should be little to no additional expense if existing borough or community resources were used and suggested coordinating with the Recreation Department or similar groups that may already have equipment. The group agreed these details could be addressed later, once the marker delivery date is confirmed. Based on PHMC timelines, recent approval volumes, and the care taken with final wording, the group acknowledged the installation would likely occur in 2026 or possibly 2027. There was interest in targeting 2026 if feasible, as it would align with both local historical milestones and the national 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence

Historic Jenkintown

Key excerpts from the comprehensive plan were highlighted, focusing on historic preservation goals. These included protecting historic structures and neighborhoods, strengthening community identity, encouraging public participation in preservation efforts, supporting walking tours and cultural tourism, and completing a borough-wide historic resources inventory. It was noted that much work had already been done on the commercial side, particularly through data collection completed in 2018, which included mapping and research that could be updated rather than recreated. The question became how best to build on that foundation without duplicating effort.

Concern was raised that conducting a full residential historic inventory might be counterproductive if approached too rigidly, especially given the amount of existing data already available. Alternatives were discussed, including using accessible tools such as Google Maps or Wikimapping to tell the borough's historical story through markers, sites, and narratives rather than exhaustive property-by-property documentation. It was pointed out that neighboring communities are well represented on regional and online historical platforms, while Jenkintown remains underrepresented despite having numerous historically significant sites. Leveraging these tools could help connect local history to broader regional networks and make it more visible to residents and visitors alike.

The conversation broadened to storytelling and interpretation, including the possibility of developing walking tours, educational partnerships, and nonprofit collaborations focused on local heritage. Recent

anniversaries and unique local features were mentioned as opportunities to deepen community engagement. The idea of restoring the borough clock was raised as a long-term symbolic goal, potentially supported by grant funding, to serve as a visible capstone to preservation efforts by 2035. Zoning considerations were also mentioned as a future step once mapping and narrative work is further along.

A differing perspective was then offered in support of including residential properties in a historic resources inventory, even if done incrementally. It was argued that the story of the borough is shaped not only by commercial buildings but by the people who lived in its homes, many of whom can be traced through census records that reveal migration patterns, languages, and social history. Residential architecture was described as diverse and, in some cases, designed by notable architects, contributing to the borough's distinct character. Documenting these resources would not impose new regulations but would preserve knowledge and context that might otherwise be lost.

There was a question about whether forming a subcommittee made sense and what its purpose would be. There was concern that undertaking a full residential historic inventory would require far more people power than was realistically available. Past experience was cited, where inventories involved going house to house, photographing properties, and collecting basic information without delving into the stories of the people who lived there. Even that limited approach was described as labor-intensive, and expanding it to include social or personal histories was seen as impractical at this stage.

Several PC members questioned whether alternative approaches might accomplish similar goals with less effort. This led to requests for clarity about the underlying objective and what problem the inventory was meant to solve.

In response, it was explained that the goal of a residential historic resources inventory would be data collection: documenting properties more than fifty years old, noting their architectural style, historic characteristics, and current use. This approach aligns with recommendations in the comprehensive plan and mirrors guidance in existing preservation reports that outline accepted practices for identifying historic resources. It was emphasized that such an inventory does not have to be rigid or one-size-fits-all and could be structured flexibly to align with broader storytelling or mapping ideas already discussed.

One participant felt that the effort risked becoming an exercise in checking boxes rather than advancing preservation in a practical way. It was noted there is a lack of funding incentives or grants tied specifically to residential inventories in Pennsylvania.

An example from Doylestown was offered to illustrate how a locally driven inventory can work outside of formal state processes. There, residents undertook a borough-wide inventory of historic properties, including homes, as part of a tourism and marketing effort rather than a regulatory one. The project was not run by the state but was highly labor-intensive and rooted in a clear goal: showcasing historic buildings, strengthening community identity, and ultimately supporting preservation policies. The takeaway was that such efforts can be effective, but only when the purpose is clearly defined and the community is prepared for the workload involved.

As the conversation evolved, some on the PC acknowledged a shift in their own thinking. It was pointed out that the comprehensive plan does point to residential historic preservation as a strategy for protecting neighborhood character, suggesting that even a modest or preliminary inventory could serve as a first step if preservation is the intended outcome.

- **Bike and Pedestrian Safety (EH)**

The update covered recent activities, including a well-attended nighttime community bike ride organized by Jenkintown Abington Residents Association (JANA) that promotes many of the same transportation and safety goals outlined in the comprehensive plan. EH described recent meetings in Abington on Abington Township's separated bike lanes action plan, where multiple public meetings were held to present and prioritize proposed projects. Some of the proposed improvements, particularly along Newbold Road and Vernon Road, would affect or connect to Jenkintown and have grant funding.

Details were shared about proposed roadway changes, including narrower travel lanes to slow traffic, reconfigured parking, and dedicated bicycle lanes that could be visually or physically distinguished from vehicle lanes. While some borough residents reportedly expressed concern about these changes within Jenkintown, similar proposals in Abington Township drew less objection. Additional regional efforts were noted, including improvements along The Fairway and broader trail connections promoted by Circuit Trails, which aims to complete hundreds of miles of interconnected trails by 2030, including routes near the Jenkintown train station.

Committee members have been brainstorming challenges and potential solutions, ranging from crosswalk improvements and pedestrian-activated signals to bike sharing, car sharing, and better trail connections to green spaces. Particular attention has been given to physical constraints such as steep hills and narrow roadways that limit safe bicycle access in and out of the borough, with further discussions and meetings planned to refine these ideas.

The monthly report turned to traffic conditions along York Road, where poorly timed signals were described as creating gridlock. Cars often block intersections, preventing cross traffic from moving, while frustrated drivers attempting left turns trigger backups and occasional road rage when gaps finally open. Possible remedies were mentioned, including traffic circles, better signal coordination, and continued community engagement through bicycle events. EH also discussed using WikiMapping as a shared mapping tool to support bicycle planning, street tree analysis, and broader traffic safety efforts. Steve Spindler offered this to the borough at no cost. Coordination with Abington was emphasized, particularly around managing vehicle speeds as cars enter Jenkintown at high rates and abruptly slow to local limits. There was interest in pushing speed reductions farther out into Abington, near major commercial areas on both sides of the road, and Ross Abel was noted as actively working on this issue after a recent traffic safety meeting that included supervisors. Cheltenham Township was said to have formed a new traffic-focused committee, with more information to follow.

• **Street Tree Assessment (PV/LB)**

An update was given on a recent joint meeting with representatives from the Environmental Advisory Council and the Shade Tree Commission, where early conversations focused on goals such as tree inventories, canopy coverage, and education for residents and property owners. Rather than attempting an overly broad effort, the group decided to break the work into smaller, more manageable projects to build momentum. Potential early focus areas included collaborations with the municipality, religious institutions, and the library. Follow-up meetings were planned for the coming month to select initial projects and continue discussions around a possible tree inventory list. It was also noted that efforts might be combined with a shade tree assessment, and there was appreciation for the growing collaboration among commissions.

• **Approved Plant List (LB)** No report this month

• **Zoning Review (AS/EH)**

Allison Shertzer (AS) described a zoning-related issue concerning long-standing nonconforming residential properties, particularly older row homes built under past planning standards. AS would like to handle much of the technical work independently but sought guidance on the formal process for modifying zoning text or maps, including which officials and boards would need to be involved. The discussion touched on differences between map amendments and text amendments, existing code provisions that allow rebuilding on the same footprint. The desire expressed is to modernize ordinances that still reflect mid-twentieth-century assumptions and to provide concise written updates at a future meeting.

Ongoing Business

George Locke provided updates for both on and off-street parking inventory, which was nearing completion after a final nighttime study. The engineer had collected occupancy data across different days and times, and coordination was underway to package the findings into a clear map-based analysis. Timing for sharing the results with the county was still uncertain due to potential holiday-related traffic fluctuations. A related discussion covered the West Avenue study, prompted by resident and business interest in possibly converting the street to one-way traffic. Traffic counts had been completed as part of a feasibility study, with the next step being presentation to council to determine whether further action was warranted.

The JBPC revisited a previously tabled issue concerning outdoor advertising and billboards. With past litigation concluded, there was interest in determining whether council wanted the planning commission to resume work on a draft ordinance that had been based on county model sign codes and tied billboard size to roadway speed limits. It was agreed that the matter could not be added to the agenda that evening, but would be discussed later and potentially placed on a future agenda after coordination.

Adjournment

With no further business raised, a motion to adjourn was made and approved. JM (RS)

Appendix

Claire shared this document to be included in our List of Standard Procedures Resource. The document is a Routes 611 & 263 Corridor Study: Montgomery County Phase 2 Report. A Road Diet Alternatives Analysis for Jenkintown Borough is outlined in this report.

<https://www.dvrpc.org/products/08045c>