

Lawrence County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes
Westminster College
April 8, 2026
12:00 PM

The regular meeting of the Lawrence County Planning Commission was held at Westminster College located at 319 S. Market Street, New Wilmington, PA at 12:00 PM on April 8, 2026.

Attendance

Planning Commission

Board: Mary Burris, Vice-Chairperson
James Blundo
John Logue
Hygeia Moss-Eggleston – alternate
Linda Nitch
Frank Telesz

Staff: Amy McKinney, Director of Planning
Allen Miller, Deputy Director of Planning
Rebecca Shaffer, Deputy Director of Community Development
Chris Conti, GIS Planner
Mary Glass, Office Manager/CDBG Administrator

Guests: Dan Vogler, County Commissioner
Dan Kennedy, County Commissioner
Chris Sainato, County Commissioner
Debbie Wachter, New Castle News
Marla Brown, State Representative
Rachel Hanson, Neighbors in New Castle
Carolyn McGee, AMS 225 BTS – New Castle, LLC
Paula Prentice, Mahoning Township Resident
Linda Ross, Mahoning Township Resident
Cassie Ruehle, Mahoning Township Resident
Robert Trotter, Mahoning Township Resident
Jim Brown, Mahoning Township Resident
Glenn Wells, Scott Township Resident

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Lawrence County Planning Commission was called to order at 12:05 PM by Mary Burris.

Regular Agenda

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Frank Telesz moved, seconded by Linda Nitch to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2026, meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

2. **Staff Report:**

- **Comprehensive Plan/Greenways Plans:** DCED Comprehensive Plan Update – awarded \$75,000 from DCED to update the County Comp plan. Four consulting firms submitted proposals for the update to the County Comprehensive Plan and interviews are set for mid-April. Preparing an RFP for the Master Site Plan and had our preconference meeting with our DCNR reps for our Stavich Contract and Quaker Falls. Working with Taylor Engineering for the Stavich Bike Trail Phase 1. Forward Lawrence submitted an application to DCED for a portion of the Quaker Falls Phase II Master Site Plan match and will be submitting an application to DCED GTRP for Phase II of Stavich.
- **CDBG:** General administrative duties. Ellwood City Curb ramp project is partially complete with a retaining wall to be completed in the spring. Advertisement for the Rich Avenue CDBG project. Preparing for monitoring of several FY CDBG and CDBG-CV contracts in June.
- **LEAD Hazard Reduction Grant:** New grantee webinar was held. Working with partnering Counties to get MOU's signed. Rebecca will be attending the mandatory grant training at the end of April in Arlington, Virginia.
- **ARPA:** General Administrative Duties and quarterly reporting.
- **SPC:** Attended TTC meetings. Planning Directors Meeting. Active Transportation meeting. TIP meetings for the TIP Update. Attended the Long Range Plan Expert Panel with SPC
- **NORTHWEST:** Weekly calls with the Core Connect Committee.
- **GENERAL:** CPDAP meetings. APA-PA Board Meeting and Legislative Committee Meetings. Forward Lawrence Board meetings and site committee meetings. Virtual Training on Data Centers.

3. **Commissioner's Comments:**

Dan Vogler – Commissioner Vogler welcomed the guests attending the meeting and asked that all those attending please observe a moment of silence in remembrance of William Humphrey who served as the County Engineer for many years and who had recently passed away. Mr. Vogler then went on to explain how State law allows counties to create planning commissions and what the role of our planning commission is. Of the 26 municipalities in the county, the planning commission has an advisory role to 17 of those. Meaning, the planning commission will review amendments to ordinances, subdivision and land development plans for those municipalities based on their own ordinances, however; they hold no approval authority. He also stated that the board holds a monthly public meeting that everyone is welcome to attend.

Dan Kennedy – Stated he is looking forward to the May planning commission meeting being held at the PA American Water Ellwood Plant.

Chris Sainato – Stated he has been to the PA American Water Ellwood Plant and highly recommends taking the tour. He also stated that there has been a lot of activity at the courthouse right now and that their main focus right now is the St. Joseph property.

4. **Forward Lawrence:**

None

5. **Public Comments:**

State Representative, Marla Brown – From the State’s perspective, they are encouraging data center development for economic development purposes. They believe there is a lot of value in bringing them in. However, she believes there needs to be parameters. She is personally creating legislation that will come out this week that will not allow data centers to be built on Class 1-3 farmland. There are several pieces of legislation pending on how to regulate data centers; however, none have passed yet. The three biggest issues being rising electricity rates, the use of too much water and how to keep the noise under control.

Linda Ross – Stated she is concerned that residential areas could be rezoned industrial and questioned whether municipal governments can use eminent domain to take neighborhoods for the construction of a data center after they have been rezoned. It was explained by staff that this would be a municipal function that would allow for industrial use but would not be eminent domain.

Paula Prentice – Asked for an explanation of how zoning can be changed. Staff explained that the municipality is required to have a public hearing. They must introduce the amendment, and they then have 45 days to act on it but during that time their planning commission and our planning commission have 30 days to review. They are not necessarily going to adopt within 45 days, but that is the minimum required time period that they have. The question was then asked what a resident should do if their property was rezoned but they never received notice. It was explained that the property owner should receive a notice, that the property should be posted with the information and the amendment should be addressed in a public meeting. The resident would have 45 days to challenge it.

Glenn Wells – Stated he is a Scott Township resident, which is a township with no zoning. The board of directors want no part of zoning, however, there are township residents who have had solar farms and strip mines built in their backyards. He would like to know who is going to help them and what they can do legally. It was explained that without zoning, you cannot regulate location. Therefore, you can build anything you want, anywhere you want in that municipality. If you have zoning you can place stipulations on the use, but you cannot prevent a legal use from coming to the municipality. It has to be allowed somewhere within the municipality. Mr. Wells again stated that the township supervisors do not want zoning and wanted to know what they do about it. Discussion was made that there is currently a vacancy on the board of supervisors in Scott Township as someone had recently resigned and that someone from Scott Township should submit a letter of interest for that position as the other two supervisors have 30 days to appoint someone to replace the prior supervisor. The other way to make a change is at the polls during the next election.

Mahoning Township Resident – Spoke about environmental effects of data centers on surrounding farmland such as raising the ground/soil temperature. Even a rise of a couple degrees in soil temperature would affect the nitrification of the soil and water uptake. Droughts would be more prominent, and it would affect the water table. Who will be responsible for mass crop loss? State Representative, Marla Brown, asked if this resident could pass along this information to her.

6. Old Business:

None

7. New Business:

None

Action Agenda:

Subdivision and Land Developments: Two land developments were presented to the Board for review:

Thomas McClymonds Single Family Residence – Slippery Rock Township - Allen Miller reviewed the County Comments on the plan. Linda Nitch moved that the Township take the County comments presented into consideration before approval. John Logue seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

New Life Baptist Church – Wilmington Township - Allen Miller reviewed the County Comments on the plan. Frank Telesz moved that the Township take the County comments presented into consideration before approval. Linda Nitch seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Zoning and Municipal Reviews:

Distribution Facility – Mahoning Township
Data Center Use – Mahoning Township
Data Center Use – North Beaver Township
HM-1 to R-I-A Rezoning – Ellwood City Borough
Boarding/Rooming House Use – Union Township

Allen Miller gave a review of each zoning ordinance amendment presented. Frank Telesz moved that the municipalities take the County comments presented into consideration before approval. Linda Nitch seconded. Motion carried 5-0.

Act 14 Notifications:

Three reviews since the March 11, 2026, meeting.

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 1:18 PM.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at 12:00 PM at the PA American Water Ellwood Plant located at 352 Industrial Park Drive, Wampum, PA.