

**Lawrence County Planning Commission  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
The Venue by Weber Catering  
January 14, 2026  
12:00 PM**

The regular meeting of the Lawrence County Planning Commission was held at The Venue by Weber Catering located at 2617 New Butler Road, New Castle, PA at 12:00 PM on January 14, 2026.

**Attendance**

**Planning Commission**

**Board:**

Karolee Loughhead, Chairperson  
Mary Burris, Vice-Chairperson  
Cindy Morabito – Secretary  
Everett Bleakney  
Maxwell Frederick – alternate  
Jim Gagliano – alternate  
Larry Lambo  
John Logue – alternate  
Hygeia Moss-Eggleston - alternate

**Staff:**

Amy McKinney, Director of Planning  
Allen Miller, Deputy Director of Planning  
Chris Conti, GIS Planner  
Mary Glass, Office Manager/CDBG Administrator

**Guests:**

Dan Vogler, County Commissioner  
Amy Kunselman, Lawrence-Mercer Assoc. of Realtors  
Debbie Wachter, New Castle News  
Rachel Hanson, Neighbors in New Castle

**Call to Order**

The regular meeting of the Lawrence County Planning Commission was called to order at 12:19 PM by Karolee Loughhead.

**Regular Agenda**

1. **Approval of Minutes:** Everett Bleakney moved, seconded by Mary Burris to approve the minutes of the November 12, 2025, 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. Still waiting to hear on DCNR for Stavich Bike Trail (Development) Quaker Falls (Master Site plan for Phase II). We are securing bids for electric service at Quaker Falls. LSA applications from 2024 were awarded and we did not receive additional funds for Stavich.. Resubmitted the application for the 2025 funding round but those have not been announced yet.

- **CDBG:** General administrative duties. Shenango Township Park - all work was completed on December 8<sup>th</sup>. Ellwood City Curb ramp project is partially complete with a retaining wall to be completed in the spring. CDBG FY2025 application was approved November 19<sup>th</sup> and contract was received. Notification was sent for the contract to be signed. We completed a FHEO monitoring for FY2022 and no findings were found. Also working on the environmental reviews for FY2025. Working on annual reports that are due on January 20<sup>th</sup>.
- **ARPA:** General Administrative Duties and quarterly reporting.
- **SPC:** Attended TTC meetings. Planning Directors Meeting. Active Transportation meeting. TIP meetings for the TIP Update. SPC Competitive Program Selection Committee for CMAQ applications.
- **NORTHWEST:** Weekly calls with the Core Connect Committee. Working with Northwest representative and 4ward planning on housing study.
- **GENERAL:** CPDAP meetings. APA-PA Board Meetings. Forward Lawrence Board meetings and site committee meetings Next LOM Meeting will be held on March 5<sup>th</sup> – working on agenda. City of New Castle Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meetings, Focus Group meeting. Shenango China Brownfield meeting.

### 3. Commissioner's Comments:

**Dan Vogler** – Stated that Commissioner Sainato was not present as commissioners from the southwest part of the state were invited to a meeting at Acrisure Stadium in Pittsburgh today. The meeting is being held in anticipation of the upcoming NFL Draft. As thousands of people that will be traveling to Pittsburgh for the event, they feel that hotel rooms as far north as Lawrence County and possibly beyond will be filled to capacity. The county has passed the 2026 budget, balanced and on time. There was no change in the real estate property tax rate. They closed on the former St. Joseph's church property on January 13, 2025. The expectation is to be utilizing the facility for several county offices as well as storage. The board of elections will be taking action in the next couple of weeks due to the merger of South New Castle Borough with Shenango Township. They will now need to create a voting district in the area. A public hearing will be held on January 15, 2026, at 2:00 PM. He also stated that Chip Abramovic will be replacing Ben Bush as the CEO of Forward Lawrence.

### 4. Forward Lawrence:

Maxwell Frederick states Chip Abramovic has been on site for a meeting recently and they all feel he will be a good addition and are excited to be working with him. The hotel study is still underway, and they are looking forward to receiving the report soon. The Steelite expansion is on schedule. The machinery and robotics will be the next thing to be installed. Phase I will be done by April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026. Phase II is a 350,000 square foot building adjacent to the current structure. Site and roadway improvements are being completed at Stonecrest Business Park. They are still administering the grants for the project and expect all the work to be done and closed out by May of 2026. They are working with the City Rescue Mission to acquire six parcels they own on Sheridan Street in New Castle and are hoping to close next week. He and a few colleagues will be meeting with Ian Beniston, Executive Director, of the Youngstown Neighborhood Development Corporation next week to get insight into how they manage their program. They have identified \$1 million dollars in assistance in project costs for the Whittaker property. They also have an LSA application submitted for an additional \$500,000. Millennium North, which is adjacent to the Steelite

property, has about 170 usable acres that can be developed. They are currently drafting flyers and brochures to send out to prospective business. They have received a \$100,000 LSA grant for New Wilmington, Vine Street Updates.

**5. Public Comments:**

Amy Kunselman notified the board that Lawrence County Builders Association dissolved as of November 30, 2025. Mercer County will be taking over this area. The Lawrence County Board of Realtors has merged with the Mercer County Board of Realtors and will now be known as the Lawrence-Mercer Association of Realtors. She will be the administrator of the group.

**6. Old Business:**

None

**7. New Business:**

Alternate voting procedures were discussed. State ethics forms were handed out and are due by the February, 2026 meeting.

**Action Agenda:**

**Subdivision and Land Developments:** One land development was presented to the Board for review:

**Varga Cold Storage Facility – Wilmington Township** - Allen Miller reviewed the County Comments on the plan. Everett Bleakney moved that the Township take the County comments presented into consideration before approval. Larry Lambo seconded.

Motion carried 5-0.

**Zoning and Municipal Reviews:**

3 Reviews since the November 12, 2025 meeting.

**Act 14 Notifications:**

14 Reviews since the November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting.

**Adjournment:**

Meeting adjourned at 12:49 PM.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 12:00 PM at the Slippery Rock Township Municipal Building located at 4334 US 422, New Castle, PA.