

**ROBESON TOWNSHIP**  
**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**May 4, 2026**

The regular Meeting of the Robeson Township Planning Commission was held in person at 2689 Main Street, Birdsboro, Pa., May 4, 2026, at 7:00 PM. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 PM by Vice-Chairman Gregg Eshelman. Also attending were Commission members Steve Marino, Henry Ramsay, Terri Lampe-Melcher, Dave Talarico and Bob Seal. Chairman William Meister was absent from the May Meeting. Also, in attendance were Township Manager Osmer Deming, Engineer Ryan Rhode and Solicitor Mark Merolla.

**Minutes:**

The Planning Commission Meeting Minutes from March 2, 2026, were reviewed by the members in attendance. A motion was made by Mr. Marino and a second by Mr. Ramsay to approve the Meeting Minutes as presented, the motion passed unanimously.

**Plans for Acceptance:**

Kramer / Nanni Subdivision – A motion was made by Mr. Marino with a second by Ms. Lampe-Melcher to accept the Kramer / Nanni Subdivision Plan for review, the motion passed unanimously.

Brookside School Land Development Plan – A motion was made by Ms. Lampe-Melcher with a second by Mr. Ramsay to accept the Brookside School Land Development Plan for review, the motion passed unanimously.

**Plans for Review (Engineer Rhode):**

Kramer / Nanni Subdivision – Engineer Rhode introduced the plan to the members present. John Hoffert, PLS distributed copies of the plan for the members review. Engineer Rhode and Mr. Hoffert explained that the comments outlines within the May 4, 2026, review letter were minimal. Mr. Hoffert advised the members present that lot corners have been set and the only outstanding item was the receipt of a review by the Berks County Planning Commission. Engineer Rhode agreed with Mr. Hoffert's statement.

After a brief discussion between Mr. Hoffert and the members present, Mr. Marino, with a second from Mr. Seal, made motion to recommend approval of the Minor Subdivision Plan, conditioned upon the satisfaction of the items outlined in Engineer Rhode's May 4, 2026, review letter. The motion passed unanimously.

Brookside School Land Development Plan – Engineer Jason Shanner, PE was present along with applicant, Steven Smucker to discuss the land development plan. Engineer Shanner explained that the applicant has successfully obtained two variances. The first is from Zoning Section 403.B to permit an Amish one room school to be constructed within the R-2 Zoning District. The second is from Section 802.B of the Zoning Ordinance to allow two principal uses on one property. Engineer Shanner explained that this would be a one room schoolhouse approximately 1,500 sqft in size. The school would serve roughly 25 to 40 students within grades 1 through 8. All students will be bused or dropped off at the school with no pedestrians walking to the school building.

Mr. Shanner advised the members present that they are in receipt of Engineer Rhode's May 4, 2026 review letter. He highlighted the drainage concerns outlined by Engineer Rhode and stated that they would be working to address them. There was discussion between Mr. Shanner, Mr. Smucker and the members present regarding the bathroom locations not being within the proposed school. Mr. Shanner reiterated that there will be no pedestrians walking to the school and that there will be roughly three (3) passenger vans delivering students. Resident Mr. Keim questioned the need for a school zone on Zion Road. Engineer Rhode responded by stating that the Township can install a school zone if requested. After some additional discussion regarding the site, Mr. Shanner stated that they were not seeking a recommendation from the members present at the meeting and that they would revise the plan and resubmit. No action was taken by the members present.

**Time Extension(s):**

None

**Items for the Good of the Order:**

322 Plow Road – ZHB application – Engineer Jason Shanner, PE was present along with applicant(s) David and Elizabeth Sparr (D&L Estates, LLC) to discuss the zoning hearing application. Engineer Shanner explained that the Zoning Hearing Board of Robeson Township, Berks County, PA will hold a public hearing in the public meeting room located in the Township Police Department Building, 2689

Main Street, Robeson Township, PA 19508, on Thursday, May 28, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. to consider the Zoning Application of D&L Estates, LLC, seeking variances from the following: i) Section 803.A.3 to allow residential accessory structure to exceed the maximum allowed by 9,100 square feet in excess of that permitted; ii) Section 805.C.2 to allow a tree service business to be operated as a category 2 home occupation inside the existing 11,000 sf structure; iii) Section 805.C.4 to allow four non-resident employees for the home occupation business; and, iv) alternatively Section 403.B and Section 802.B to allow the tree service business as a second principal use together with a single family use on the subject property.

After discussion by the members present, in particularly regarding the number of employees reporting to the site, a motion was made by Mr. Seal with a second by Mr. Talarico to recommend the Township take a position in favor of the application. Mr. Ramsay reminded Mr. Sparr to be sure his testimony includes the request for additional employees to allow room for the growth of the tree business.

Stericycle – Waiver of Land Development – Mr. Joe Karnes, Senior Manager Engineering, was present to represent Stericycle in their request for a wavier of land development. Engineer Rhode explained to the members present that he had been in discussion with the Stericycle folks regarding their request. Mr. Karnes explained to the members present that they are requesting a waiver to allow for three site improvements:

1. The installation of a prefabricated switch building.
2. Drainage improvements and earthwork on the site.
3. A waste tank to be installed at the site.

Mr. Karnes explained that the switch gear and wastewater tank already exist on the site. He is asking permission to install these improvements while the existing remains in place and then decommission the existing switch gear and waste tank. Ms. Lampe-Melcher asked some general questions regarding the site and the current activities. After a brief discussion with the members present, Mr. Marino with a second from Ms. Lampe-Melcher, recommended a waiver of land development based upon the discussion before the Planning Commission. The motion passed unanimously.

Data Center Ordinance – Engineer Rhode distributed a package to the members present, as well as some members of the public, which included guidance documents from the Berks County Planning Commission, request by Ms. Lampe-Melcher, a current copy of the Robeson Township DRAFT Data Center Ordinance (prepared Kraft Municipal Group, Inc.), as well as a draft Data Center Ordinance

(prepared by the Robeson Township Environmental Advisory Committee). Engineer Rhode explained that currently the Township is somewhat protected from data center proposals under Section 728. of the Zoning Ordinance. This Section permits all undefined uses as a Special Exception within the GI Zoning District. Engineer Rhode then reviewed the current draft Data Center Ordinance with the EAC members present and the Planning Commission members present. This discussion focused on the important aspect of these ordinances. This included bulk zoning data and building height requirements, setbacks to residential zoning districts, environmental impacts to water supply, noise, and air ground and water pollution, as well as impacts to fire and emergency services. Engineer Rhode compared the sections which address these issues in the current draft to those found within the draft ordinances of the neighboring municipalities.

The discussion regarding data center concerns included many of the members of the public which attended. This discussion involving EAC members, PC members, and the general public included, but may not have been limited to the following:

- Engineer Rhode discussed the current bulk zoning criteria and proposed methods of approval.
- There was discussion between EAC Member Ms. McMahon, Engineer Rhode, Solicitor Merolla, and the members present regarding what should generally be within the ordinance and what might be far or over reaching. All agreed they do not want to open the Township up to an exclusionary challenge.
- Vice-Chairman Eshelman explained that he had concerns with some of the setback criteria and that it too could be exclusionary in nature.
- Generally, those present agreed that the following items should be reviewed and potentially revised within the draft ordinance:
  - Water supply shall be required to be public, with protections added to protect ground water.
  - A statement regarding adverse impacts should be added as a requirement within the ordinance.
  - Engineer Rhode will review the on lot water protections so that the section does not tempt applicants to request a variance.
  - Several sections of the draft ordinance reference trucking and truck storage. Engineer Rhode will review these sections and remove what does not seem to be needed.
  - Any reference to odors or emissions from farm operations will be removed.

- Engineer Rhode will review the decommissioning requirements and include recommendations from the EAC and BCPC guidance document.

After the members present, Solicitor Merolla, and Engineer Rhode attempted to answer the questions and concerns presented, Engineer Rhode stated that he would be working on a revised draft ordinance and would present that draft at the June Planning Commission Meeting. With no further discussion being heard, no action was taken by the members present. The members present did thank the EAC members in attendance for their ongoing concern and interest regarding this issue and requested they continue to attend meetings as they are able.

**Adjournment:**

At 8:52 PM, there being no further business, the Planning Commission adjourned upon a motion by Mr. Marno and seconded by Ms. Lampe-Melcher. The motion passed unanimously.