

**Monthly Meeting of the
Allentown City Planning Commission
July 14, 2026
Draft Meeting Minutes**

Attendance:

- **ACPC Board Members:** Christian Brown (Chair), Craig Beavers (Vice Chair) Erich Hornung (Secretary), Leslie Hartzell, Kate Hartney
 - **City Staff Members:** Jennifer Gomez, Melissa Velez, Mike Handzo, Joseph Millick, David Petrik, Adam Rosenthal, Sarah Rotz, Brian Hite, Brandon Jones, Kevin McNulty, Charles Gafney, and Yeimy Delgado (Virtually)
 - **Others present:** For item 3: Jennifer Swann, Ricky Pool, Jadie Serra, Emily Kim, Jeremy Binder, Lidda Hanna, Bonnie McMahon, Travis Beller, Kathryn Hoffman, Alejandro Figueroa, Margaret Hartmann For Item #4: John Palumbo, Carlos Tovar, Minal Amin For Item #5 Rocco Caracciolo, John McRoberts, James Russell, Tom Whalen, Brett Showalter
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Meeting Called to Order at 12:15 PM

Item #1 - Approval of minutes of the June 9, 2026 Meeting – No comments or corrections.

Action: Unanimously approved as written.

Administrative Matters

Item #2a – Planning Commission Agenda Item Postponement Policy

Item #2b – Planning Commission Policy and Procedures – Public Participation

Staff Overview :

Jennifer Gomez stated that the two administrative items were related to setting policy and procedures related to the tabling or postponement of an agenda item as well as public comment during meetings. She stated that this would establish a time frame of 26 hours before a Planning Commission meeting so that the project could be postponed at the request of the applicant. Ms. Gomez stated that if the request came to pull from the agenda less than 26 hours before the meeting the applicant would be required to attend the meeting and request a tabling of the project.

Discussion:

Chris Brown stated that this was a formal adoption of the postponements policy that had been discussed previously. Mr. Brown stated for the public comment policy that this was a formal adoption of the policy that had been discussed previously. He stated that the policy would be to take public comment at the end of the agenda for non-agenda items and also memorialize the required public comment prior to action on any agenda item. He noted that public comment would be restricted to residents and taxpayers in the City of Allentown.

Public Comment:

None

Action:

Craig Beavers made a motion to adopt the ACPC Public Participation Policy and the ACPC Postponement Policy of the ACPC.

Leslie Hartzell seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously 5-0

Item #3 – Amendments to Part II General Legislation, Chapters 660 Zoning, Article 5 Uses, Table 660-4 Use Table and Section 660-38 Manufacturing & Industry Group, adding public notice requirements and amending the use category Data center Use.

File: Bill 52 – 2026

Staff Overview:

Ms. Gomez reviewed the history of the Data Center ordinance Bill 20, the city's first data center ordinance, which had been adopted by City Council. She stated based on feedback from public comments, e-mails, phone calls and extensive feedback, City Council expressed a high priority for amendments to strengthen the ordinance while having some regulations in place by adopting Bill 20.

Ms. Gomez highlighted the amendments to the ordinance. She stated that the amendment would remove the Special Exemption Use for Data Centers in the IG Zoning District and maintain the Special Exemption Use in the IM Zoning District. She also noted a change to setback requirements, namely a significant increase in the setback from sensitive receptors, from 200 feet to 500 feet.

Ms. Gomez also noted that the proposed amendment had a new public notification requirement for greater transparency, not only for data centers but also for high intensity industrial uses and recycling uses. She stated that under the amendment, applicants would be required to hold their own public meeting before any City public hearings. She opined that this requirement would improve communication between the applicant and the community. She stated that the applicant would also be required to have a project website with plans and project files for community access and transparency.

Ms. Gomez stated that there were additional regulations for noise and vibration such as full spectrum sound studies, documentation of baseline ambient noise levels, assessment of persistent tonal sounds and other low frequency sounds. Relating to specific regulations for third party acoustical consultants and associated violations. She opined that a lot of language was already existing but was refined to put an emphasis on the third party consultants.

Ms. Gomez highlighted the addition of a decommissioning requirement. She stated that this would require full mitigation of the site and to restore the site to previous conditions and a financial security requirement to ensure decommissioning occurs.

Discussion:

Mr. Brown asked about setbacks that were 75 feet from a public street and what is the determination if the sensitive receptor is across the street. Ms. Gomez informed the Commission that the setbacks are measured from the lot line of sensitive receptors regardless of public streets. She stated that the more restrictive setback would prevail when determination is made for setbacks. Mike Handzo stated that punctuation in the intent is very clear for this requirement. He opined that the 500 foot setback would not be negated by the receptor being across a street.

Mr. Brown thanked the Allentown Environmental Advisory Council for their assistance. That while the ordinance may not be perfect, the use is an emerging use that is rapidly changing. He also informed the audience that the Planning Commission's role in the ordinance amendment is to provide comments to City Council. Kate Hartney thanked the City Staff for their work as well as the community for their feedback and hard work on this amendment

Public Comment:

Kathryn Hoffman of 1649 W Linden Street stated she is a homeowner in the city since 1987. She stated that she liked the requirements and mandates but was displeased by the "if possible" phrasing within the ordinance. She also wanted to see a limit on water and electricity usage and asked who would enforce these regulations. She stated that she liked the transparency requirements but wondered who the City serves and who do they work for?

Bonnie McMahon of 934 N 26th Street stated that Bill 52 was for Data Centers greater than 50,000 Square Feet. She inquired whether there were regulations for smaller data centers under 50,000 square feet. She also inquired as to the full spectrum sound study and whether it covered infrasound.

Ms. Gomez informed the audience and commission that the Data Center ordinance would apply to all data centers but that those over 50,000 square feet would require an 8-acre minimum lot size. She also stated that the dBA is the standard sound measurement but the intent is to study all sound including lower hums and frequencies.

Alejandro Figueroa of 747 Walnut Street in Emmaus PA, and taxpayer in the city stated his opinion that the city should look beyond setbacks and boundaries. He stated that the intent should be to encourage sustainable projects.

Action:

Mr. Beavers made a motion to forward Bill 52 to City Council with a favorable recommendation, Mx. Hartney Seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 5-0

Land Developments

Ms. Hartzell announced that she would recuse herself from the next agenda item as her employer has an interest in the project.

Item #4

Project: West Residences at 2 Allen Street – Resubmission

Applicant: Remington & Vernick Engineers

Location: 1-17 Liberty Street, 2-16 Allen Street

Description: Construction of a 7-story mixed-use building with 200 apartment units and 18,000 SF of retail space.

File: LMA-2025-00028 (Preliminary/Final)

Staff Overview:

Melissa Velez stated that the application had previously been reviewed by the Planning Commission on March 10, 2026 and was tabled to allow the applicant to make revisions based on comments from the Commission and staff. She also stated that the project was a major land development in which applicant proposed to construct a 7-story mixed-use building with 200 dwelling units.

Ms. Velez highlighted that the revised plans show the building would be comprised of 50 studios, 107 1-bedrooms, and 43 2-bedrooms. She also informed the Commission that the previously incorrect addresses listed on the plans had been corrected, a lighting plan had been provided, and bike racks, bike storage, and tenant storage space had been added to the plans. She also noted that an off-street loading/unloading space had been identified on the plans, but full dimensions were not shown. Ms. Velez stated that the Staff was unsure whether there was sufficient space for loading and unloading to occur with the parking space that which was located only a few feet from the doorway to the loading area and how this space will service the retail bays that are at the basement finished floor level. She also informed the Commission that no access was shown to the elevator in the trash room and that no access was shown to the retail spaces from the parking garage.

Ms. Velez stated that the project site was within the TNDO, and said that the renderings showed the majority of the façade to be fiber cement panel, architectural panels, artisan siding, and thin brick. The changes in material, color of the brick, and canopy, pay homage to the existing Sussman building.

Ms. Velez continued that the revised renderings show consistent changes in color and material that helped to break up the façade and massing of the building and create a more vertical orientation. She also noted that it had appeared that the building had been moved forward slightly toward Riverside Drive, although dimensions were not provided on the plans to confirm. Ms. Velez highlighted that the increased rear setback provided additional space between the proposed building and the small rowhomes across Brick Street. She also noted that the smaller windows are proposed on the first and second floors along Brick Street would be more consistent with the rowhomes. She noted that staff suggested that the Commission inquire as to what screening material will be used, if any, and how will that will prevent headlight glare onto adjoining properties and streets.

Ms. Velez highlighted the City adopted plans of Allentown Vision 2030: Comprehensive plan, Lehigh Riverfront Master Plan, Allentown Works, Welcome Home: Housing Needs Assessment

and Strategic Plan, Safe Streets for all, Citywide Bike Plan, Allentown Parks Plan 2025. The 1st and 6th Wards Neighborhood plan.

Ms. Velez stated, in conclusion, that staff suggested that the Commission inquire about the applicant's coordination with the Cohesion Network and the Riverfront Civic Association, as well as the affordability of the proposed apartments. Staff further recommended that the applicant engage with community groups as retail spaces are programmed and consider neighborhood needs, including access to food options, childcare, high-generating employment uses, and to coordinate with the Allentown School District on additional school demands.

Ms. Velez stated that consideration should also be given to the design of Wharf Street for a future connection to the waterfront. She also recommended that applicant explore the potential to widen Brick Street to better support the adjacent homes and whether any aspect of the Sussman Building (2 Allen Street) can be retained and reused as part of the development.

Ms. Velez stated that the applicant should be encouraged to incorporate energy-saving strategies and bird-friendly window designs, include native plants in landscaping, and to consider building above the elevation of the floodplain and that outdoor containers and amenities be anchored and enclosed.

She noted additional recommendations include identifying loading/drop-off areas, she emphasized that the applicant provide additional information on the loading/unloading space including the dimensions and how it is to be utilized by retail and residential tenants, ensuring the garage screening material will suitably prevent headlight glare onto adjoining properties and streets, and enhancing the streetscape with benches, trash receptacles, and pedestrian-scale lighting.

Ms. Velez stated that the staff encouraged the applicant to work with the City to explore on-street parking along Riverside Drive, evaluate the possibility of allowing public parking in the proposed garages, and implement improvements identified in the traffic study. The applicant should also coordinate with the Allentown Parks Department on park-related needs and collaborate with LANTA to assess transit routes serving the 1st and 6th Wards.

Ms. Velez informed the Commission that the applicant's comment response letter only addressed the technical City Comment letter, staff requested that the applicant address the Planning Commission's March 2026 feedback, including clarification of the overall vision for Riverside Drive and waterfront development, what placemaking and/or public art features had been incorporated, whether there was dedicated visitor/public parking in the garage, how the applicant's projects related to one another, how they would connect to the community and other assets, and how they could align with the Lehigh Riverfront Master Plan.

Ms. Velez concluded that staff recommended that the interior parking layout be revised to remove pockets of parking and to add connecting drive aisles or designated areas to turn around, a cornice in a style that compliments the building should be added, details of the parking garage screening should be provided, and that additional landscaping be added, and that step back is recommended to be added for the 4th floor, and that a pedestrian easement be secured.

Finally, she stated that Staff generally supported the proposed development, but was interested in understanding which elements of the overall recommendations, traffic study recommendations, and project specific recommendations can be incorporated into the project prior to approval. And any recommendation of approval must be conditioned on the applicant appropriately addressing comments in the city comment letter, including, but not limited, restriping the roadway in order to provide on-street parking to the satisfaction of the City. Any approvals should also be conditioned upon the building elevations dated May 6, 2026, as presented at the July 14, 2026 Planning Commission meeting. Any significant changes to the elevations should require review and approval by the Allentown Planning Commission.

Discussion:

Carlos Tovar, representing the applicant, provided a presentation highlighting the changes to the plan from the comments received from the March 10, 2026 ACPC meeting. He highlighted the renderings and the integration of the architecture of the to be demolished Sussman Building into the new building design.

Mr. Tovar then proceeded to review the individual floors of the proposed building with focus on the basement and first floor parking and retail areas. He noted that dedicated parking for retail and tenants could be accommodated within the parking garage. He noted there would be 200 parking spaces in the garage as well as the planned restriping of Riverside Drive to accommodate on street parking. He also highlighted the different apartment layouts through the residential floors of the building.

Mr. Tovar reviewed the elevations and renderings of the proposed building pointing out aspects of the previous ACPC recommendations and the incorporation of an Allentown historical industrial feel and homage to the Sussman Building. He also noted the change in the screening of headlights from the parking levels to the neighboring properties including some smaller style windows and metal panels.

Mr. Tovar concluded with a review of the lighting on all aspects of the building and highlighted terraces that would be part of some of the apartments to provide an outdoor area for residents.

Mr. Brown opined that he would have preferred a retention of some of the Sussman Building but that he understood that saving portions of the building may be cost and project prohibitive. He also questioned the parking areas for retail tenants and patrons and whether they were to be available to the public. Mr. Tovar explained that the control of parking would be by key card access for the tenants, and that patrons could possibly have 40 rotating spaces for the public to utilize.

Mx. Hartney identified concerns about the aspect of placemaking, bicycle access and access to the waterfront. Stating that the desire was to see a more downtown feel, connection to the revitalization of the City and creation of more foot traffic.

Mx. Hartney questioned how people would get there, and how they would be enticed to stay there with a combination of retail and living space. Mr. Tovar opined that he believed that would occur with the developments as he had witnessed in other cities including the City of Allentown along Hamilton Street.

Mr. Beavers questioned as to the roadway configuration regarding lanes of traffic and whether that included on street parking. Mr. Tovar stated that the parking would be key to the success.

Mx. Hartney asked about a grocery store possibility for the building. John Palumbo stated that he had conversations with Elias Markets but that had not materialized into anything to date. He stated he would revisit that aspect as it would be a nice amenity for the community.

Mr. Brown asked about the lighting along Brick Street and voiced his concern over intensity of lighting onto the neighboring properties. He opined that a subtle style of decorative lighting may be more desirable while still lighting the area for safety. Mr. Tovar said he would revisit the lighting and integrate the suggestion into the lighting plan. Mr. Brown also noted that the landscape plan could be enhanced with an opportunity there to do more with the streetscapes. Mr. Tovar agreed and stated that the applicant would revisit the landscape plan.

Mr. Brown inquired about the pedestrian easement versus dedicated right of way of Brick Street. David Petrik stated that the City Engineering Bureau preferred a pedestrian easement to enable the public to utilize the sidewalks without the city having to take on the responsibility of the right of way, which could change the setbacks of the proposed building.

Erich Hornung voiced his approval of the architectural design of the proposed building. He opined that the cornice could be strengthened to give it more visual appeal rather than the smaller version depicted on the renderings. Mr. Tovar indicated he would look into that and he agreed it could be revised and he would look into that aspect.

Mr. Beavers asked about the AEAC bird friendly window design and whether that could be incorporated due to the possible existence of a large bird population. Mr. Tovar stated that he would look into the bird friendly windows for the higher floors. Mr. Beavers also requested that animal and cigarette disposal stations be provided. Mr. Palumbo and Mr. Tovar stated that would not be a problem to incorporate.

Mx. Hartney inquired as to the applicants coordination and conversations with the Cohesion Network, Riverfront Civic Association and the Allentown School District. Mr. Tovar stated they meet with the organizations on a regular basis. Mx. Hartney inquired as to the affordable housing aspect. Mr. Tovar stated that he realized that was an important priority for the city. He expressed a desire to work with the city to make the placemaking and future affordability with future projects.

Mr. Brown inquired about the possibility of delaying demolition of buildings until the redevelopment was about to start. Mr. Palumbo stated that with the recent large fire at 301 N Front Street, that in his opinion delaying demolition of vacant properties slated for redevelopment would be a safety hazard.

Public Comment:

Alejandro Figueroa of 747 Walnut Street of Emmaus, PA asked whether the building was in the flood zone. Mr. Tovar indicated that the project was not in a flood zone.

Action:

Mr. Beavers made a motion to provide conditional preliminary/final approval of the project with the following conditions:

- The window material on the garage shall fully prevent headlight glare onto the adjacent properties and streets.
- Designate parking for the non-residential spaces within the garage, which may include tenants and visitors.
- The wall lighting and overall project lighting shall be decreased and/or shielded to better reduce lighting glare onto adjacent properties, particularly on the Brick Street façade.
- The landscaping around the base of the building and streetscape shall be enhanced to create active, well-designed space. Incorporate a landscape architect into the design of the public space.
- Enhance the rooftop cornice, and/or incorporate other architectural details from the Sussman Building to detail and embellish the top story.
- Consider bird friendly design for the design of the windows.
- Incorporate stations for pet pickup and cigarette disposal.
- Compliance with the staff report and the technical city comment letter.

Mr. Hornung seconded the motion, which passed 4-0 with one abstention.

Sketch Plan Review

Project: 3995 Tilghman Street

Applicant: Jaindl Land Company

Location: 3995 Tilghman Street

Description: Redevelopment of an existing restaurant site into a proposed two-story medical office building

File: LMA-2026-00008 (Sketch Plan)

Mr. Brown announced that he would recuse himself over a possible conflict of interest with the 3995 Tilghman Street project. Mr. Beavers would be the presiding officer for the sketch plan review.

Staff Overview:

Ms. Velez informed the commission that the project is a sketch plan in which the applicant proposed the demolition of an existing restaurant building and construction of a 2-story, 20,200

sq ft, medical office building and various site improvements. She noted that the property is located in the MX-S zone. The MX-S zone is primarily intended for mixed-use, regional-scale nodes within the city, where residents and visitors may access multiple uses by walking and automobiles. She stated that the zoning classification allows for the development of a medical office building.

Ms. Velez indicated that the staff opined that the building was well designed with façade materials, such as brick and stone veneer, horizontal and vertical shadow lines, and a flat roof with eaves that complement the area. She pointed out that staff inquired as to the building construction at the easement line or at the front setback of the existing building and that a second building entrance be added closest to the sidewalk access from Tilghman Street.

Ms. Velez said that staff suggested that the required bicycle parking be shown on the plans, additional streetscape and landscaping improvements be added, and that lighting be added to the parking area at the northeast side of the property.

Ms. Velez noted that the project was within West Allentown and will bring additional medical facilities to the westernmost portion of the City. She opined that some ways the project could help to achieve goals of Vision2030 would be by the reduction of any excess impervious surface, additions of additional landscaping to absorb stormwater runoff, use of native plants and shrubs in landscaping and integration of energy saving strategies within the project, such as utilizing sustainable building materials and taking measures to maximize energy efficiency. She also noted that the AEAC also suggests the use of bird-friendly glass and installation of cigarette disposal receptacles.

Ms. Velez stated that there were no bicycle facilities along Tilghman Street. She also noted that the project was located less than ½ mile from the Trexler Trail system and approximately 500 ft from a Park in South Whitehall Township. She stated that staff requested that durable bike racks be added outside for the convenience of customers, visitors, and/or employees, and long-term indoor bike storage be provided for employees.

Ms. Velez noted that Trexler Memorial Park is identified in the Allentown Parks Plan for various Park Improvement Opportunities including access to trails from LANTA stops, signage, lighting, repairs, and enhanced riparian buffers. She also emphasized that the project would be subject to the Parkland Dedication Requirements of 350-12 prior to finalization of the plan.

Ms. Velez informed the commission that staff generally supported the proposed development and that they suggested the building be moved closer to the street, that a second entrance be added, that the project be upgraded with additional streetscape and buffer landscape features, that additional lighting be added, and bicycle parking be shown on the plans. The applicant was also encouraged to incorporate energy-saving strategies, to reduce any excess impervious surface, add additional landscaping to absorb runoff, include native plant and shrubs, and use bird-friendly glass. She noted that as of the meeting date, no LVPC comments have been received. These comments should be incorporated into any preliminary/final plan submission.

Ms. Velez concluded that if zoning relief was required, staff recommended the project first obtain approval from the Zoning Hearing Board prior to the Commission conditionally approving the project.

Discussion:

John McRoberts, representing the applicant, appreciated the city's thorough review of the sketch plan submission. He reviewed the history of the property and informed the Commission that it had originally been designed under the pre-2026 ordinances. He opined that other than the setback requirement that the project aligned well with the new zoning and SALDO ordinances.

Mr. McRoberts reviewed the setback design and highlighted the 60-foot drainage easement along the property frontage of Tilghman Street which inhibited the ability to conform with the new zoning. As such he opined that the application would have to seek zoning relief to respect the drainage easement and setbacks. He also stated the drive access aisles would have to be changed to provide the required setbacks of the new ordinance, again stating that the easement is prohibitive as well. He also stated that medical office buildings in general prefer to have all parking in front of the entrances for safety of the public accessing the building.

Ms. McRoberts stated that the site design and renderings were developed to pay respect to the adjacent retail business design. He also stated they would comply with the bike rack requirement and provide a marked pedestrian path from Tilghman Street to the front of the building.

Mr. McRoberts stated that the second entrance requirement is not conducive to a medical office building. He noted that medical providers prefer a one point of access for safety and convenience of visitors. He opined that a second entrance would be difficult and would most likely have the applicant seek zoning relief.

Mr. McRoberts informed the Commission that the streetscape recommendation would be complied with. He noted that some minor landscaping changes may be required to address Engineering and Planning comments. He stated the applicant's awareness of nearby residential properties and a desire to respect them and not intrude. He also noted that many aspects of the staff recommendation would be addressed, in respect to the building design, with the architect team as the project evolves.

Mr. McRoberts stated they had received information from DEP that no sewage planning module would be required. He also noted the applicant would comply with the fee in lieu of requirement for park land dedication. He also informed the Commission that the future tenant would seek the required permits for signage at the appropriate time.

Rocco Caracciolo stated that the traffic volumes for the previous restaurant and the medical office building are similar and in fact could be less nighttime traffic than the restaurant created. He also opined that the medical office building would be better for traffic management as most visitors are appointment based.

Mx. Hartzell inquired as to the use of the building and the end client. Mr. McRoberts stated that it was a standard medical building with scheduled appointments. Mr. Hornung inquired as to the site and parking lighting. Mr. McRoberts reviewed the parking lot lighting and existing poles that would be used for the new building lighting needs. He also stated his concern for additional lighting affecting nearby residents. Mr. Hornung expressed his desire for the project to have more sustainability features. Mr. McRoberts stated they would look at green roof design

Mr. Beavers informed the applicant that the city had received a public comment from the HOA of the Villas at Trexler Park. He requested that the comment be provided to the applicant. He also stated that the applicant should provide a courtesy copy of the proposal to South Whitehall Township for their review and comments as the municipal boundary was adjacent to the proposal.

Mr. McRoberts inquired whether the plan would be considered to be a minor or major land development project. Ms. Gomez stated that the plan would be right on the edge of being a major. She informed the applicant that a major plan may provide the project a quicker approval process with an expedited first review.

Public Comment:

Tom Whelan of 3957 West Washington Street, stated that he was a member of the HOA for the Villas at Trexler Park. He requested that the applicant address the deteriorating fence along the property lines. Mr. McRoberts stated they would take a look at the boundaries and fencing. Mr. Whelan also inquired about the use of the building, following up on Commissioner Hartzell's earlier question. He asked whether this was contemplated to be an acute or urgent care facility with extended hours. Mr. Caracciolo stated that project was not proposed to be an urgent care facility.

Action:

No action required for a sketch plan, but comments are provided for the use of the applicant for the creation of preliminary/final plans.

Other Matters:

Ms. Gomez informed the audience that Chief Planner Jesse Sadiua had retired from the City after over 12 years of service. She also informed the Commissioners that Ms. Velez had recently been promoted to Chief Planner. Mr. Brown stated his sadness to see Jesse leave the City and opined he was a valuable resource and an interesting individual as a person.

Ms. Gomez inquired as to whether the ACPC has a desire to have a set end time to meetings, as long meetings could lead to exhaustive technical reviews and not enable the focus required. The Commissioners agreed that setting a time limit would give the public and the city staff an expectation.

Action:

Mr. Beavers made a motion to set an end time of planning commission meetings at 4 and ½ hours in duration and that the upcoming special meeting on July 16, 2026 would end no later than 10:00 pm.

Mx. Hartney seconded the motion, the motion passed unanimously 5-0

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items:

None

Adjournment:

Meeting adjourned at 2:17 PM

DRAFT