COOLBAUGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
Work Session Minutes
February 17, 2026, 6:00pm

Board Members present:
William Weimer, Alma I. Ruiz-Smith, Clare Colgan, and Lynn Kelly
Board Members absent:
Cara Rogan
Staff present:
Patrick Armstrong, Solicitor, Erin Masker, Township Secretary, Merdith Thompson, Business Manager, Darren Dixon, Township Controller and Tomas Keane, Director of Codes and Zoning
Staff absent:
None

The public hearing was called to order by Chairman William Weimer at 6:00pm

1. **Discussion on Proposed Amended Nuisance Alarm Ordinance**

Solicitor Armstrong reviewed the proposed amendment to the Township's nuisance alarm ordinance to specifically authorize the Township to provide written notices of nuisance alarms and to authorize emergency departments, including fire departments, to record and report instances of nuisance alarms for enforcement purposes. The amendment is intended to clarify that repeated false alarms, including those requiring fire department response, may result in enforcement action when they exceed two occurrences within a defined time period, with fines beginning on the third false alarm, and to ensure that the Codes and Zoning Department can utilize reports from both police and fire departments in tracking compliance. Solicitor Armstrong explained that the existing ordinance has been adequate for police-related burglar alarms but did not clearly authorize the fire department to submit similar automatic alarm reports to the Township, which has limited enforcement on properties with repeated fire-related false alarms. He further stated that under the proposed amendment, the Township would continue to collect any fines.
Mr. Keane, Director of Codes and Zoning stated that the fire department already provides reports to the Township and that, under the amendment, they would provide monthly reports of automatic alarm dispatches similar to the police department's existing reports. This would allow Codes and Zoning to determine whether an alarm permit exists and to educate property owners when none is on file.

- **Discussion:** A. Lopez, questioned whether the fines associated with fire-related nuisance alarms should be directed to the volunteer fire department, expressed concern about the impact of added financial penalties on residents living on fixed incomes, and suggested that the Township focus more heavily on education and outreach (including at property closing) so new residents understand local alarm permit requirements. She shared her experience as a new resident whose inherited alarm system repeatedly triggered fire responses until she learned of the ordinance, and she emphasized that many newer residents may not be aware of their

responsibilities. Ms. Ruiz-Smith responded that the Township already provides financial support to local fire companies through dedicated tax millage and other budgeted contributions, and that enforcement of citations and any required court actions remain the responsibility and cost of the Township rather than the fire companies.

2. **Discussion on Township Zoning**

Mr. Weimer stated that the Board is looking at a large piece of land that is commonly known as the former Camp Tegawitha, referred to at the table as "Lot 3," consisting of approximately 247 acres characterized by significant wetlands and formerly containing a lake that is no longer present but remains regulated as wetlands. The parcel is currently zoned Industrial but is contiguous with two existing Woodland Conservation districts, and the Board discussed a potential rezoning to restore it to Woodland Conservation to better protect high quality waters and sensitive environmental resources.

He stated that a prior Board, in accordance with the 2005 regional comprehensive plan prepared with other municipalities, reclassified certain woodland conservation lands to industrial zoning to promote economic development, and they noted that subsequent changes in environmental regulations, wetland buffer requirements, and community expectations have substantially reduced the developable area of the parcel. During the discussion, Ms. Ruiz-Smith asked Solicitor Armstrong whether a rezoning might constitute "spot zoning" or "reverse spot zoning," with Mr. Armstrong indicating that, based on the fact that the parcel would directly abut and connect existing Woodland Conservation districts on both sides, the proposal did not appear to create an isolated zoning island and therefore did not appear to meet those spot zoning definitions, although he would perform a more detailed review of the parcel and zoning maps. Solicitor Armstrong confirmed that if the Board directs preparation of a rezoning ordinance, the property owner and adjoining owners would receive written notice, the property would be posted, and public notice would be published prior to any potential adoption, in accordance with Township and state law. He further clarified that nothing would be adopted at this work session.

- **Discussion:** M. Bisbing of Pocono Mountains Industries, Inc., doing business as Pocono Mountains Economic Development, stated on the record that the owner opposes the proposed zoning change and emphasized that the parcel is part of the Pocono Mountains Corporate Center West, a planned business park. T. Fox, asked for confirmation that a letter from Pocono Heritage Land Trust had been received; being advised that it was. Mr. Weimer stated that earlier planning efforts had focused heavily on industrial development while current residents place greater value on tree cover, high-quality water resources, and community character. He stated that the regional comprehensive plan is outdated, that the Township and county need to undertake an updated plan that reflects current conditions and community priorities, and that the Township may need to proceed with its own comprehensive planning if a larger regional approach is delayed.

At 6:30 p.m., the Board paused the work session discussion to proceed with the scheduled public hearing as advertised. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the Board returned to its regular work session agenda.

At 6:55pm the work session was reopened and discussion continued:

- J. Miller presented a timeline of resident and community advocacy efforts on behalf of environmental protection of the Pocono Mountains Corporate Center North properties dating back to 1997. He provided the Board with a desktop environmental assessment prepared by Craig Todd which reviewed the soils that are on the property and stated that development on this property will be very challenging. The desktop assessment utilized Monroe County GIS flood plain maps, National Wetlands Inventory data, County Soil Survey data including hydraulic soil groups, high water tables, and NRCS hydraulic soils lists. The assessment found that over half of the property consists of exceptional value wetlands and flood plain with high water table soils throughout, that the land includes a confluence of Duck Puddle Run, Clear Run, and Hockey Run (all high-quality streams), and that the property acts as a vital wildlife corridor connecting to nearby undeveloped properties. The assessment provided in the Monroe County Planning Commission document dated 2021 characterized the parcel as "remaining lands" with significant natural constraints making further development challenging and less feasible. J. Miller concluded by recommending that the Board rectify what he characterized as a mistake in the original industrial rezoning by restoring Woodland Conservation zoning to Lot 3.
- B. Leonard, representing the Tobyhanna Conservation Association, an organization of over 100 members who hunt, fish, live, or recreate in Coolbaugh Township. He urged the Board to restore Woodland Conservation zoning to the remaining undeveloped land of the Pocono Mountains Corporate Center North and provided historical context on the property. He stated that the land was formerly Camp Tegawitha, which opened in 1918 as a camp for girls. He noted that in April 1997, the Lynch Corporation requested rezoning from Woodland Conservation to Industrial, that the rezoning did not consider the extensive wetlands on the site, and that the seated Coolbaugh Township Board of Supervisors approved the rezoning on April 15, 1997, through an amendment to Ordinance 51. On December 28, 1999, the Lynch Corporation sold approximately 600 acres to Pocono Mountain Industries for $3.2 million. Since that time, a portion of the property has been developed with large distribution centers, but the remaining undeveloped property contains extensive wetlands that make industrial development both impractical and environmentally

damaging. B. Leonard emphasized that the wetlands are defining features of the site that protect water quality, support wildlife, and buffer surrounding communities from flooding, and that ignoring these constraints would invite long-term environmental harm and costly regulatory complications. He also referenced the historic character of the land, noting that the Lynchwood Lake Ice Company operated an ice harvesting operation there in the early 20th century with a 30,000-ton capacity icehouse built in 1902.

- D. Miller spoke about the importance of the forests, waterways, wetlands and wildlife that are on the property and in the township. He provided the Board with a map which shows Pocono Forests and Waters stating that Monroe County is outlined and is made up of 400,000 acres; 20% of the deciduous forests are being cut down for development and stating that the infrastructure cannot sustain a loss of that rate over the next 20-40 years. That is why it is so important to take the steps now to protect our land before it is too late. He referenced two quotes “the first rule of tinkering is to keep all the parts” and “what good are wild freedoms without a place to enjoy them”. He is in support of the Board taking the necessary steps to protect the lands in Coolbaugh Township.
- E. Ramirez stated that he supports the consideration on rezoning the land as there are residential and schools that boarder the property.
- J. Smith-Hughes stated that she and other Township EAC members support the rezoning of the property discussing the natural resources in the community.

Work Session closed at 7:21pm

Submitted by: _____ Date: _____
Erin Masker, Township Secretary

Witnessed by: _____ Date: _____
William Weimer, Chairman