# COOLBAUGH TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
## Work Session Minutes
## March 3, 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, and Tomas Keane, Director of Codes and Zoning
Staff absent:
None

1. **Evergreen Farms Request for Text Amendment to Coolbaugh Township Zoning Ordinance**

Attorney Piperato appeared on behalf of the applicant, accompanied by Mr. Mark Banick, representing the engineering firm, and the property owners. Attorney Piperato explained that the applicant owns approximately one hundred acres of land, ninety-seven acres of which is in the C3 zoning district, which permits multi-family dwellings. He stated that the Township zoning ordinance defines two types of multi-family dwellings: garden apartments and apartment buildings. A garden apartment is defined as a multi-family structure designed to contain three to ten apartment units and not exceeding two and a half stories, while an apartment building is defined as a structure over two and a half stories. Attorney Piperato indicated that Section 400-40 of the ordinance currently limits both garden apartments and apartment buildings to a maximum of ten dwelling units per building. The applicant is requesting that the Board consider amending the ordinance to permit apartment buildings to contain up to twenty-four dwelling units per building while maintaining the current height limitation and the existing density limitation of six dwelling units per net acre. Attorney Piperato emphasized that the proposed amendment would not increase density or units per acre but would allow for more efficient vertical construction rather than horizontal expansion, thereby reducing impervious coverage. He stated that it is impractical in the current economic environment to construct 10-unit buildings that are three stories high, and that 24-unit buildings would be more cost-effective and result in less overall site disturbance. Ms. Ruiz-Smith engaged in extended discussion with the applicant regarding building design, site layout, total project density, and infrastructure requirements. Ms. Ruiz-Smith expressed support for residential housing development but emphasized her strong preference for affordable senior housing rather than family housing, noting that the Township needs senior housing for residents who wish to remain in the community but no longer want to maintain single-family homes. She provided examples of existing multi-family developments she has personally observed, including Summit Point in Scranton, and requested that any future proposal includes a maximum of two bedrooms per unit to limit the number of school-age children and maintain a quieter living environment suitable for seniors. Attorney Piperato responded that the applicant is fully aware of the Board's interest in senior housing and indicated that a mix of market-rate housing for various ages and units focused toward seniors makes sense to the applicant. He stated that all units would have a maximum of two bedrooms and that the family has developed similar projects in other municipalities. He presented photographs of a

typical 24-unit building design that the applicant has constructed elsewhere, which features three stories with eight units per floor contained in a single building.
Attorney Piperato stated that the applicant envisions approximately 240 total dwelling units on the 97-acre tract, which would result in approximately ten buildings plus a clubhouse with facilities and small storage units for tenant use. Ms. Kelly asked about sewage disposal, with Attorney Piperato confirming that the applicant intends to develop an onsite wastewater treatment facility rather than connecting to public sewer, and that the project would utilize approximately fifty acres for spray irrigation fields to support the wastewater facility. The applicant confirmed that the project would be one land development owned by a single entity responsible for providing all utilities, including connection to public water supply. Ms. Ruiz-Smith expressed concern about gas stoves and gas heating in senior units due to safety risks associated with dementia. She also raised concerns about the total number of units (240) and the resulting traffic impacts from residents' private vehicles, particularly seniors driving on Route 611. Mr. Weimer inquired about fire safety, with Mr. Banick confirming that the building code would require sprinkler systems for apartment buildings. Parking requirements, building separation standards (minimum twenty feet between principal structures as required by the existing ordinance), and whether garages would be provided (outdoor parking only) were also discussed. Solicitor Armstrong clarified that if the Board were to amend the ordinance to increase the maximum number of units permitted in apartment buildings from 10 to 24, the amendment would apply township-wide to all properties zoned to permit apartments, not solely to the applicant's property, unless the Board chose to make modifications specific to the C3 zoning district. He further explained that this work session discussion represented an initial step in the process, and that if the Board is interested in considering the amendment, the applicant would be required to sign a professional services agreement and post escrow to reimburse the Township for staff time, solicitor review, and township engineer review. Board members expressed general support for exploring the proposed text amendment further, with Mr. Weimer asking whether an intermediate number such as 15 or 20 units per building might be considered, to which Attorney Piperato responded that 24 units per building makes the most sense from a construction and site planning perspective and represents the standard building design the applicant constructs. Solicitor Armstrong and Mr. Keane noted that staff review would include consideration of whether other sections of the multi-family dwelling ordinance provisions should be revised in conjunction with the applicant's request, including potentially increasing minimum lot area requirements for apartment developments to ensure that only larger tracts are eligible for multi-family development.

- **Discussion**: J. Miller stated he is in support of a housing development but cautioned the Board to carefully evaluate all aspects of the proposal, noting that amending the ordinance would apply to any future applicant, not solely to Evergreen Farms. He referenced the applicant's prior proposal to construct a warehouse on environmentally sensitive land and questioned whether the subject 97-acre tract contains sensitive environmental features. J. Miller also raised concerns about whether apartments could be used as short-term rentals, referencing the number of short-term rental properties in the Township. Solicitor Armstrong responded that the Township's short-term rental ordinance definition may already address apartments and believes it prohibits short-term rental use of apartment units, and that he would review the ordinance to confirm and recommend clarifying language if necessary to ensure apartments cannot be used for short-term rentals. Ms. Ruiz-Smith expressed her strong support for the housing proposal,

stating that Attorney Piperato and the applicant are working to fulfill her long-term request for quality residential housing in the community stating that the building design presented by the applicant is significantly better than apartment construction in the area. Following discussion, Board members indicated consensus authorizing the applicant to proceed with entering into a professional services agreement, posting escrow, and working with Township staff and consultants to further develop the proposed text amendment for future Board consideration.

No formal action was taken during the work session on this item.

2. **Public Comment**

No additional public comment was heard.

Work Session closed at 6:30pm

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

Witnessed by: _____ Date: _____
William Weimer, Chairman