

**CUMRU TOWNSHIP BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING ON TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT (TND)
OVERLAY DISTRICT TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENTS TO
ZONING ORDINANCE OF 2009, AS AMENDED
JUNE 1, 2026**

The Public Hearing of the Cumru Township Board of Commissioners was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by President Andy Donnell. Other Commissioners in attendance were Vice-President Tonya L. Campbell, Mark Ferrero, Greg Miller, and Lisha L. Rowe. Also attending were Solicitor Kelsey Frankowski, Special Projects/Asst. Secretary Patricia A. Wylezik-Pfeiffer, Megan Zepiora from Delta Development, and Court Reporter Jolene Remus.

NOTICE:

Public comment will be accepted in person. Please include your first name, last name and address for all comments. Any comments without a name or address will not be considered. To accommodate as many people as possible, we request that each person's comments be limited to 3 minutes (resolution no. 301). The meeting comment period is limited to a total of 60 minutes. This time period may be extended at the discretion of the Commissioners. While public comments will be given due consideration, immediate responses will be made at the discretion of the Commissioners.

Pledge to the Flag.

**HEARING ON PROPOSED TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT
(TND) OVERLAY DISTRICT TEXT AND MAP AMENDMENTS TO ZONING
ORDINANCE OF 2009, AS AMENDED**

Mr. Donnell turned the Public Hearing over to Atty. Frankowski, who explained the procedure for the Public Hearing. She stated that this was the time and place for the Public Hearing for the Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Overlay text and map amendment as advertised. This amendment was proposed by the Board after being created by the Delta Development Group.

The following documents were entered into exhibit:

- Exhibit 1 – A copy of the Proposed Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance of 2009 as amended
- Exhibit 2 – The Proof of Publication in the Reading Eagle on May 17 and 24, 2026.
- Exhibit 3 – Affidavit of Transmission to BCPC and Cumru Planning Commission
- Exhibit 4 – Affidavit of Posting of the Notice
- Exhibit 5 – Affidavit of Mailing of the Notice to all affected property owners
- Exhibit 6 – Review Letter from BCPC, dated 4/13/26
- Exhibit 7 – 2nd Review Letter, dated 5/22/26
- Exhibit 8 – Memorandum from the Cumru PC to the BOC, dated 5/29/26
- Exhibit 9 – PowerPoint by Delta Development

Atty. Frankowski introduced Megan Zepiora, a representative from the Delta Development Group, who gave a verbal explanation of the proposed Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) Overlay District after she was sworn in due to technical difficulties with the PowerPoint.

The proposed amendment was created in response to some of the public outreach that was part of the economic development strategy. There was a desire for a variety of new housing as well as new retail and dining options.

Ms. Zepiora explained that the TND is designed to be walkable and increase community. It has a mix of different types of housing with commercial and retail space. It is meant to encourage a blend of recreation and medium-density housing. There will be safe pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle circulation. The ultimate goal is to encourage people to work and live in the same community space.

Ms. Zepiora explained the design elements of the TND. There would be mixed housing including apartments, townhouses and single-family homes. There would be centrally located common open spaces and a variety of retail and dining options. There is a 30% open space requirement. The maximum housing density is 5 and ½ dwelling units per acre. This could be increased to 6 and 1/2 dwelling units per acre if the developer increases the open space to 40%. She clarified that each apartment is considered 1 dwelling unit.

She explained that the overlay district creates 2 options for the developers. They can follow the existing zoning or they can follow the TND zoning.

Mr. Donnell gave a little background on what happened to lead up to the hearing today. It began with the Board hiring Delta to figure out solutions to address the short falls in the projected revenues over the long-term for the commercial and residential tax base. Delta worked with the Township through a year's worth of investigation, fact-finding and research.

The Board wanted to do this in a data-driven way with their eyes open, not guessing, and trying to make decisions that were good for all the residents. He explained that there were public engagement sessions to gather data. An Economic Development Steering Committee was formed with representation from a diverse spectrum of personalities and backgrounds.

Once Ms. Zepiora was able to access the PowerPoint, she showed Legacy Park in Mechanicsburg as an example of a TND in an area with characteristics similar to Cumru Township.

The zoning ordinance would not dictate architectural style but the developers must create architectural guidelines so the development will look good.

Mr. Donnell wanted to clarify that the Township was not developing anything. The property owners would be developing their property as they see fit. We are facilitating what is allowed and how development is allowed within the Township and perhaps create incentives for people to do or not do things.

Atty. Frankowski opened the hearing for the Board to make public comments on the record.

Mr. Miller wanted to add that this is an overlay so the existing zoning that's in place for these parcels will remain. No one has to do anything. This just presents an additional opportunity.

No other Board members or Township employees had any additional comments.

Atty. Frankowski opened the hearing for comments from the public. She explained that this is not a Zoning Hearing so the public does not have the right to become a party or present evidence or call witnesses. This is a Public Hearing designed to inform and obtain public comment prior to the Board taking any action on the ordinance. The Board is not required to answer questions or make comments but the members can if they wish. A transcription would be available.

Atty. Frankowski reminded everyone that they must speak slowly and clearly so the stenographer can transcribe what is being said. Public comment began with the people who had signed up to speak.

PUBLIC

Attendance: Brian Hard, Marie Ryan, Scott Horner, Rich Santolen, Steve Symanski, Mike Nowotarski, Georgette Krick, Laura Stockhausen, JoAnn Dowling, Roberta Kennedy, Jake Simpson, Stanley Kemp, Ron Schmehl, Donna Schmehl, Barb Dietrich, Todd Dietrich, Bob Matt, Bev Leonti, Perry Haas, Sue Haas, Branden Strickland, Pat Hobbs, Nick Szeredai, Judith Ingram, Lisa Quinby, Beth McGeehan, Zach Martin, Roger Fuatti, Tina Fuatti, Susan Whary, Barbara Nagle, Richard Keffer, Donald Brennan, Annie McCain, and Jane Zintak.

A.) Nick Szeredai, a resident of Rim View Lane, addressed the Board.

Mr. Szeredai stated that he has a municipal engineering background and works for municipalities. He was a member of the Cumru Township Park & Recreation Board when it was active. He had attended all the community events held by Delta and believes that the study results were biased.

Mr. Szeredai voiced opposition to the proposed TND Overlay. He does not believe that it is compatible or compliant with the economic study. The focus of the study was the 222 corridor and developing a pathway to creating tax revenue. The school district is near maximum capacity. The plan called for true economic development through retail, commercial, and industrial but we are going straight to residential. Usually the tax revenue on dwellings is pennies on the dollar compared to true retail and commercial space.

The study stated that we needed affordable housing of all different types. Mr. Szeredai does not believe that 50-60 ft. apartment buildings are the answer. He mentioned the Sencit Apartments and all the ongoing problems with that building. The cost of resources and ancillary activity with emergency services is going to outweigh any tax revenue that you think you are going to make.

In reference to the proposed ordinance, he stated that he was very frustrated with watching the meetings and how this played out. The Cumru Planning Commission should have been able to fully vet this ordinance. The Cumru Planning Commission had very little say and that is not how this is supposed to work. There should be a better relationship between the Planning Commission and the Board. The process should be followed.

The TND creates a lot of conflicts with the current ordinance. He cited roads and definitions as 2 examples. Mr. Szeredai said that he received community outreach after he had reviewed the proposed ordinance and provided feedback to the Planning Commission. People didn't know what to do because they know that this will be pushed through.

Mr. Szeredai stated that he watches all the meetings and that the Board is doing a great job 90% of the time. This is not it.

He highly disagreed with the section that states that the ordinance will need flexibility. The Zoning Ordinance is restrictive and in order to get a variance, you need to prove a hardship.

He said that the ordinance should have included a sample layout. The example provided in the presentation tonight was the first sketch shown to him and it was very unclear which region was which.

He ended by recommending that this ordinance should be sent back to the Planning Commission and be revetted to put a higher focus on retail and commercial space not just housing.

Ms. Rowe thanked Mr. Szeredai for his well thought out presentation.

Mr. Donnell said that Mr. Szeredai made some valid points. Not everyone will agree. He wanted to address a few of the comments.

The TND Overlay is not the single end product of Delta's efforts. There continues to be a substantial focus on the commercial corridor, specifically the Lancaster Pike corridor. The TND is only one small piece of the comprehensive approach.

Mr. Donnell believed that there has been a lack of clarity about the process. The Cumru Planning Commission reviewed the TND Overlay in various iterations. The Township Engineer and Solicitor were involved. It was submitted to the Berks County Planning Commission. All feedback was integrated into the ordinance. The Board is not trying to push anything through; the Commissioners need to address the budget deficit.

He understands the concern about tall buildings. The Board is considering the TND Overlay to allow the developers to build residential townhomes or high end condos or apartments that go up to 60 ft.

B.) Ronald Schmehl, a resident of Freemansville Rd., addressed the Board.

Mr. Schmehl voiced concern about the lack of public sewer and water. He stated that we are in the third year of negative rainfall and many properties have wells.

He talked about a similar development near Phoenixville called Steelpointe that has the same topography as Cumru Township. They did a beautiful job there with townhouses, single-family houses and some apartments. He rides bikes along the bike trail. He would not be opposed to something like that.

Mr. Donnell wanted to confirm that the Delta presentation showed an example of the TND approach and not an actual plan.

Mr. Miller said that any kind of water and sewer discussion would be addressed during planning.

C.) Bob Matt signed up but stated that Nick Szeredai had covered his points.

D.) Zach Martin, a resident of Philadelphia Ave., addressed the Board.

Mr. Martin stated that he recently moved into Cumru Township directly next to one of the proposed TND areas. One of the big drawing factors was that I purchased in Rural Conservation (RC) so it will be a huge disappointment if the area gets highly developed. He read the RC definition from the Zoning Ordinance and stated that the proposed TND doesn't follow the RC.. He talked about the wildlife in the area and the bald eagle's nest on the hill behind his property. The TND Overlay will destroy habitats.

Mr. Martin was also concerned with adding more traffic to SR724, which is already a very busy road.

E.) Mike Nowotarski, a resident of Freemansville Rd., addressed the Board.

Mr. Nowotarski stated that Sheerlund Forest is in his backyard. He said that he did not show up when the area across the street was rezoned but he is showing up now. He voiced concern that the TND Overlay would make the existing zoning null and void. He recommended that the owners should go to the ZHB if they wanted variances.

Mr. Nowotarski stated that the Lancaster Pike commercial and retail died when the bypass went in and cut off access. People were happy that the truck traffic stopped but so did the customers.

Mr. Miller said that the reason to put the overlay in place is to generate interest.

Mr. Nowotarski explained that the properties in the overlay are in Clean and Green to preserve them from the possibility of development. People knew that they would have to get variances to develop the land.

F.) Brian Hard, a resident of Seven Springs, addressed the Board.

Mr. Hard asked if the maps and the parcels were accurate and showed the areas that would be impacted by the TND overlay. The answer was yes.

G.) Steve Szymanski, a Cumru Township resident, addressed the Board.

Mr. Szymanski recommended taking Nick Szeredai's hardcore engineering advise because it makes sense. The proposed TND has too much wiggle room.

He said that the 23% tax increase was difficult for him because he is a senior and is semi-retired. He is concerned that the TND might not be the most efficient plan and he doesn't want to pay more in the future for decisions made today. He stated that he is not too confident.

Mr. Miller restated that new housing stock is needed. He explained that retail and commercial entities look at population demographics when deciding where to develop. New housing will bring in new population. We're doing this part of the plan first and then we'll move to 222 after that.

Ms. Rowe stated that she feels this is a bait and switch. She voted for hiring Delta under the guise of developing SR222 for business, not the whole Township. Now there is this and the AI data center.

Mr. Miller replied that the AI data center came on its own. He said that the development was for along all the highways, not just SR222.

Mr. Rowe replied that the idea for lowering taxes was to get business development on SR222. There was no talk about more people and more houses. Houses are not losing value; they are going up.

There was a discussion about the difference in the re-sale value and tax assessed value of homes and how the problem would need to be addressed by the county. A new tax assessment has not been done in over 30 years. If the assessed tax value of the tax base is going down and the costs are going up, that creates a gap in the budget which needs to be addressed.

Mr. Donnell added that we need to grow smart. While there is no perfect solution, we need to address the situation.

Mr. Miller explained that the other strategy would be to fire people but he didn't know how that would make this a better place to live and it would be a terrible environment to work.

H.) Jake Simpson, a resident of Pheasant Rd., addressed the Board.

Mr. Simpson stated that it seems that we have a budget problem not a housing problem. He asked what happened if the Township went bankrupt.

He also asked what happened if we develop everything and down the road we still end up with another deficit. We can't keep developing until we have no more land. This is not feasible.

Mr. Miller explained that during a bankruptcy, debt is shed. The only debt at this point is the bond for the firehouse. What you really want to do is broaden the tax base.

Mr. Simpson suggested that Cumru Township should take look at neighboring Brecknock Township which is calm. His property is located next to the green Hills Nature Preserve which is intentionally protected. He voiced his opposition to development in Area 3.

There was discussion about Brecknock Township having a fraction of the population of Cumru Township so they have to provide less services. There are state unfunded mandated services that must be provided. Cumru Township provides services to other surrounding municipalities. There was a question about reimbursement for services. The answer is no for reimbursement because it is considered mutual aid.

I.) Stanley Kemp, a resident of Mountain View Rd., addressed the Board.

Mr. Kemp stated that he lives near the area proposed for the TND Overlay. When he saw the sign with the posted notice, he was standing at one of the most beautiful landscapes in the Township. He voiced a strong concern that this historical landscape will be destroyed in order to encourage development.

Mr. Kemp explained that the rural conservation areas have value and provide quality of life. These are protected areas with ecosystems and wildlife habitats. Development will affect the quality of the watershed.

He expressed his belief that the perceived budgetary benefits will be eaten up by providing services for the newly developed areas.

Mr. Kemp finished by stating that Cumru Township is a beautiful place to live and he wants it to stay that way.

Mr. Miller replied that not all the parcels would be bulldozed. Mr. Kemp replied that they could be.

Ms. Rowe said that she has known Mr. Kemp for many years. As a professor of biology and ecology, he knows what he is talking about.

Mr. Donnell said that he agreed with what Mr. Kemp had said and he wants to protect nature. We can't have perfect bucolic everything and not have taxes go up sometimes.

Mr. Kemp asked for more time to figure this all out. He felt like this was getting rammed through quickly and there have been so many good points raised that it would be a good idea to take a deeper look.

J.) Bev Leonti, a resident of Crestview Ave., addressed the Board.

Mrs. Leonti reminded that the Steering Committee didn't even see the Delta results until January and the Planning Commission only saw the first rough draft of the TND in February.

She thanked Nick Szeredai for his comments and agreed that an example drawing would have been appreciated.

She talked about the changes in the maps and how the Ukrainian property was only added after it went up for sale. Now that property is under pending sale.

She voiced her concern about paying more for school taxes due to the proposed housing development. The school board members on the Steering Committee said they are at capacity and have no room to build.

Mrs. Leonti implored the Board to take all the concerns of the general public into account.

K.) Barbara Dietrich, a resident of Hilgert Ave., addressed the Board.

Ms. Dietrich identified herself as the Chairperson of the Planning Commission.

She asked Ms. Zepiora how the properties were chosen for the TND areas. Ms. Zepiora said that it was through a discussion with the Commissioners.

Mr. Miller explained that they had gone on tours with Delta. They looked at areas that were developable and most attractive for certain types of development. The SR10 corridor has access to highways. The houses in the SR10 area sell very quickly so there is a demand.

Mr. Donnell stated that they looked at areas and not parcel by parcel.

Ms. Dietrich asked if they had talked to the property owners and got any feedback from them.

Mr. Miller replied no. It would be the property owner's choice if they want to participate or not.

Ms. Dietrich voiced concern about the beautiful land that is in rural conservation and why the areas were not moved closer to existing housing stock. She stated that building 600 homes and all the extra cars on SR10 and SR724 might not be that attractive, especially since there will be 200 apartments at Hawthorne.

She echoed Nick Szeredai by saying that this is a bad ordinance. The Planning Commission was not involved in terms of developing it. There are people on the planning Commission who have experience with developing ordinances. She asked Ms. Zepiora how many ordinances she and Delta have actually done. Ms. Zepiora answered that this was her first one and she did not know about her colleagues. More involvement from the beginning with the Cumru Planning Commission, Berks County Planning Commission, residents like Nick and the school board would have been better.

Ms. Dietrich reported that she had had a conversation with Dr. Hess. When she asked for her thoughts, she was told that this is a disaster. What is needed is manufacturing and commercial.

There was conversation about stepping back and allowing the Planning Commissions to work on this to come up with something more beneficial. It was noted that the Berks County Planning Commission had reviewed it twice and there would be no more review.

L.) Todd Dietrich, a resident of Hilgert Ave., Addressed the Board.

Mr. Dietrich echoed Steve Szymanski's concern about being retired and being able to afford the increased taxes.

He questioned why the development should be residential that will require more Township services, increase the burden on the school district which will increase taxes, and create more traffic issues. He asked why it couldn't be industrial or commercial without the residential.

Mr. Dietrich stated that he is against this because he doesn't feel like the whole thing was fully explored.

M.) Pat Hobbs, a resident of Valley Stream Rd., addressed the Board.

Ms. Hobbs said that she agreed with what others had said. She likes allow and thorough.

A big concern for her is traffic. The roads are already crowded. She talked about how the construction has closed SR724 toward Birdsboro which has added to the traffic problem.

The schools are maxed and the taxes are becoming prohibitive. She is on social security and is afraid that she will have to sell her house if she can't afford the taxes. She loves the area.

The whole idea of a 50-60 ft. building changes everything. A former Commissioner, Carolyn Ramsey, had told that Clean and Green would preserve the land. When she moved here in '87, she saw lots of deer. You see fewer wildlife with all the development.

She also voiced concern with the wells running dry.

Ms. Hobbs asked about postponing the vote. Atty. Frankowski told her that the Board would be deliberating at a special meeting after the Public Hearing. She said that people who have contributed to the community for years could be forced out if they can't pay their taxes.

There was a quick recess to give the stenographer a break at 7:07 p.m. and then the Public Hearing went back on record at 7:09 p.m.

N.) Jane Zintak, a resident of Welsh Rd., addressed the Board.

Ms. Zintak asked if anybody was for this? No one raised their hands. Ms. Hobbs said no.

She said that doing more residential would cost more for all the services, schools and everything. She asked why we don't concentrate on the commercial area because that is where you get the taxes. The focus should be on SR222.

Mr. Miller replied that it wasn't the 80s anymore and the retail environment has changed. Everybody wants the mixed-use development. Ms. Zintak said that we have that at Flying Hills and those aren't full.

Mr. Donnell replied that SR222 is one of the focuses. This is a small piece of the big picture.

There was discussion about challenges such as the underdeveloped infrastructure that have different timelines. The Board is trying to attack this from multiple angles.

O.) Donald Brennan, a resident of Pinewood Ct., addressed the Board.

Mr. Brennan asked about why we aren't charging for police and fire services provided to other municipalities. Atty. Frankowski said that would be a discussion for another time. She said that mutual aid is required between municipalities. She suggested that we should stick with the TND Ordinance.

P.) Laura Stockhausen, a resident of Pinewoods Ct., addressed the Board.

Ms. Stockhausen stated that she was not in love with the proposed ordinance but she would personally prefer 600 houses to a warehouse with tractor trailers on SR10.

While she doesn't work with commercial development, she has co-workers who do. She has heard around the office that the developers don't want to touch Cumru Township because it's complicated. Ms. Stockhausen wanted the public to know that Cumru Township is not super appealing to commercial development right now.

Q.) Annie McCain, a resident of Sheerlund Rd., addressed the Board.

Ms. McCain asked if a market survey had been done to know the addressable market. She asked about the price point for these properties and what the market can bare.

Mr. Miller said that the information was in the Delta study. He did not have the information off the top of his head. The Delta study is available on the front page of the Township's website.

There was no further public comment.

Atty. Frankowski explained that the Board could take action on the proposed amendment during the special meeting starting right after this.

ADJOURNMENT

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:17 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Patricia A. Wylezik-Pfeiffer
Assistant Secretary