Chester Township Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes

|Wednesday, September 2, 2026 7:00 PM |
Chester Town Hall – Audio Recording on File

Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Mr. Oswick at 7:04 p.m.

Roll Call

Members present: Mr. Kats, Mr. Lauro, Mr. Mersol, Mr. Oswick, Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Spetrino
Members absent: None

Also Present:
BoT member present: Mr. Davis
Becky Geissinger - Secretary, Zoning and Zoning Appeals

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Oswick led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Kats moved to approve the minutes of the August 5, 2026 meeting as submitted;
Mr. Lauro seconded.
Mr. Kats/yes Mr. Lauro/yes Mr. Mersol/yes
Mr. Oswick/yes Mr. Rosenbaum/yes Mr. Spetrino/yes **Motion passed**

Public Comments: None

Introduction of Geneve (Jenny) Maiden (resident) who had a BZA Hearing on August 10th. She is attending to gain understanding of structure in consideration of serving on the Zoning Commission or Board of Zoning Appeals in the near future.

Proposed Amendments to the Chester Township Zoning Resolution

The following (3) proposed amendments went before the Board of Trustees on Thursday, August 20, 2026. Results are as follows:

2026-4 Chester Township Zoning Resolution Reformatted – Passed
Effective 9/18/2026
New binders passed out to all Zoning Commission members
Discussed that in a quest for efficiency and cost reduction, pocket folders have been added to keep pending documents to alleviate repetitive printing. Wall mailboxes can be utilized (in the hallway) for anyone wanting to keep the binder at Town Hall.

2026-5 (Blur the Lines) – Continued until the 9/3/2026 BoT Meeting

2026-6 (Accessory Buildings) – Continued until the 9/3/2026 BoT Meeting

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Discussion regarding proposed amendments 2026-5 and 2026-6:

- Geauga County Ohio Court of Common Pleas – Joyce Building Co. Inc. **vs** Russell Township Board of Zoning Appeals. This document was submitted by a Chesterland resident in opposition of 2026-5 & 2026-6. The ZC believes that this case has nothing to do with the proposed amendments above but derailed the passing of 2026-5 due to misunderstanding of the lawsuit and the ruling.

- Mr. Mersol explains the lawsuit and how it differs from what the ZC is requesting Essentially the lawsuit states that Russell Township's setback requirement as applied to this piece of property give the property no economic use whatsoever. There is nothing you can build on the property. The case resolves that Russell Township cannot prevent the property owners from building a house with smaller setbacks that are more in line with keeping of the property. The ZC believes the lawsuit has absolutely nothing to do with the amendment submission for blurring the lines. If fact, Mr. Mersol would argue it is the opposite because in our case, landlocked property is worthless and this would enable the landowner to utilize the land.

- Discussion about the process for recommending an amendment to the BoT. and the history of the increase in size of outbuildings two years ago.

- Discussion regarding the amendment and how it affects platted sub-divisions and flag lots.

- **Fundamental question:** To what level should zoning impact a resident's ability to do what they want , on their own property, in a zoned community

    - ***We are required to zone for the health, safety and welfare of our residents. How do we as the ZC and the BZA consider the resolution statement alignment with our practice.***

    - ***102.0 PURPOSE OF THE ZONING RESOLUTION This resolution has been enacted in the interest of the public health, safety, convenience, comfort, prosperity, or general welfare in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Specifically, the purposes of this resolution are, among others: To protect the community against fire, explosion, air/ground/water pollution, vibration and other hazards to its public health, safety, convenience, comfort, prosperity, or general welfare.***

- Should we reconsider Amendment Proposal 2026-5 to refer just to landlocked parcels for now?

    If it helps get the amendment through the front door, then why not. It would start something. The concern is that people are literally being told no at every BZA request and are doing other things to make it work, which are causing other issues to compound on themselves. This is happening enough that it came to our attention.

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- Mr. Davis states that the BoT can vote to pass the amendment, turn down the amendment or continue it again. The BoT can make changes and pass with said changes.

- Mr. Lauro stated, a 10-acre parcel (with or without blurring the lines) with a 9,600 square foot outbuilding only utilizes **2%** of your lot, **and** you still have to adhere to all other zoning regulations (set-backs, etc.)

- If the BZA viewed its position as it should, as the safety valve and not stringent enforcement, some of these amendments would not be necessary. The purpose of the BZA is to enforce for health and safety and welfare, not to prevent variances. How does the reputation of the BZA denials keep residents from filing for an appeal? They don't want to spend the money or the time "knowing" they are probably going to be denied.

- Property lines move based on the center of the road moving. Example: Caves & Mayfield –
  Caves road got moved about 200' to the west. All of the property owners got letters stating that their property lines changed.

Is it true that if a BZA case is denied it's denied forever? Yes. As submitted, if a case is denied it is into perpetuity. The request must change significantly to be considered again. That is why many people withdraw rather than be turned down.

Tabled for future Discussion:

EV Charging Stations – Mike Santilli, Director of Fire Investigation Unit of Geauga County sent potential Zoning Resolution language for EV Charging Stations. Copies were distributed to all. Mike will attend the next meeting where we have more ZC members present.

Data Centers – Tabled for future meeting. Needs to be looked at. Highest need is to define the size of a data center that can be allowed. Data Centers need to be defined (specifically size) in our definitions and listed as a permitted use. It is recommended by State Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur and Dave Thomas to be sure to write a moratorium to mitigate lawsuits between now and having it in the resolution.

Meeting adjourned: 8:26 p.m.

Minutes planned to be approved by: Chester Township Zoning Commission September 16th

Final Review by: _____ _____
Jon Oswick, Chair Date

Attested by: _____ _____
Becky Geissinger, Secretary Date

APPROVED