



Woodland Design Associates, Inc.

Landscape Architects □ Site Planners □ Wetlands Specialists

Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan Boroughs of Oakland & Susquehanna Depot- Hearing Meeting Notes

Susquehanna County, PA

May 18, 2026

The following exhibits are attached in support of this meeting and the contents of this document of record:

Exhibit 1: The attendee sign in sheet for the public hearing.

Exhibit 2: The affidavit received from the Scranton Times, a publicly circulated newspaper, showing that the required public advertisements were published.

Exhibit 3: A photograph of the room as each Borough Council and attendees took their seats.

Comprehensive Plan Public Hearing Meeting Notes

Susquehanna Depot Borough & Oakland Borough

Date: May 18, 2026

Time: 6:00 PM – Approximately 7:40 PM

Location: The Susquehanna Depot Borough Municipal Building
83 Erie Blvd # A, Susquehanna, PA 18847

1. Call to Order

The public hearing was called to order at 6:00 PM by Susquehanna Depot Borough President, Sue Crawford. Attendees participated in the Pledge of Allegiance prior to the start of the meeting. The Susquehanna Chief of Police requested that all attendees maintain proper decorum throughout the hearing, noting that sensitive topics could arise and asking participants to remain calm and respectful.

2. Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

Jayson Wood of Woodland Design Associates, Inc. introduced himself as the planner responsible for preparing the draft Comprehensive Plan. He requested that attendees sign in and provided an overview of the purpose and function of a municipal comprehensive plan under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC).

Key points included:

- A comprehensive plan serves as a long-range policy guide for future municipal growth and development over the next 10–20 years.
- While not itself law, the plan guides future decisions regarding:
 - Land use
 - Zoning
 - Transportation
 - Infrastructure
 - Housing
 - Parks and recreation
 - Economic development
 - Historic preservation
 - Community facilities
 - Sustainability and resilience

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Mr. Wood explained that comprehensive plans:

- Help municipalities defend land-use decisions
- Improve eligibility for grants and state programs
- Guide elected officials and planning commissions
- Serve as the foundation for zoning ordinances and future planning efforts

He also clarified that:

- The Comprehensive Plan is not a zoning ordinance.
- Zoning ordinances should generally align with the Comprehensive Plan.
- The plan recommends development and economic growth areas but does not directly authorize specific uses such as data centers.
- Municipal zoning ordinances may later establish regulations, districts, and conditions governing such uses.

3. Planning Process Overview

Mr. Wood outlined the process used to develop the draft Comprehensive Plan, including:

- Data collection and analysis
- Public meetings and surveys
- Focus groups and approximately ten committee meetings over a two-year period
- Drafting goals and recommendations
- Review by the Susquehanna County Planning Office
- Public hearing and formal adoption process

He also stated that municipalities would be encouraged to post the adopted plan on their official websites.

4. Public Comment Procedure Prior to public comment, attendees were asked to:

- State their name
- Indicate whether they were residents
- Identify their municipality of residence
- State whether they were local business owners
- Mr. Wood noted that the hearing was required under the Municipalities Planning Code and intended to gather public input on the draft plan.

He further stated that:

- The draft plan had been circulated to surrounding municipalities and the Susquehanna County Planning Office for review.
- Responses were received from Harmony Township and the Susquehanna County Planning Office, both indicating they had no comments.
- To maintain organization and efficiency, each goal and objective within the draft plan was reviewed individually before public comments were accepted.

5. Public Comments and Discussion

- General Corrections and Revisions were noted.
- The following corrections were identified during the hearing:
 - A spelling error was identified on page 32.
 - Additional spelling errors were identified on pages 45, 57, and 60.
 - Goal #2 on page 55 was noted as incorrectly worded.
 - Goal #5 on page 37 was noted as needing revision to acknowledge existing rental and vacancy ordinances currently in place or under amendment.
 - References throughout the document to “Exchange Street Bridge” should be corrected to “Veterans Memorial Bridge.”

- **Property and Development Discussion Starrucca House**
 - Andreas Plonka stated that the Starrucca House should not be classified as “blighted” and requested that all references to it as a blighted property be removed from pages 22, 26, and 36.
 - Woodland Design Associates acknowledged the concern and agreed to revise the document accordingly.
- **Tourism and Recreation**
 - Kathy Matis asked whether the draft plan had been reviewed by the County’s Bureau of Tourism, specifically referencing Stacy Wilson.
 - Mr. Wood stated that it had not been directly reviewed by the Bureau of Tourism but that the draft aligns with county tourism initiatives and the County Comprehensive Plan.
 - Discussion also included:
 - **Potential “Outdoor Town” and/or “River Town” designation opportunities**
 - **Recreation-based economic development**
 - **Public support for outdoor recreation initiatives**

The following were additionally noted/discussed:

- **A local Mormon church group in Oakland Borough had previously expressed interest in constructing a hotel to accommodate pilgrims.**
- **Housing and Short-Term Rentals**
- **Discussion occurred regarding the statement on page 34 concerning the relationship between employment opportunities and housing affordability.**
- **Committee members emphasized:**
 - The importance of housing opportunities for all income levels
 - Senior housing needs
 - Long-term affordability concerns
- **A need for short-term rentals was also discussed. Woodland Design Associates recommended that both municipalities consider adopting short-term rental ordinances to:**
 - Protect neighboring properties
 - Address nuisance concerns
 - Establish operational standards if such uses are permitted
- **Parks, Trails, and Community Facilities**
Wendy MacDonald-Dudley asked about the proposed park area referenced near the Borough-owned land surrounding the power plant.
Mr. Wood explained that:
- **Committee members toured the property during meetings in 2024 and 2025.**
 - The area was identified as having potential for:
 - Hiking
 - Biking
 - Kayaking access
 - Public recreation
- **Developing a shared community center for events and educational opportunities**
- **Encouraging a community college or educational institution to offer:**
 - Co-op programs
 - Night classes
 - Adult education opportunities

- **Zoning and Intergovernmental Coordination**

Woodland Design Associates recommended that Oakland Borough develop and adopt a zoning ordinance to better protect against nuisance land uses.

The firm also recommended consideration of:

- A multi-municipal planning board
- A shared zoning ordinance between municipalities
 - However, committee members and Borough Councils reportedly expressed limited support for those approaches.
 - As an alternative, Woodland Design recommended establishing a multi-municipal advisory committee to improve coordination regarding:
- Infrastructure
- Land development
- Economic development
- Shared emergency services

A Blight, Property Maintenance, and Land Banking Discussion took place regarding:

- Removal of dilapidated structures
- Establishment of a land bank in partnership with the County Redevelopment Authority
- Borough officials discussed:
 - The costs associated with acquiring unsafe properties
 - Demolition responsibilities
 - Ongoing maintenance challenges
 - The Susquehanna Depot Borough Solicitor reviewed:
 - The process by which properties enter the County registry
 - The International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC)
 - Municipal authorities require unsafe structures to be removed
 - The draft Comprehensive Plan recommends adoption of “Quality of Life” ordinances to assist municipalities in addressing unsafe and unsightly properties.

Public Outreach Concerns

- Several attendees stated that this was the first time they had heard about:
 - The Comprehensive Plan
 - Committee meetings
 - Public surveys
 - The planning process itself
- Discussion followed regarding the methods used to publicly advertise meetings, surveys, and hearings.

Additional comments and updates included:

- Oakland Borough officials requested that photos representing Oakland Borough be added to the cover of the Comprehensive Plan.
- A new resident stated that they had purchased the former “First National Bank” building in Susquehanna Depot and planned to restore it as a public event space.
- A citizen asked whether the hearing concerned a proposed data center development. It was clarified that:
- The hearing concerned the Comprehensive Plan only.
- The plan recommends that zoning ordinances include districts where data centers could potentially be permitted.

6. Next Steps

A citizen asked about the next steps in the process.

Mr. Wood explained that:

- The document would be revised based on public comments.
- The revised draft would be returned to the committee for review.
- The committee would then forward the plan to each Borough Council for consideration and potential adoption.
- Once adopted, the plan would be published on each municipality's website.

7. Adjournment

The public hearing concluded at approximately 7:40 PM and was adjourned by Sue Crawford.

Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting (Immediately Following Public Hearing)

Immediately following adjournment, members of the Susquehanna Depot Borough Council and Oakland Borough Council remained in session as members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee.

- Funding Timeline--Committee members discussed the expiration of Pennsylvania DCED funding in June 2026 and emphasized the need to finalize the project promptly to avoid jeopardizing funding eligibility.
- Motion and Vote
A motion was made by Chet Walker to:
 - Revise the draft plan based on public comments received
 - Complete revisions within two weeks
 - Forward the revised draft to each Borough Council for adoption consideration
 - The motion was seconded by Dee Ipolito.
 - Vote Outcome
 - In Favor: 11
 - Opposed: 0
 - The motion carried unanimously.

Final Action Items

- Woodland Design Associates will complete the necessary revisions and distribute the revised draft within the next two weeks.