

SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AND
SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING – JUNE 26, 2025, AT 7:00PM

A Joint Work Session of the Smithfield Township Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission (“Group”) was held on June 26, 2025, at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center, at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom.

Present were Supervisors Jacob Pride and Michael Albert; Commissioners Scott Amori, James Munet, Doug Schryver, and Jean Turn; and Conservation & Recreation Director Dr. Alex Jackson.

Supervisor Robert Lovenheim and Commissioners David Strunk, Dr. Nicole Carney, and Chris Bowers were absent.

Also present were Tara Vecchio-Freeman, Brett Cartwright, Ken Schuchman, Bob Weseloh, Barth Rubin, and Attorney Joseph “Joe” McDonald.

1. Chair Jacob Pride calls the meeting to order at 7:01PM. A quorum is present.

2. Old Business:

a. Discuss: Draft Signage Ordinance.

Jacob stated that this is the sixth joint session on this topic and hopes to conclude discussion. Several reviews lie ahead, including formal reviews. Jacob mentioned that we are on sound legal ground with the stand-alone chapter and hopeful for ordinance adoption in September or October.

Dr. Alex Jackson discussed a recap from previous meetings, during which he noted there are other townships with stand-alone sign ordinance chapters, and he pointed out how at the previous meeting, the Group discussed snipe sign removal, including a separate stand-alone chapter concept.

Dr. Alex Jackson presented and led a discussion on a truncated version of the draft ordinance starting with “off-premise signage”. Michael Albert stated that there is off-premise signage from Smithfield Township on I-80. The discussion on off-premise signage proceeded to the distance between off-premise signs.

Ken Schuchman commented that the ordinance is restrictive, which led to a discussion on off-premise signage where Jacob Pride said he didn’t want to make existing billboards non-conforming. Ken Schuchman commented that all billboards in Smithfield Township would be on commercial property, with setbacks from residential areas.

Bob Weseloh commented on the distance of signs from intersections/interchanges and roads and asked about shared driveways, which led to a discussion where Jacob Pride asked about what the distances are in the current ordinance.

Jean Turn asked about the differentiation of what a lot is and the number of off-premise signs allowed per lot. Michael Albert stated the structure of the ordinance is sound, but size, speeds, and dimensions are open to debate.

Ken Schuchman commented on why someone would want to put up a 50-square-foot sign, the sign ordinance, and a speed limit and size chart criteria, which led to a discussion where Michael Albert explained that slower speed limits typically require smaller signs, which is standard practice. Michael Albert noted that on a highway, you wouldn't see a much smaller sign, leading to further discussion.

The Group discussed how the Planning Commission had complained for many years about blighted signs, signs leaning on unsound structures, and concerns about the Township's appearance. This led to a discussion with Ken Schuchman on ordinance enforcement. Jacob Pride stated that the current mechanisms don't achieve the objective, which is to remove sign blight, and he wants to make it easier to promote business.

Bob Weseloh stated that he has property with a billboard on it, and if he wanted to hypothetically develop the property, he would lose the billboard. He discussed subdividing the property and said it doesn't make sense to proceed, where Michael Albert said the issue is that the Township doesn't want excessive signage.

Bob Weseloh said he's the president of LTS Homes and brought his attorney, Joe McDonald, with him. He discussed a marquee sign he owns and what would happen to it under the new ordinance. Michael Albert asked if his business is on that property, and Bob said yes. It was clarified that the discussion would not impact his sign since it is an on-premise sign.

Jacob Pride said the 1,500 foot and 1,000 foot distances don't seem to work. Michael Albert said the off-premise signage section is the most substantial, while the other sections are more business-friendly. He noted the sub-committee specifically tailored it to help businesses.

Bob Weseloh said he owns signs, where Pride clarified the Township wants to incentivize businesses but not allow extra jumbo billboards on the same property. Michael Albert said the Route 209 corridors shouldn't just be a strip of signs and advertising, which led to a discussion.

Bob Weseloh reiterated that he owns billboards and is glad the group is going through this process, which is why he brought his attorney. This led to a discussion where Bob Weseloh commented on larger signs versus speed limits. He expressed respect for the Township's aesthetic goals.

James Munet called a point of order to stick to the agreed-upon task for the day. This led to a lengthy discussion where Group agreed to set aside the discussion and not schedule another joint session on off-premise signage. They will request written suggestions from stakeholders present.

Barth Rubin commented he assumed all signs are grandfathered in. He stated that he owned eleven billboards, which he recently sold to Lamar, and is happy to share his experience. He agreed that this is the Poconos and we should get rid of blight, which led to a discussion on temporary and limited-duration signs.

Ken Schuchman commented whether temporary and limited-duration signs would be acceptable if they were always kept in good condition, leading to a discussion, where the Group reiterated their request for comments from stakeholders on off-premise signage.

Dr. Alex Jackson discussed limited-duration signage. He explained they require a permit and are for one-year durations, renewable annually. A discussion followed, where the Group agreed to keep the five-acre street frontage criteria for large signs in residential zoning districts.

Bob Weseloh commented on options for developing his property in the ED Zone.

The Group discussed the temporary sign section of the ordinance, and a discussion followed, where the Group consented to keep the five-acre street frontage restriction for large temporary signs in residential zoning districts.

The Group discussed unlawful, blighted, unsafe, and nuisance signs, where Michael Albert stated that criteria for unlawful signage need to be added, which lead to a discussion on multiple points in the draft ordinance.

Joe McDonald commented by thanking the Township for its work and asked about non-conformities, on-premise signage, Route 209 corridor widening over time, and the implications for signs on his properties, including directional-type and marquee signs, which led to a discussion.

Bob Weseloh commented on setbacks, which led to a follow-up discussion on the stand-alone ordinance, flexibility, and waivers. Michael Albert reiterated the Township's request for written comments from the stakeholders on off-premise signs, which lead to further discussion.

The group discussed waivers, and Michael Albert restated the need for a legal opinion on appeals going to two boards (Zoning Hearing Board and Supervisors) and how to address this, which led to a lengthy discussion where Michael Albert commented on whether the ordinance warrants a full rewrite and side-by side comparisons amongst other themes

related to the draft ordinance process, and further discussion ensued where Jacob Pride said they can compare the final draft side-by-side with the existing ordinance.

Doug Schryver said many sign aesthetic problems already exist, and noted that the billboard owners present tonight are a minority, although they have rights. He pointed out that billboards have been banned in some places and suggested there are legal pathways to phase them out. Brett Cartwright agreed.

Doug Schryver said billboards are detrimental to aesthetics. Michael Albert said businesses should have the right to advertise off-premise. Doug contrasted the situation to Shawnee, which he said is beautiful and thriving. He said the whole township should be beautiful like Shawnee-something the community can be proud of-which led to a lengthy discussion where Michael Albert stated he enjoys driving through Vermont where there are no billboards, and Jacob Pride noted the Township might provide incentives to make non-conforming signs more aesthetically pleasing, which led to another discussion.

b. Discuss: Next Steps for Draft Ordinance.

The Group discussed next future meetings and off-premise sign comments, where Michael Albert agreed that getting off-premise signage feedback is important. Jacob Pride concluded that most of the rest of the ordinance makes sense. He noted the Group accepted all changes and wants a full legal and engineering review. Michael Albert stated that when finalized, the committee will review the final draft for consistency, after which all Township officials will get a copy, including Ron Karasek, T&M Associates, and possibly Bob Kidwell for legal review.

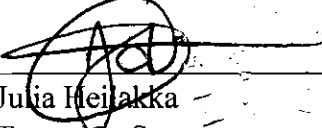
Brett Cartwright commented that the criteria table for off-premise signs may be popular among residents. Scott Amori and Doug Schryver agreed. Doug Schryver emphasized the importance of public opinion. Brett Cartwright asked how to gauge public support, noting he was the only resident present. The Group responded that this is just the preliminary stage and noted the presence of Township volunteers as well.

3. Public Comment: none.

4. Adjournment: Michael Albert motions to adjourn, Jean Turn seconds: meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Dr. Alex Jackson

Respectfully submitted:



Julia Heilakka
Township Secretary