

TIOGA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of

Wednesday, July 8, 2026

6:30 P.M. Tokishi Building

Call to Order: Kevin Connelly (Chair) called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Roll Call: The roll call found eight (8) members present: Nancy Smith, Roger Bunn, Dawn Avery, Erick Coolidge and Chair Kevin Connelly. Also, in attendance Kaye Aumick, Administrative Director; Rachel Courtney, Planning Director; Melissa Underwood, Planning Specialist; Chelsie English, County Intern.

Public in attendance: Ken Smith, W. Jamin Merritt, Tracy Tackett, Valerie Baltzley, Ashely Dexter, Wayne Gray, Michelle Strange, Lynn Bower, Lois Blusek, and Louis Prevost.

Communications from Local, Regional, State & Federal Agencies/Organizations:

- **Develop Tioga**: Valerie Baltzley and Ashley Dexter provided an organizational update.

Approval of Minutes: A copy of the June minutes was available for review. Motion to approve was made by Erick Coolidge, second by Dawn Avery. Motion carried.

Presentations: Tracy Tackett of Greenkey Solar presented the Mann Creek Solar Project, which is located in Richmond Township. Because Richmond Township has its own Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO), the Tioga County Planning Commission is required to submit a letter of review for the land development proposal.

The proposed project is an 8-megawatt (MW) solar facility consisting of fixed-tilt panels facing south on approximately 50 fenced acres. Greenkey Solar has received preliminary approval from Richmond Township, contingent upon providing documentation for NPDES permitting, stormwater management, and a completed survey.

Discussion among Planning Commission members and the public included responsibility for electrical grid improvements. Greenkey Solar confirmed that any required grid improvements associated with the project would be the responsibility of the solar company. It was also noted that the project has the potential to provide local power if the electrical grid experiences an outage.

Additional discussion focused on the potential for cost shifting to consumers due to excess energy generation and whether the solar development could be sold without transferring liability to a new owner.

The lease term is 25 years, with the option for additional renewal terms of three to five years. Because Pennsylvania's net metering program limits projects to 3 MW or less, the 8 MW project has been divided into three independently wired sections to meet the program's requirements.

Tioga County Planning Director Rachel Courtney strongly encouraged Greenkey Solar to negotiate a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) with a local agricultural organization, noting that the project would convert productive farmland. A CBA would provide an opportunity for the developer to invest in the local community and support agriculture, one of the county's leading industries and an important part of its heritage. The group also discussed agrivoltaics and training for local emergency responders, both of which have been implemented with similar projects in western states.

Greenkey Solar, an Oregon-based company, has developed approximately 50 projects across the country. Before final approval, Greenkey Solar must provide documentation of its interconnection agreement and financial security for decommissioning. Tackett stated that the financial security would be in the form of a bond. In accordance with the county's solar ordinance, the bond must be no less than 110% of the estimated cost of decommissioning. A detailed decommissioning cost estimate must also be submitted. Greenkey Solar will be required to provide an updated decommissioning cost estimate every five years and increase the financial security if the estimated costs rise.

Old Business: Administrative Director, Kaye Aumick, gave the following updates:

- **Mountain Laurel Recovery Center – Westfield Borough** – No response has been received from the County regarding the outstanding comments related to the fire lane. Previously, Marvin Turner stated that they had not received a response concerning the County's determination that the existing fire lane does not meet the required standards. He noted that they had previously been informed the existing fire lane was adequate and that no County representative had visited the site or contacted anyone to discuss the issue. It was reported that the Fire Chief would be contacted to obtain additional information. As of this report, no further response or update has been received.
- **Morris Run Water Treatment – Acid Mine Reduction** – The applicant continues to work through the outstanding review conditions. They are addressing the County Engineer's review comments and coordinating with the Conservation District on the NPDES permit application and with PennDOT regarding Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) comments. Payment for the County Engineer's review remains outstanding and is still required.
- **Croft Hollow Compressor Station** – No changes have been reported since the previous meeting. Site construction, bulk earthwork, grading, and paving of Spencer Road have been completed, with paving coordinated through the Township. Minor restoration and touch-up work remain to be completed, and mechanical work for the station is expected to begin in the fall.
- **Westfield Solar – Westfield Township** – The project is currently on hold pending action by the PUC. Prior to being placed on hold, the applicant had been working through the conditions of approval. The County Engineer's comments had been addressed, and progress was being made on the PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP), North Central review, Post-Construction Stormwater Management (PCSM) approval from the Conservation District, and notification of neighboring property owners. No additional updates have been reported at this time.
- **DeCristo Compressor – Sullivan Township** – The applicant continues to work through the conditions of approval. The County Engineer's review comments have been received and forwarded to the applicant for response. Payment for the County Engineer's review has also been received. No additional updates have been reported at this time.
- **TSF12 Compressor – Jackson Township** – The project is now in the construction phase. The applicant has completed the conditions of approval, including payment of the County Engineer's review fee. Construction activities are underway, and no additional updates have been reported at this time.
- **Watterson Poultry Barn – Chatham Township** – The project remains in the construction phase. All conditions of approval were satisfied, and construction activities are underway.
- **Pennsylvania Wilds Design Guide** – Planning Department Intern Chelsie English provided additional observations from her review of the PA Wilds Design Guide. She highlighted areas of interest that may be applicable to future updates of the County SALDO, including street design standards, connectivity and walkability considerations, and the preservation of existing vegetation as natural buffers and barriers. Chelsie continues to review the guide and compile a list of recommendations for the Planning Commission's consideration.

Other Business:

- An alternate date was established for the Planning Commission's November meeting due to Veterans' Day. The meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 10, 2026, at the same time and location. Kevin Connelly made a motion, which was seconded by Erick Collidge, to approve the revised meeting date.

New Business: No new business.

Directors Report: R. Courtney gave a verbal report.

- Planning Director Rachel Courtney provided the Director's Report. Rachel Courtney reported on discussions with DEP regarding the Taft well site in Middlebury Center and the ongoing field inspections that have occurred over the past year and a half. DEP indicated that the absence of barium is an indicator that the source of pollution is not related to gas and oil operations or produced water. Elevated fluoride levels have been identified. At the time of the initial inspection, Seneca was applying road salt, which was believed to have contributed to the elevated conductivity levels that initially raised concerns of potential contamination. DEP stated that it is unable to issue a citation or fine because doing so could create similar enforcement concerns for other industries, businesses, municipalities, and state entities.
- Rachel Courtney also provided an update regarding archaeological investigations, noting that the Planning Commission does not have authority over archaeological review matters. DEP will not issue the NPDES permit for the land development until the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) is satisfied with the recommendations included in the permit application and confirms that the required measures will be followed.
- Rachel Courtney discussed the potential for a County-wide Noise and Dark Skies Study. The National Park Service's Mapping Sound program was identified as a resource that provides free geospatial sound modeling data, provided appropriate credit is given to the National Park Service. Discussion followed regarding how noise travels across topography and the potential need to address this through the County SALDO and local ordinances. The Planning Department has received sound complaints related to compressor stations; however, completed sound studies indicated that decibel levels were below the County's SALDO standard of 60 decibels. It was noted that the current SALDO does not account for topographic features and measures noise levels at the nearest property line. In situations where gullies or valleys are present, noise may travel directly to properties that are not adjacent to the development. Potential SALDO amendments were discussed, including requiring a Professional Engineer (PE)-sealed memo with land development plans that demonstrates, using established acoustical engineering methods, how far noise and vibration from loading areas, mechanical equipment, or circulation areas may travel. The determined distance could then be used to identify where decibel measurements should be taken. Another option discussed was creating a high-impact development section within the SALDO with additional standards for projects more likely to generate significant noise or vibration.
- An update was provided regarding Comprehensive Plan efforts. Rachel Courtney explained that a comprehensive plan is a long-range public planning document that guides land use, development, and community growth at the municipal and county levels. The plan represents the vision of the communities included and requires public input during its development. It was noted that a comprehensive plan is not zoning, but rather a guiding document that addresses land use. A current comprehensive plan can also strengthen grant applications by demonstrating that projects have been identified by the community and are supported as viable priorities. Tioga County's comprehensive planning application has been submitted, with award announcements expected in Fall 2026. If awarded, work is anticipated to begin shortly thereafter, with updates expected to be adopted by the commissions in Winter 2027.
- The Fall 2026 comprehensive planning applications include the Northeast region, consisting of Sullivan, Jackson, and Rutland Townships and Roseville Borough; the Northwest region, consisting of

Brookfield, Westfield, Clymer, Deerfield, Chatham, Gaines, and Elk Townships, as well as Westfield and Knoxville Boroughs; and the Greater Mansfield Region Mini-Comprehensive Plan, consisting of Mansfield Borough and Richmond, Covington, and Putnam Townships. Spring 2027 applications are anticipated for the Lower Tioga River Valley Comprehensive Plan, including Tioga and Lawrence Townships and the Boroughs of Tioga and Lawrenceville. Liberty and Morris Townships have also expressed interest in pursuing a multi-municipal comprehensive plan and zoning effort, with hopes of including Duncan Township, Liberty Borough, and Union Township.

- Rachel Courtney provided a recap of the “Plan the Plan” Public Learning Seminar, which had approximately 150 attendees. Due to the amount of discussion and public engagement, not all planned topics were covered, including farmland preservation and Act 13 funding.

Public Comment: No public comment was given.

Next meeting: August 12, 2026 at 6:30 PM.

No further business – Erick Coolidge made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Nancy Smith. The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by Rachel Courtney, Tioga County Planning Director.