

**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Dagsboro Planning & Zoning Commission**  
**Bethel Center**  
**February 5, 2026**

**I. Call Meeting to Order**

Chairperson Brad Connor called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Those in attendance were Chairperson Brad Connor, Vice-Chairperson Theresa Ulrich, Commissioner Norwood Truitt, Commissioner Ryan Stuckey, Commissioner Cindy Gallimore, Town Manager Cynthia Brought, Engineering Consultant Kyle Gulbranson, and Mayor Jason Russell. Please see the sign-in sheet for others in attendance.

**II. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**III. Approval of Minutes  
December 4, 2025 Minutes**

Commissioner Stuckey made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as presented. Vice-Chair Ulrich seconded the motion. All were in favor. The vote was 5-0.

**IV. NEW BUSINESS**

a) Ryan Stuckey Presentation – Comprehensive Plan

Commissioner Stuckey shared with the Committee the pressures they are facing with trying to balance the property rights of landowners who want to develop with the community's desire to preserve the town's rural character. Currently the zoning code often forces the outcome that is least liked. Successful development often means the complete suburbanization of the landscape. Commissioner Stuckey proposed that the Town adopt a few principles from the book Rural by Design. He stated that it is not about stopping growth, but about making sure it is happening on our terms. The biggest misconception about what people call "smart growth" is the word density. It is not always bad; it can be good if it is done in the right way. If the developer has the right to build fifty homes, we do not have to change the yield, we could change the footprint by reducing the required lot size not the density. That would then mandate that, say 50% of the land remains as permanent open space, which turns leftover land into a community asset.

Commissioner Stuckey stated that it is his understanding that the process starts by drawing the lot lines, which should be the last step according to Mr. Erick. The first step would be to identify conservation areas, which would be the areas that simply are not buildable but mature growth woodlands, farmland, USDA Grade 1 or 2, and wetlands. Those areas become a do not touch zone. Next would be to locate the housing sites by placing homes to maximize views of that conservation area. Then it would be to align the streets to connect the house sites. The last step would be to draw the lot lines. This vision is building a golf course community without the golf course. Instead of bulldozing everything, leveling everything, grading it and building artificially, you identify the places of the heart. Work to preserve those areas and build the community around it. He felt that others felt the same as him in wanting a back yard for kids to play in.

This approach has a variety of benefits, one of which is when people move here because they love the same thing about this place that we do and feel a connection to the community when you put roots here. He felt this was a fiscal and responsible way of changing the P&Z ideas. Cluster developments have a lot of savings as there are shorter road networks, less asphalt the developer must lay, and less for the town to maintain. It also means shorter sewer and utility lines. Commissioner Stuckey stated that studies consistently show that homes in conservation subdivisions, where residents have access to trails and views, are appreciated faster than homeowners in standard grid subdivisions. Therefore, we are strengthening our tax space without increasing the maintenance liability.

Commissioner Stuckey stated that these principles are not about what you do with green space, it is also about infill development and how to make it easier to build our existing Main Street in town rather than break ground on a new green field. Mixed-Use Zoning and Cluster Development would be two of the varieties of ways to enhance Main Street. He felt that there should be standards in place and that the developer needs to adhere to those standards if they want to build here. Mr. Stuckey stated that he felt P&Z is very reactive, the developer comes to us with their plans and then we ask if things could be changed or added. Whereas, we could start from the beginning and get out in front of it. He felt the changes would be positive for the town and the people who live here. Mr. Stuckey stated that we should use the time we have with the moratorium, so we don't end up with what Frankford and Millsboro are allowing.

Engineering Consultant Gulbranson stated that Dagsboro does have a Cluster Ordinance. It is a designated Zoning District that must be applied for and is tied to a Site Plan. When applying they would have to have the plans as well as the Zoning change. Mr. Stuckey stated that it is a problem when the developer is given the option, they are creatures of habit. Mr. Gulbranson stated that there were two developments in the early 2000's that got preliminary approval and never made it to final because the property was sold. He stated that you could do that in Dagsboro and that the Town Center District allows for Mixed-Use development. Mr. Gulbranson stated that there are also design standards for commercial and residential development. Mr. Stuckey asked about Vines Creek Centre and the parking being to the side. Mr. Gulbranson stated that when it came through a waiver was given for safety concerns. However, the Morse project is following the design standards and thinks it will look attractive. Mr. Stuckey stated that there needs to be incentive for wanting to come here and Seaford offers a grant to those that want to come there and build. Mr. Gulbranson stated that Seaford was designated as of the Downtown Development Zone and Dagsboro applied for that and were turned down.

Commissioner Truitt asked if Cluster Development was Mixed-Use. Mr. Gulbranson stated "no, it is making the lot sizes smaller in exchange for more green space." Mr. Gulbranson stated that one problem in Dagsboro was years ago the density was reduced to four homes per acre, which is lower than any other town in Sussex County. Mr. Stuckey stated that it is about a quarter acre per house. Mr. Gulbranson stated, "correct but if you wanted to cluster, four units per acre isn't going to cut it." "You will need your density." Mayor Russell asked what number is ideal for Cluster Development. Mr. Gulbranson stated seven units per acre. Mayor Russell stated that it sounds like there are additional hurdles to overcome with Cluster Zoning. Mr. Gulbranson stated that once the moratorium is over developers could apply for a Cluster Zoned subdivision, but he felt the problem is that the four units per acre is not going to be monetarily feasible for the developers. Mayor Russell stated that they would also have the re-zoning fee. Commissioner Stuckey asked if the fee could be removed. Mr. Gulbranson stated "yes, it would be a Code change." Mr. Stuckey stated that he is willing to put time into this while under the moratorium.

Commissioner Stuckey stated that being amenable in the town to more than just single-family homes, but affordable housing or workforce housing, is a real concern. If we are only selling \$400k homes eventually the workers won't be able to live in the area and would have to drive over an hour to work, which will hurt the businesses that cannot afford to pay \$15 an hour. He felt that it was a setup for a catastrophe.

#### **b) Update on Impact Fee Changes – Town Council Meeting 1/26/26**

Mayor Russell stated that he has been on the Town Council for three years and was appointed Mayor this year. The moratorium is in effect and has been for four months and there are two months left. The reason for the moratorium is to adjust the fees and get ahead of some things as well as have the infrastructure in place and make sure that the town is funded for years to come. A questionnaire was sent to the P&Z Committee, Town Council, and few others about the impact fee schedule for their input. Mayor Russell stated that he was trying to introduce an Ordinance at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting. Mayor Russell stated that we did add a .25% impact fee for the police department, which was a step in the right direction, but they now must go to Millsboro police department with prisoners to stay accredited. He stated that we are looking into possibilities of Town Hall/Police Station in the near future that requires money and funds. He felt it is important to set the town up fiscally and try to get ahead of this.

Chair-person Connor stated that whatever the developer doesn't do then the town is left with. Commissioner Stuckey stated that it feels bad, but we are going to have to come in with a higher fee than we want to because we have missed

20 years of inflation gains. He stated that the people in this town cannot afford to pay for the problems that the folks moving here are bringing with them. Mayor Russell stated and that is the issue, if we don't do something then it would be individual property taxes that would go up. He stated that most of the residents are on fixed income and should not foot the bill for the developments wanting to build.

**V. Old Business**

There was no old business.

**VI. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**VII. Adjournment**

Vice-Chair Ulrich made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Stuckey seconded the motion. All were in favor. The vote was 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Stacy West, Finance Clerk