

MEETING MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
BOROUGH OF PARKESBURG, PA
JULY 31, 2025

PC MEMBERS PRESENT –

Todd Brade
Matthew Marran
Casey Wyatt
Dave Bashore

BOROUGH OFFICIALS –

Rochelle Gresh, MPA, Borough Manager
John S. Carnes, Jr., Esq., Borough Solicitor
Ed Van Arsdale, III, P.E., ARRO Consulting, Borough Engineer

OTHERS –

Mike Malloy, Rise Up Towers, LLC (Applicant)
Matt Graubert, Colliers Engineering & Design
Joe Ruiz, R.F. Services, Inc.
Brandon Conrad, CEO, VistaBlock, Inc. (Developer)
(No members of the public were present.)

Call to Order. Mr. Bashore called the meeting to order in the conference room at Borough Hall at 7:00 p.m.

Quorum. A quorum of members was present.

Announcements. None.

Approval of Minutes. Ms. Wyatt moved to approve the Minutes of the Commission's June 26, 2025, meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brade and passed 4-0.

Land Development Plan of Rise Up Towers, LLC re: *Construction of a 170-foot-high-cellular communications tower on approximately 2,500 square feet of the Borough's Public Works facility located at 5 West Street in the C-1 Commercial Zoning District.*

* Mr. Carnes advised that the proposed cell tower on Borough property would be a by-right plan under the Zoning Code that requires Planning Commission review and recommendation and would be governed by an agreement with an initial 5-year term renewable every 5 years thereafter.

Applicant's Comments –

* Mike Malloy introduced himself as an attorney who serves As Counsel with Obermayer and is a one-half owner of Rise Up Towers, LLC., with Nick Folan. The company is backed by private equity from other investors.

* Mr. Malloy advised that Verizon would be the tower's major tenant and would likely later include the other cell carriers (AT&T, T-Mobile and Boost, owner of the Dish Network). Parkesburg Police and Keystone Fire Co. both would be on separate bands, but Verizon would likely be willing to add them to the new pole.

* The Borough would receive 40% of all gross tower rents from each company locating on the tower (estimated to be \$12,500 per year per co-locator – times 4 or \$50,000 per year total a year over the life of the tower). The tower would cost about \$350,000 to build.

* Mr. Ruiz explained that a professional engineer with radio frequency expertise studied existing cell coverage and gaps in “existing reliable coverage” in the area and recommended this site, which would provide coverage in a radius of about 1.5 miles.

* A separate interference analysis conducted by DBM Engineering showed that the tower would produce electromagnetic exposure equal to about 1% of the rate considered by the FCC to be safe for the public.

* A separate analysis conducted by Michael Plahovinsak, PE, for Rise Up Towers showed that the tower has been designed “to withstand a 3-sec[ond] gusted wind speed of 114 mph” and “also conforms to the requirements of the 2018 International Building Code.

* The Plahovinsak analysis also concluded that in the event of a failure due to extreme wind and comparable appurtenance antenna load (winds in excess of the design wind load), it would yield/buckle at the 85' elevation. The yielded section is designed to swing down and rest on the ground...” and “[a] properly maintained pole has never collapsed...” Mr. Graubert indicated that the tower would be 33 feet from Amtrak rail lines.

* Mr. Malloy distributed slides, showing how the proposed tower would look from a handful of different vantage points in the Borough; advised that the type of perimeter fence around the tower would be left up to the Parkesburg Police; said the FAA doesn't require the top of the tower to have a flashing light and said the area would be landscaped with 8' high arborvitae and would be visited by Verizon every 4-6 weeks.

Planning Commission Comments –

* PC members voiced concerns and asked the applicant questions about what prompted the need for a new tower, the proposed tower's height, the design and stability of the structure, how the tower would fall in the event of high winds or a catastrophic failure, the electromagnetic profile of the structure and its impact on nearby residents, security fencing, landscaping screenings, and maintenance of the facility.

* Mr. Brade moved that the Planning Commission send Borough Council a letter recommending acceptance of the cell tower as presented tonight. Seconded by Mr. Marran, the motion was approved 4-0.

Sketch Plan of VistaBlock, Inc. re: *Construction of 80 single-family residences (56 detached and 24 semi-detached) and 3 3-story multi-use buildings with 33,500 sq. ft. of ground-floor commercial space and 56 apartment units on the upper floors on 24.4-acres located at 70 E. 2nd Avenue under Traditional Neighborhood Development provisions in the R-2 Residential Zoning District.*

* Mr. Bashore reiterated that under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, a sketch plan review by a municipal Planning Commission is considered informal, meaning among other things that no official recommendations will be made to Borough Council this evening.

Applicant's Comments –

* Mr. Conrad explained that the revised sketch plan envisions construction of 80 housing units for sale and 56 apartment units for rent as follows:

20 single-family detached on 36' x 50' lot with front-loading 2-car garage.

20 single-family detached on 24' x 50' lot with front-loading 2-car garage.

16 single-family detached on 24' x 50' lot with rear-loading detached 2-car garage w/alley.

24 units in 12 2-family detached (duplexes) on 24' x 50' lot with rear-loading detached 2-car garage w/alley.

2 75' x 200' mixed-use buildings each comprising 15,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential space each (for possible restaurant, coffee shop, personal services, doctor office, etc., as determined by the market) with 24 apartment rental units on upper two floors.

1 50' x 70' mixed-use building comprising 3,500 sq. ft. of nonresidential space with 8 apartment rental units on upper two floors (ground floor to comprise a leasing office, fitness center, lockers/changing room and meeting space) adjacent to a 25' x 40' outdoor pool.

* Mr. Conrad stated that no less than 8 detached single-family houses on the outer-band of the development would share a driveway to permit side-loaded garages.

* Mr. Conrad surmised that the development's proposed duplexes would serve as the detached units to comply with Borough's new attainable housing provisions, which require lower pricing for a minimum of 10% of housing units within a TND plan (i.e., 8 singles and 6 apartment units).

* Other features shown on the sketch plan are the same as or similar to the previous plan: a perimeter pedestrian trail; an outdoor exercise area on the strip of property extending to East 2nd Avenue, with ingress/egress there limited to emergency responders; 3-4 stormwater management areas; and passive open space around the perimeter.

* Mr. Conrad estimated that if the development were approved, the site work would take about six months, followed by construction of the two larger mixed-use buildings over the next 10 months, with occupancy of the apartments to follow. After that, he would hope to build the houses for sale over a two-year period, depending on the financing bank(s), construction and mortgage interest rates, and market demand.

* Mr. Conrad said the perimeter would be landscaped at a minimum in accordance with Borough regulations; he would consider planting trees and shrubs along a raised berm but again stated that they weren't interested in installing a perimeter fence.

Planning Commission Comments –

* Mr. Brade thanked Mr. Conrad for addressing a number of Planning Commission concerns noted at the last meeting and reiterated his preference for a more upscale/higher-end look to the houses along with larger front porches ala New Daleville in Londonberry Township.

* Several PC members reiterated their desire that the new development's perimeter be heavily landscaped, especially adjacent to 2nd Avenue properties and the farm to the south of the property.

* Ms. Wyatt thanked Mr. Conrad for considering a mix of housing styles; e.g., clusters of semi-detached carriage homes and duplexes next to clusters of detached single-family homes of different sizes and designs.

* Mr. Carnes suggested looking into the feasibility of building an Olympic-size pool (for use by the Octorara Area School District) and enclosing it for year-round use and opening it to all Parkesburg residents, who presumably would pay a membership fee.

* Mr. Marran reiterated his previous suggestion that one or more electric car charging stations be installed on the property, that the feasibility of a solar panel overhead on the mixed-use buildings and/or the pool (similar to Lincoln Financial Field's) and renewed his concern about significant amounts of stormwater flowing from the development site onto and across his property.

* Mr. Conrad accepted Mr. Bashore's suggestion to meet again with the neighbors before submitting a formal Conditional Use/land development plan. Ms. Wyatt offered to coordinate the meeting.

* Mr. Conrad concluded his presentation by suggesting that he would move forward with conducting the required engineering and other required studies and would submit a formal Conditional Use/preliminary land development plan application upon their completion in a few months.

Old Business. *Zoning Hearing Board decision re: Oaks Ministry appeal for variances to use Parkesburg Arms Hotel at 415 W. First Avenue as a rooming house for adult women in need.*

* Mr. Bashore advised that the Borough recently received a letter from Robin Martin, founder and executive director of Oaks Ministry, advising that they would not be moving forward with the purchase, renovation and occupancy of the Arms Hotel.

* Mr. Carnes advised that the Zoning Hearing Board unanimously approved Oaks' use of the Arms Hotel building as an "institutional" as defined by the Borough's zoning code, while denying other requested variances. But apparently, some of the ZHB's conditions of approval were just too onerous for Oaks to comply with.

Old Business (continued). *SEPTA funding crisis and its potential impact on the Parkesburg community.*

* Mr. Bashore provided an update on the funding crisis facing SEPTA and other public transit agencies across the Commonwealth. As of now, if adequate funding isn't approved by August 24th, SEPTA is planning to reduce bus, trolley and regional rail service, especially during non-peak hours, for the rest of the year. Then on September 1st, they would implement a 21% fare increase and on January 1st eliminate the R-5 Thorndale/Paoli and other regional rail lines and likely end their consideration of extending SEPTA rail service to Parkesburg and Atglen.

New Business. None.

Adjourn. Mr. Brade moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wyatt and passed 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Dave Bashore, Chair

(NOTE: *These minutes were approved 4-0 by the Planning Commission on 8/28/2025.)*