

Zoning Hearing Board Meeting 11/19/2025

Heidelberg Township Zoning Hearing Board Hearing Minutes November 19, 2025, 7:00 pm

At Heidelberg Township Municipal Office, 6424 York Road, Spring Grove, Pa 17362

Board members present: Chairman A. Brough, Vice Chairman G. Morelock, Secretary E. Thompson, Solicitor Jay Kalasnic. Quorum present.

The Zoning Board approved meeting minutes from March 26, April 30, and June 25, 2025.

Christine Myers, Stenographer

Judy Mustard, Township Manager

Lori Van Tassell, audio and video recording

Scott Beaverson, attorney for York County Rail Trail Authority (YCRTA)

John Affriol, engineer with C.S. Davidson, Project Manager for YCRTA, Expert Witness

Application #09-24-2025

Filing date: September 23, 2025, Passed by Planning Commission: October 8, 2025

Applicant: York County Rail Trail Authority (YCRTA)

Application and hearing were advertised in Hanover Evening Sun 11/04/2025 and 11/11/2025.

Location of property: 6775 York Road, Spring Grove, Pa 17362 in Designated Growth Area, Mixed Residential Zoning District (DGA-MR) ID#30-000-EE-01596-A0-00000

Applicants seek to establish a trailhead to allow public access parking to 12.5 acres of Rail Trail property and to prevent parking on a public road. The Authority requests a variance to Part 5, Section 10.4 H1 of the Township Zoning Ordinance: A variance to the number of required parking spaces for parks and non-commercial recreation use would keep as much area as possible in a natural state and use a minimum amount of acreage for the proposed trailhead. The ordinance requires 36 parking spaces for the number of acres in the parcel; the variance would allow a reduced number of 25 spaces covering 2.5 acres, which is the maximum usable amount to provide for trailhead development and public access while keeping the rest of the property in a natural state. The plan also provides for maintenance of trash cans and portable toilets. Signage would direct users about proper use of the area.

Applicant also seeks a Special Exception to Section 11-4 Part 4, Section 2 DGA_MR to allow access via an existing driveway from York Road (PA RT. 116) to the trailhead area.

The plan must comply with Section 12.7c4 and 8.4Z since the area is within the flood plain overlay.

John Affriol, Project Manager, described the parcel and the trailhead area. He presented eight exhibits with maps and photographs. Mr. Affriol answered questions about lighting, signage, noise and vehicle access. This access road borders Rt. 116, which is a collector road and has the required 100 feet sightlines to enter or exit the existing access road. Required stopping distance is 500 feet both east and west of the access road. No electric lighting will be installed since visitors' access will be only from dawn to dusk. There will be minimal impact on neighboring properties. A park and recreation area are the only uses allowed for this parcel. There is no need for public water or sewer.

Christine Myers, Stenographer, swore in anyone wanting to speak.

Questions from residents included safety and security concerns, e-bike use, trash collection, noise, general maintenance and number of walkers expected to use the trail.

Paul King asked if the proposed bridge from the trailhead to the walking trail would be ADA compliant.

Mark Hudak asked if there was a traffic study conducted.

Eric Singel asked how the number of users needing parking was calculated

Lori Van Tassell asked whether ebikes or motorized vehicles would be used on the bridge after it is constructed. Also, she wanted to be assured about signage instructing people about proper use of the bridge.

Ed Strausbaugh commented that Route 116 bordering the access road was very dangerous and asked if hunting would be restricted in the park area.

Rick Singel questioned how often people actually use the Rail Trail and if the parking lot was full where would people park. He also was concerned about people using the park after dark and if a gate could be put in place.

Mike Ritz said he thinks more people outside of Heidelberg Township rather than residents will use the park.

Gene Morlock wanted to know how the number of walkers on the Trail per day is calculated.

Andy Brough asked for clarification that all the construction is within the 100 year floodplain area.

J. Kalasnick wanted to know how walkers are kept from entering the water and are there any problems with trespassing. Mr. Affriol described signage addressing these concerns used in all YCRTA parks.

Mr. Affriol answered all the questions by citing the YCRTA's policy and history of regular maintenance, cleanup and patrol of trails throughout York County. He also pointed out that a park would preserve natural areas, have a low impact on neighboring properties, and provide an amenity which would benefit all residents of Heidelberg Township.

After an executive session members of the ZHB proposed approval of the Variance on the condition that a gate be placed on the access road which could be locked at night and unlocked in the morning. Mr. Affriol agreed to include the gate in the plans.

The vote was unanimous to approve the Variance with the condition that a gate be placed at the entrance to the park driveway.

The vote to approve the Special Exception was also unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19pm.