

**February 12, 2026 MEETING MINUTES**  
Formally approved February 24, 2026 meeting

FULL BOARD PRESENT; Also present: Will McKenna, Sheriff; Ali Cassidy, Betsy Kramer, SEDA-COG; Kelly Smith-Wells, Krystina Yarish, Susan Black, Sam Burleigh, Beth Burleigh, Robin Gresh, James Artman, Bill Tyler, Jamie Fabian, Deb Alpaugh, Susan (Murray) Wayde, Sandra Johnston, Aimu Bruckhapp, Misty Raup, Linda Shupp, Jeanne Fry, Bill Waltman, Nieale Spring, Marilyn, Pickett, Robin Carr, John E. Murray, Sarah Kowalski, Joseph Kowalski, Marcie Betz, Patricia Betz, Sharon Waltman, Leslie Smith, Nikki Burrows, Meredith Armstrong, Cathy J. Kelley, Kurt Weiss, Kit Kelley, Jenifer Wemple, Michael Jawns, Lizzy Wemple, Mark Giesen, Ginny Kerslake, Renee Goocey, Angie Storipski, Nicolas Woods, Matthew Solomon, Cortney Shupp, Steve Shupp, Beth Goldman, Donald Kuziak, Sally Sitler, Monica McCollum, Ross A. McCollum Jr., Frank D. Rishel, Lynn Wintersteen, Tara Cummings, Public; Julie LaBelle, Dale Lebsack, Talen Energy; Erich Schock, Fitzpatric, Lentz & Bubba; Jeff Whilhelm, Reed Smith, Becky Ford, AWS; Julie Wemple, NCPA; Drew Mumich, Press Enterprise; Anna Wiest, The Daily Item.

Ms. Dressler asked those so inclined to rise for a prayer by Solicitor Michael Dennehy. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison. The meeting was then opened.

General Account Disbursements	\$225,909.12
General Account Receipts	\$39,911.10
General Account Checking	\$826,340.62
Capital Reserve Fund	\$85,309.16
Operating Reserve	\$1,226,039.83
Total Checking	\$2,137,669.61
Act 13 Highway-Bridge	\$204,475.46
Act 44	\$136,966.07
Act 89	\$296,994.13
Children and Youth Checking	\$1,667,263.01
Debt Service Fund	\$1,143,570.56
Flood Mitigation	\$2,907.64
Hazardous Material Account Checking	\$11,839.87
Human & Community Services Checking	\$129,667.24
Improvement Fund Checking .01%	\$16,479.92
Liquid Fuels Checking	\$271,268.67
Offender Supervision Account Checking	\$63,786.76
Opioid Settlement Fund	\$375,908.07
Storm Water Ordinance Escrow	\$56,299.85
Uniform 911 Surcharge	\$1,053,036.21
Whole Homes Repair	\$9,395.57

Mr. Lynn moved to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Mr. Finn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Finn moved to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Mr. Lynn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Ms. Dressler called for public comment. There was none.

Under old business, Mr. Finn moved to appoint Brooks Stahlnecker as an additional representative to the SEDA-COG Board of Directors. Mr. Lynn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Under new business, Mr. Lynn moved to deny a request by Talen Energy to change the zoning map for certain properties in Anthony Township. Ms. Dressler seconded. Before a roll call vote, each Commissioner provided individual considerations on the matter as follows:

**Ms. Dressler:** Before I state my vote, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the many people who participated in this process.

I want to thank the members of the Planning Commission for the time and care they devoted to reviewing this request. I also want to thank our Solicitor and County staff for their efforts throughout what has been a complex and lengthy process. Most importantly, I want to thank the residents of Montour County who took the time to attend meetings, submit comments, ask questions, and engage respectfully in the democratic process. Public participation matters, and it has mattered here.

After careful review of the record, public testimony, written submissions, expert correspondence, and applicable law, I find that the applicant has not met its burden to demonstrate that the requested zoning map amendment serves the public health, safety, or general welfare, as required under the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code.

My conclusion is based on the following findings:

Rezoning is a legislative act, not an entitlement. The burden rests with the applicant to demonstrate that a zoning amendment advances the general welfare of the County, not merely the interests of a single landowner or project.

In this case:

The asserted benefits—jobs, tax revenue, and economic development—were presented in general terms, without binding commitments, guarantees, or quantified net fiscal analysis.

No evidence was provided demonstrating that projected benefits outweigh documented and foreseeable public costs, including infrastructure impacts, emergency services demand, environmental risks, and long-term land-use consequences.

Generalized claims of economic benefit are insufficient to justify a permanent zoning change.

The record demonstrates that the request is parcel-specific and project-driven, tied to a contemplated data center and related energy uses rather than a comprehensive, county-wide land-use strategy.

The amendment would permanently reclassify agricultural and rural lands for industrial use based on a single anticipated project.

Once enacted, the zoning change would allow any permitted industrial use, regardless of whether the originally discussed project proceeds, changes, or expands.

This raises legitimate concerns regarding spot zoning and precedent-setting, particularly where the rezoning does not arise from a comprehensive plan update or demonstrated county-wide need.

Montour County's planning framework emphasizes:

- Preservation of agricultural land,
- Protection of rural character and natural resources,
- Directing industrial development to areas already planned and served for such uses.

The proposed rezoning conflicts with these long-standing objectives and would introduce industrial zoning into areas historically designated as agricultural and rural.

The applicant repeatedly indicated that key details—water use, infrastructure upgrades, environmental mitigation, noise, and operational impacts—would be addressed at later land-development stages.

However:

- Rezoning is a permanent land-use decision.
- Conditional use or land development review cannot cure the foundational question of whether industrial zoning is appropriate for these parcels.

Approving a zoning amendment based on future, unspecified mitigation shifts risk to the County and residents while locking in irreversible land-use rights.

The record reflects that:

- Industrial-zoned land exists elsewhere within the region and County;
- The applicant did not demonstrate why existing industrial areas could not accommodate current or future needs; and
- No evidence was provided showing that denial of this rezoning would result in a county-wide exclusion of legitimate industrial uses.

Zoning law does not require a municipality to rezone specific parcels simply because development is feasible elsewhere.

The record reflects extraordinary public engagement, including:

- Over 3,000 petition signatures opposing the rezoning;
- Formal requests for denial from two local school boards;
- Letters requesting denial from directly affected municipalities;

- A recommendation against approval by the Planning Commission;

Public opposition alone is not a determinant, but it is relevant when evaluating community impact, compatibility, and public welfare.

I want to be clear: This was not a decision I reached lightly and denying this rezoning does not mean that I am opposed to progress and economic development. It does mean that development must occur in the right places, under the right standards, and with demonstrated public benefit. This decision does not exclude future proposals that are more narrowly defined, appropriately sited, and supported by clear evidence.

For these reasons, and based on the record before us, I believe denial of this rezoning request is the appropriate decision. I thank everyone who participated in this process and helped ensure that it was thorough, transparent, and respectful.

**Mr. Lynn:** Failed to demonstrate why current existing industrial areas in the County could not be used;

Economic employment not provided for short- or long-term employment, just general statements;

Failed to engage the community in the process until the community discovered the information on their own;

No justification provided on why the County Comprehensive Plan should be altered to allow for the change;

Residents of township and school district oppose the changes since no benefits were demonstrated to them.

**Mr. Finn:** Talen did not meet its burden of proof.

On roll call vote, Ms. Dressler voted in favor of the motion to deny; Mr. Finn voted in favor of the motion to deny; Mr. Lynn voted in favor of the motion to deny.

Ms. Dressler moved to approve a three-year contract extension with Zito Business for telephone services at a fixed fee of \$1,041.75 over the course of the agreement. Mr. Finn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Dressler moved to approve a Tourism Fund grant proposal from Sunnybrook Park for \$25,000.00 as a local share cost of installing accessible walkways at the park. Mr. Lynn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Lynn moved to appoint Martin Friday to a two-year term as Conservation District Director to fill the unexpired term of Richie Heintzelman. Ms. Dressler seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Lynn moved to reappoint William Betz and Jack Gerst to five-year terms on the Geisinger Authority. Mr. Finn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Ms. Dressler moved to appoint Greg Watson, Danville Borough Police Chief, to the Montour County Children & Youth Advisory Board. Mr. Lynn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Finn moved to affirm the hiring of Maverick Hughes as Deputy Prothonotary effective February 2 at a salary of \$23,000.00. Mr. Lynn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Mr. Finn moved to draft a letter of support for Danville Borough's grant proposal through the DCNR Motorized and Non-Motorized Trail Funding program to purchase an RC mower for the North Branch Trail and levee system. Ms. Dressler seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

Ms. Dressler introduced Ms. Kramer, program manager for SEDA-COG's Community Revitalization Program. SEDA-COG is proposing a coordinated greenway planning effort in Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, and Snyder counties to advance trail, greenway, and recreational connectivity across the four counties. SEDA-COG has already secured a \$398,000.00 budget allocation to support planning efforts. There will be no costs for SEDA-COG services. Counties will be asked to approve a resolution authorizing participation.

Mr. Finn commented that it has been a rough few weeks in the County, including a historic snowstorm and a bomb threat at a facility, which brought a host of challenges, including emergency transport issues, the need to open a shelter, and Danville-Riverside Food Bank logistics. He noted the coordinated efforts of many helped overcome problems, and thanked the Danville Borough Street Department, local police, Sheriff's Office, fire police, EOC staff, Red Cross, DASD officials, Reichard's bus services, Rabbit Transit, food bank staff, and Brookside Nursery.

Mr. Lynn moved to pay the following bills: General Account, \$281,746.19; Children & Youth, \$14,043.48; Human and Community Service, \$852.15; Operating Reserve, \$105,282.09; Uniform 911, \$117,617.22; Other Funds, \$181,995.20. Mr. Finn seconded. On called vote, all voted in favor.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Submitted By:

Holly A. Brandon, Chief Clerk