

PA Office of Attorney General

Attn: AGRÉ

15th Floor, Strawberry Square

Harrisburg, PA-17120

Via Email: Acre@attorneygeneral.gov

RE: Horsham Township -- Request for Review

Dear-Sír/Madam:

We represent the owner of a large parcel of land in Horsham Township, Montgomery County. Our client has asked us to submit a request for review with regard to proposed forestry and Horsham Township's efforts to interfere Accompanying this request for review are the following documents: with that permitted activity.

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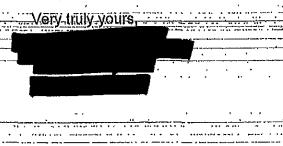
- 1. Our letter dated December 2, 2024, to the members of the Horsham Township Council stating our client's intention to commence forestry activity on its property in Horsham Township; and
- 2. The "Order and Determination" letter dated December 11, 2024, from the township zoning officer/township manager.

Our letter to the township unambiguously stated our client's intention to commence forestry on the property. There is no pending or contemplated application for development relating to this property.

Notwithstanding the stated intention to commence forestry, the township's response was a determination which compels our client to appeal within 30 days to the township zoning hearing board. In Pennsylvania land use law, zoning determinations are not issued sua sponte. They are issued upon request of a la landowner. Our client did not request a determination from the township zoning officer. Our letter sought confirmation of information previously requested by our client's forestry consultant.

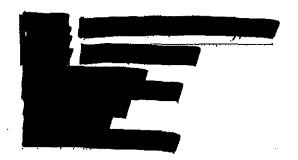
The result and purpose of the township's response are to impede, if not prevent our client's right to commence lawful forestry activities and to force unnecessary zoning legal proceedings and remedies.

Our client requests the review by the Office of the Attorney General and intervention by the Office of the Attorney General to enable our client to conduct forestry on its property. Given the deadline to respond to the township letter, our appeal to the zoning hearing board must be filed by January 10, 2025, following which our client will be forced to proceed with a public hearing, notwithstanding the statutory preemption.



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Enclosures (2)



December 2, 2024

W. William Whiteside, III, President
Sean Wade, Vice President
Eric Glémser, Tréasurer
Samantha Slaff, Secretary
Ellen-Zschunke-Parliamentarian

1025 Horsham Road

Horsham, PA 19044

Via email to: horsham@horsham.org

Keith-Valley-Road-

Gentlemen/Ladies:

This firm represents land located on Keith Valley Road, more and the control of the control

e owner of 100 acres of

This letter provides notice of our client's intention to commence forestry activities on the property pursuant to the rights granted to property owners under Pennsylvania law.

> Section 603(f) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code (MPC), expressly provides:

> > Zoning ordinances may not unreasonably restrict forestry activities. To encourage maintenance and management of forested or wooded open space and promote the conduct of forestry as a sound and economically viable use of forested land throughout this Commonwealth, forestry activities, including, but not limited to, timber harvesting, shall be a permitted use by right in all zoning districts in every municipality.

Our client's property is zoned R-1. A permitted use in that zoning district is "Agricultural Use." In section 230-5 of the township zoning ordinance, "agriculture" is defined to include "forestry." We also direct your attention to section 952 of the Right to Farm Act, 3 Pa. Stat. § 952, "Normal agricultural operation" and "agricultural commodity" encompass "forestry and forestry products."

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Finally, we direct your attention to 3 Pa. C.S. § 312 which defines an "Unauthorized local ordinance" as one which "(1) Prohibits or limits a normal agricultural operation...."

In its exercise of due diligence, our client's forestry consultant contacted

Horsham Township to determine what, if any, regulations and fees are required to
commence forestry operations. A right-to-know request sought the following records:

- Any enacted Horsham Township ordinance establishing a requirement for a township timber harvesting permit. If no ordinance exists, please confirm that no ordinance has been enacted;

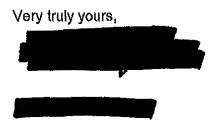
In response to this very specific records request, the township provided only the following:

- a general permit application which listed 16 types of work or improvement, including the category "other". Nothing in the application refers to forestry or timber harvesting;
- timber harvesting;

 an application for a stormwater management permit for minor earth disturbance activity; and
- Resolution No. 2024-11 restablishing a fee schedule for various categories of activities, none of which specifically refers to forestry or timber harvesting, with the exception of subsection 2.A referring to a grading permit fee for "logging." A township code-wide search of the term "logging" produced a reference to the term within the definition of forest management/timber operations contained in section 190-12 of Chapter 190 regulating stormwater management.

We conclude from the township's response to the right-to-know request that there are no specific regulations or requirements with regard to commencement and pursuit of forestry/timber harvesting activities which are protected by the unequivocal statutory provisions cited in the beginning of this letter.

If the township wishes to supplement the information previously provided, please do so within 7 days of the date of this letter.



Cc:

HORSHAM TOWNSHIP

WWW HORSHAM, ORG
COUNCIL
W, WILLIAM WHITESIDE, III, PRESIDENT
SEAN WADE, VICE PRESIDENT
ERIC GLEMSER
SAMANTHA SLAFF
ELLEN ZSCHUNKE



1025 HORSHAM ROAD

HORSHAM, PA 19044 216-643-3131 PHONE 216-043-0448 FAX

WILLIAM T. GILDEA-WALKER TOWNSHIP MANAGER

DENNIO P. HAGGERTY JR DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

December 11, 2024

.

ORDER AND DETERMINATION

Owner:

Property Location:

Horsham Township

Montgomery County TMP

Horsham Township Zoning District - R-1

Dear.

In a letter dated December 2, 2024, you indicated that your client, intended to conduct forestry operations on the property they own on property is more specifically identified as Montgomery County TMP.

which.

In order to commence any use of the property, including forestry, it will be necessary to secure a zoning permit under the Zoning Ordinance and demonstrate compliance with all township ordinances as well as state laws and regulations.

You argue that the Right to Farm Law protects your client's right to conduct forestry activities on the property and that the Municipalities Planning Code prohibits provisions in a zoning ordinance which unreasonably restrict forestry.

Please note, however, that the Municipalities Planning Code defines "Forestry" as "the management of forests and timberlands when practiced in accordance with accepted silvicultural principles, through developing, cultivating, harvesting, transporting and selling trees for commercial purposes, which does not involve any land development."

Likewise, the Right to Farm Act defines Normal Agricultural Operation as those activities a farmer would adopt or use to prepare his goods for market.

The purpose of these laws is to encourage the continuation and sustainability of farming activities.

More than 18 months ago, your clients approached the township with a plan to develop the property. You and your client represented that you paid the United States to extinguish the easement previously in place for the Naval Air Station. You presented a concept plan and asked the township to amend the zoning ordinance to allow greater density on the property.

Negotiations on the terms of the ordinance amendment ensued and later reached an impasse because your client did not want to be subject to the tree replacement requirements of the zoning ordinance or subdivision and land development ordinance.

-At a meeting-last month, the township enacted a zoning ordinance amendment which reduced the minimum lot size as your client requested; and reduced to 20% the woodlands which must remain undisturbed. The ordinance did not exempt the property from the tree replacement requirements as your clients requested.

Your letter indicates that your client now intends to remove trees on the property without specifying whether there will be selective harvesting or clear-cutting. The Right to Farm Law and the Municipalities Planning Code place limits on a municipality's right to regulate forestry operations, ——The goal of those state laws is to encourage and protect sustainable agriculture (including silviculture). ——Your clients are not engaging in forestry operations or any "normal agricultural operation." Your client's words and actions evidence an intent to remove all or most of the trees from the property so that you may build houses on the property without replacing trees as required by township ordinances.

In order to remove a natural resource from the property you will need to obtain a permit in accordance with Zoning Ordinance Section 230-226. There is no Right to Farm Act exemption because your client is not proposing an agricultural or forestry use, they intend to remove trees to prepare for the development of the property. You will need to demonstrate compliance with all provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, including, but not limited to, Section 230.49 which regulates natural resources.

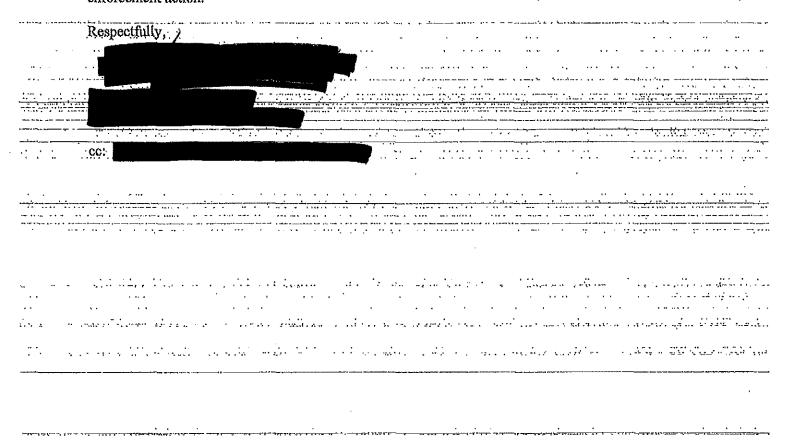
You will also need to show compliance with the Pa Code which requires, at Chapter 35 Section 102.1 et seq an Brosion and Sediment Control permit.

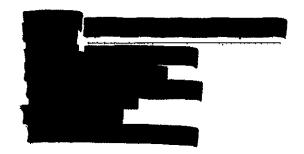
The proposed use of the property is "development" as defined by SALDO Section 198-6. Please note that if you remove environmental resources now, in advance of development, and in order to avoid the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance and SALDO, you will be expected to reforest and demonstrate compliance prior to or as part of any land development approval.

If your client has changed its intentions with regard to the development of the property and wants to engage in true silvicultural, your permit application must include a forestry management plan (if you intend to use a selective harvesting technique) or a reforestation plan (if you intend to clear cut the woodlands).

Pursuant to Section 909.1 of the Pennsylvania Municipal Planning Code, you have the right to appeal this Order and Determination to the Horsham Township Zoning Hearing Board. YOU MUST FILE THIS APPEAL WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS OF THE DATE OF ISSUANCE OF THIS NOTICE.

Failure to secure a permit and comply with township ordinances and state laws and regulations prior to commencing any tree removal is a violation of this the Zoning Ordinance. Because of the nature of the violation, the township may seek injunctive relief instead of, or in addition to, proceeding with a civil enforcement action:





January 10, 2025

PA Office of Attorney General Attn: ACRE 15th Floor, Strawberry Square Harrisburg, PA 17120 Via Email: Acre@attorneygeneral.gov

RE: Horsham Township -- Request for Review

Dear Sir/Madam:

By letter dated January 8, 2025, we requested the review of the Office of the Attorney General with regard to a forestry issue in Horsham Township.

One of the letters we provided to the Office of Attorney General was a letter from Horsham Township. The second page of that letter referred to a permit application required for forestry. Accompanying this letter is the permit application we received from the township solicitor. It is a generic application for "work or improvement" to property without any reference to forestry.

We believe that this permit application further demonstrates the efforts of Horsham Township to impede, if not prevent, forestry on our client's property.

Very truly yours,



Enclosure



Horsham Township Department of Licenses and Inspections

1025 Horsham Road, Horsham Pa 19044

215-643-3131

PERMIT APPLICATION

Note: Read page three (3) in its entirety prior to completing this application

APPLICATION DATE:	4	APPROVAL DATE	*, 	PERMIT NUMBER:	
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APPLICATION

The following sections located on page one must be completed in full:

- Location of proposed work or improvement, most importantly, site location, tax parcel number and lot number.
- Type of improvement including a brief description of work.
- Owner information with complete mailing address,
- Estimated cost of construction is required to be provided.

The contactor section is required to be completed only when work is performed within Municipalities that require contractor registration. However, Code Inspections, Inc. requests a minimum of the primary contractor information to be provided in case correspondence or contact is necessary.

Page one and two need to be completed for only the sections that apply to the proposed project, or work to be performed.

Page two and three need to be completed for Floodplain information and, a signature by the property owner, or agent of the owner must be provided on page three. Page four is intended for administrative use and will be completed by the Municipality during the application review.

PLANS AND SUBMITTIALS

The submittal shall include two (2) complete sets of plans and specification sufficient to indicate the scope of work being is proposed. Listed below are some basic examples of information tiecessary to complete a plan review. Additional information may be requested depending on the intended project.

Project design shall conform to the International Residential Code currently adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Drawings shall specify all site information such as address, lot number, TMP number, owner name and type of work Proposed. This information shall be reflected on all pages.

Drawings shall include Floor plan showing new construction in comparison to existing, room labels or use of rooms, bearing locations, window and door sizes, header sizes and all other pertinent information.

- Footing details and specifications shall be provided for all locations. Detail should include a footprint or outline of the scope of work as well as specifying pier or continuous footings where applicable.
- Pre-east concrete panels and all other pre-manufactured products shall have manufacturers engineered designs and space.
- Insulation and thermal values shall be indicated for walls, ociling, floors, basement walls and slab perimeter,

Indicate electrical components including locations and sizes.

Swimming Pools

Provide swimming pools construction specifications.

Swimming pool enclosures and barriers shall be shown and include fence, gate and gate device details.

Commercial Permit Application and Submittal Requirements

The Application shall be completed as explained in the Residential information listed above.

PLANS AND SUBMITTIALS

The submittal shall include two complete sets of niture and specification bearing the signature and seal of a licensed Design Professional, Plans and specifications shall, at minimum, be required to contain the information specified within the rections listed below.

\$ 403.42a(b) A permit applicant shall submit an application to the building code official and attach construction documents, including plans and specifications, and information concerning special inspection and structural observation programs. Department of Transportation highway access permits and other data required by the building code official

with the permit application. The applicant shall submit two sets of documents.

§ 403.42a@ A licensed architect or licensed professional engineer shall prepare the construction documents under the Architects Licensure Law (63 P. S. 88 34.1-34.22), or the Engineer, Land Surveyor and Geologist Registration Law (63 P. 8, §§ 148—158.2). An unilconsed person may prepare design documents for the remodeling or alteration of a building if there is no compensation and the remodeling or alteration does not rolate to additions to the building or changes to the building's structure or means of egress.

\$ 403.42a(a) The permit applicant shall submit construction documents in a formal approved by the building code official. Construction documents shall be clear, indicate the

location, nature and extent of the work proposed, and show in detail that the work will conform to the Uniform Construction Code.

§ 403.42a(f) All of the following fire egress and occupancy requirements apply to construction documents:

§ 403.42a(f)(1) The permit applicant shall submit construction documents that show in sufficient detail the location, construction, size and character of all portions of the means of egress in compliance with the Uniform Construction Code.

§ 403.42a(f)(2) The construction documents for occupancies other than Groups R-2 and R-3 shall contain designation of the number of occupants to be accommodated on every floor and in all rooms and spaces,

§ 403.42a(f)(3) The permit applicant shall submit shop drawings for a fire protection system that indicates conformance with the Uniform Construction Code in accordance with the following:

§ 403.42a(f)(3)). The shop drawings shall be approved by the building code official before the start of the system installation.

- § 403.42a(f)(3)ii The stop drawings must contain the information required by the referenced installation standards contained in the International Building Code currently adopted by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- § 403.42n(g). Construction documents shall contain the following information related to the exterior wall envelope:

403.42a(g)(1) Description of the exterior wall envelope indicating compliance with the Uniform Construction Code.

§ 403.42a(g)(1) Flashing details.

§ 403.42a(g)(1) Details relating to intersections with dissimilar materials, corners, and details, control joints, intersections at roof, caves, or parapets, means of drainage, waterresistive membrane and details around openings,

§ 403.42a(h) Construction documents shall contain a site plan that is drawn to scale. The building code official may waive or modify the following site plan requirements if the permit application is for an alteration or repair or if waiver or modification is warranted. Site plan requirements include all of the following:

§ 403.42a(h)(1) The size and location of new construction and existing structures on the site.

§ 403.42a(h)(2) Accurate boundary lines,

§ 403.42a(li)(3) Distances from lot lines.

§ 403.42a(h)(4) The established street grades and the proposed finished grades.

§ 403.42a(h)(5) If the construction involves demolition, the site plan shall indicate construction that is to be demolished and the size and location of existing structures and construction that will remain on the site or plot.

§ 403.42a(h)(6) Location of parking spaces, accessible routes, public transportation stops and other required accessibility features.

§ 403.42a(i) A building code official may waive or modify the submission of construction documents, that are not required to be prepared by a licensed architect or engineer, or other data if the nature of the work applied for does not require review of construction documents or other data to obtain compliance with the Uniform Construction Code. The building code official may not waive the submission of alte plans that relate to accessibility requirements.

§ 403.42a(m) An applicant for an accusal permit under § 403.42(f) shall complete an application and provide information regarding the system that may be altered and the date

that approval was previously provided for the approved electrical, gas, mechanical or plumbing installation.

§ 403.42a(n) A permit applicant shall comply with the permit, certification or ficensure requirements of the following laws applicable to the construction:

§ 403.42n(n)(1) The Boiler and Unfired Pressure Vessel Law (35 P. S. §§ 1331.1-1331.19).

§ 403,42a(n)(2) The Propane and Liquefled Petroleum Gas Act (35P. S. §§ 1329.1—1329.19).

403.42a(n)(3) The Health Care Facilities Act.

§ 403, 42a(n)(4) The Older Adult Daily Living Centers Licensing Act.

	ADDITIONAL CONTACT I	NFORMATION			 	 	v	
	Lle	o.# Name .			Address	 ., .		15555.7
-	Design Professional ""				 	 		
	Principal Contractor		: :	· · · · · · · · ·	 	 1		<u> </u>
	Master Plumber;			, *	 	 		
	Olher contacts:				 			

Authorization and Acknowledgement:

The applicant certifies that all information on this application is correct and the work will be completed in accordance with the approved construction documents and PA Act 45 (Uniform Construction Code) and any additional approved building code requirements adopted by the Municipality. The property owner and applicant assumes the responsibility of locating all property lines, setback lines, easements, rights-of way, flood areas, etc. Issuance of a permit and approval of construction documents shall not be construed as authority to violate, cancel or set aside any provisions of the codes or ordinances of the Municipality or any other governing body. The applicant certifies he/she understands all the applicable codes, ordinances and regulations.

Application for a permit shall be made by the owner or lessee of the building or structure, or agent of either, or by the registered design professional employed in connection with the proposed work.

Certificate of occupancy.

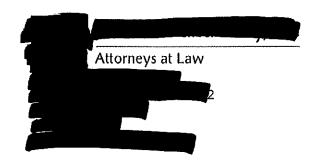
§ 403,46(a) A building, structure or facility may not be used or occupied without a certificate of occupancy issued by a building code official.

§ 403.46(d) A building code official may suspend or revoke a certificate of occupancy when the conflicate was issued in error, on the basis of incorrect information supplied by the permit applicant or in violation of the Uniform Construction Code, Before a certificate of occupancy is revoked, a building owner may request a hearing before the board of appeals under § 403.122 (relating to appeals, variances and extensions of time).

I certify that the Building Code Official or the Building Code Official's authorized representative shall have the authority to enter areas covered by such permit at any reasonable hour to enforce the provisions of the code(s) applicable to such permit.

Signature of Owner or Authorized Agent	Print Name	of Owner or Authorized Agent	
Address		Dale :	

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CUT AND FILL	□'YES		D On File	ZONING	D YES	<u> </u>	On File.
PENNDOT HIGHWAY OCCUPANCY			Q.On File		, UYES		□ On File
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March 13, 2025

PA Office of Attorney General Attn: ACRE 15th Floor, Strawberry Square Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Horsham Township -- Request for Review

Dear Mr. Willig:

Via Email:

We received on March 12th the response letter from Horsham Township dated March 6th. We note that although the township solicitor sent her response to your office by email, the township did not accord the same courtesy to us, instead sending its response by first class mail. One can easily argue that the purpose of this decision to delay our receipt of the township's response was to ensure that we did not have the response before the March 11th zoning hearing board meeting.

As set forth in our previous correspondence and request for review, the Horsham Township zoning officer issued an "order and determination" which compelled our client to appeal within 30 days to the township zoning hearing board. At the zoning hearing board hearing on March 11th, the following testimony was heard:

- 1. The township zoning ordinance has a specific, express provision that states that no permit is required for matters governed by the Pennsylvania Right-To-Farm Act. Nonetheless the township manager/zoning officer testified that a zoning permit application is required for forestry activities. The township manager/zoning officer testified and conceded that forestry is included within agriculture and that the township ordinance states that no zoning permit is required for Right-to-Farm activities. The zoning permit application makes no mention of forestry or timber harvesting. The testimony of the township manager/zoning officer was that the permit application is required and the category "other" is the category that encompasses forestry.
- 2. The township manager/zoning officer has been in that dual capacity since 2010. He admitted that never before has he issued a zoning determination including the latest order and determination when no one requested that determination.

3. At the hearing, the zoning officer testified that a landowner who wants to commence forestry should request a meeting with township staff. The day after the hearing, we requested that meeting. The township solicitor responded that the township will not meet with us.

The township is attempting to do whatever it can to interfere or prevent forestry on our client's property. The hearing testimony included exhibits setting forth provisions of the Right-To-Farm Act and section 603(f) of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code which provides that forestry is a permitted use in every zoning district of every municipality.

Notwithstanding any previous discussions our client may have had with the township, our client has not filed and there is no pending formal application for zoning, subdivision, or land development relating to our client's 100-acre property. The township continues to manufacture procedural requirements not found in township regulations (or state law) in its effort to prevent the preemptive land use of forestry on our client's property.

If it would help the Office of Attorney General in its consideration of our request, we will provide your office with a copy of the hearing transcript before the Horsham Township Zoning Hearing Board.

Very truly yours,

