

Welcome to Towamencin Township

Department of Community Development
and Codes



Guide to starting a business in Towamencin Township

Prepared By:
Department of Community Development and Codes
Towamencin Township Economic Development Committee

Towamencin Township Overview

Towamencin Township was founded in 1728. With a current population of 17,500, Towamencin offers beautiful residential neighborhoods, historic farmhouses, first-class recreational facilities, and wide-open spaces. The community is a successful mix of residential, commercial and rural development and is home to several excellent educational institutions. Centrally located in the middle of Montgomery County, Towamencin offers access to an Interchange of the Pennsylvania Turnpike. With its combination of the above, Towamencin is a wonderful place to work, live and play.

Historic Towamencin Township

The first settlers arrived in Towamencin Township around the turn of the 18th Century. These settlers were of German, Welsh, and Dutch descent. They mainly pursued agricultural endeavors to sustain their livelihood.

The first grant of land in Towamencin Township was in 1703 from William Penn's Commissioners to Benjamin Furley on June 8. The Commissioners granted 1,000 acres to him. On June 17 of that same year, Abraham Tennis and Jan Luken bought the property from him, and then divided the land in half in 1709.

The name Towamencin is of American Indian origins, and means "Poplar Tree". The legend associated with the name started in the 1720's when Heinrich Fry purchased some land near what is now known as the Towamencin Creek. On this tract of land was an Indian Village. The Indian Chief spoke broken English and observed one day two men clearing trees near the creek and said "Towha-men-seen", meaning "Two men seen." Apparently, the Chief's pronunciation stuck, as the legend goes, and is how Towamencin got its name.

In March of 1728 the settlers of the area petitioned William Penn's Commissioners for Towamencin to become a Township. The request was granted and a charter given. The land was surveyed and recorded, outlining the boundaries of the Township. Those boundaries are similar to what they are today. In the enumeration of 1734 there were 32 landholders within the Township, with William Tennis having the most acreage at 250 acres.

Today, Towamencin remains a community of tradition and vision.

Key Contact Information

The Department of Community Development is the first point of contact for a new business, a developer looking to provide commercial and residential opportunities or an established business looking to invest and expand within the Township. Our Department works with the Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board, Economic Development Committee and Board of Supervisors to ensure all appropriate agencies are working to guide the applicant(s) through the process of establishing themselves within Towamencin Township.

Physical Address:
Towamencin Township
1090 Troxel Road
Lansdale, PA 19446
215-638-7602

Mailing Address:
Towamencin Township
PO Box 303
Kulpsville, PA 19443

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MT Kennedy
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David Tweed
Building Inspector
215-368-7602

Montgomery County Health Department
1430 DeKalb Street
Norristown, Pa 19404
610.278.5117

Scott Fleischer
Fire Inspector
215-368-7602

Code Inspections, Inc
Fire Marshall
215-672-9400

Towamencin Business Alliance
PO Box 150
Kulpsville, PA 19443

US Small Business Administration
Parkview Tower
1150 First Avenue, Suite 1001
King of Prussia, PA 19406
610-327-2673

The Process of starting a Business in Towamencin

Understanding the Regulations

All businesses are required to follow regulations set forth by the state, local and federal governments. Regulations will vary depending on the type of business you plan to start and the location of your business. It is important that you as the prospective business owner understand and comply with all regulations to protect yourself, your customers and your investment. The Township's Department of Community Development and Code Enforcement will not provide legal advice or recommend any professional services as a matter of ethics. We advise you to consult with the appropriate professional to guide you through the legal approval process.

Information for All Businesses

Building Code and Zoning regulations are a vital and pivotal point in determining if you can operate your business where you would like. There are also specific requirements for those who wish to sell food to the public.

Building Code Regulations:

These regulations require that both the structure and the space are safe and accessible to all clients and employees. Under Act 45 of 1999, The Pennsylvania Uniform Construction Code, the International Building Code was adopted as the building code within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The current code regulates how structural members, plumbing, mechanical, fire safety systems and electrical components are installed and maintained. This code also regulates the modification of an existing space.

New facilities or modified facilities constructed or altered with the intent for commerce or public use must meet American Disabilities Act ("ADA") requirements. These regulations are subject to the ICC A117.1-2009 Accessible Usable Buildings Facilities Code and the Commercial Accessibility Code. ADA requirements are subject to all occupancy classes with the exception to one and two family dwellings.

Zoning Regulations:

These regulations are written by the Township to ensure the continuity and flow of the municipality with regards to growth and development. Zoning regulations specifically regulate the uses allowed within a particular area of the Township. The zoning ordinance sets rules for specific design criteria within a particular zoning district, parking requirements, sign requirements, outdoor illumination requirements, nuisance standards and many other requirements.

Businesses that prepare, serve and sell food

Food establishments are highly regulated to protect the public. Please contact the Montgomery County Department of Health for specific regulations and requirements prior to opening a new business or acquiring an existing business.

Let the Planning Begin.....

Before you can complete the first step in opening a business within Towamencin Township you need to verify your location. Towamencin does not have a dedicated post office; therefore, several zip codes apply within the Township. You should consult with the property owner or their agent to confirm the location of the prospective business.

After confirming your location, we recommend that you contact the Towamencin Township Department of Community Development. We are happy to schedule a meeting to discuss your intended use and provide feedback on whether it will work within your desired location. If your use is not allowed per the current zoning ordinance there are still alternatives to pursue. For example one can make an appeal to the Zoning Hearing Board. Meanwhile, if you are purchasing an existing business (and the use is remaining the same) you may simply need to apply for a Use and Occupancy Permit prior to the transfer of title.

In the Township's Zoning Code there are various types of uses including: By-Right uses, Conditional Uses and Special Exceptions.

By-Right Uses- These uses are allowed within a specific zoning district as long as they meet the specific criteria set forth by the zoning ordinance.

Conditional Uses- A use permitted in a particular zoning district pursuant to the provisions in Article VI of the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code and Chapter 153-1000 of the Towamencin Township Zoning Code. Though the exact process differs with the specific ordinance requirements, typically the owner presents their argument orally and by petition before the Towamencin Township Board of Supervisors.

Special Exceptions- A special exception is a use permitted within a zoning district, but subject to certain, specific conditions. The applicant must demonstrate compliance with the conditions during a public hearing before Township's Zoning Hearing Board.

The Hearing Process:

- Only a residential property owner may represent themselves. All corporate entities must be represented by legal counsel. No individual not licensed as an attorney within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania may practice law without a license.

- Keep in mind that if you are required to have a hearing before the Zoning Hearing Board (ZHB) or the Board of Supervisors (BOS), you will be required to pay all fees and submit all applications prior to the scheduling of a hearing.
- Once all fees and applications are received, your first hearing will commence within sixty (60) days, unless extension is agreed; next hearings shall occur within 45 days of prior hearing; cases shall be completely presented within 100 days of the first hearing as further specified in 908(1.2).
- Public notice shall be given; written notice shall be given to the applicant, zoning officer, and other designated persons. The notice shall be posted on the affected land at least one (1) week before the hearing
- A quasi-judicial hearing will take place and documented by a court reporter. At this time you will have the opportunity to present evidence and witnesses. The hearing is presided over by the Zoning Hearing Board Solicitor.
- In some cases an oral decision is rendered after the hearing is closed. The board or hearing officer shall render a decision or written findings when no decision is rendered, within 45 days of the last hearing; content of decisions and further provisions are found in 908(9).

Please keep in mind that even if a use does not fall under the above categories, it may still be granted based on a Use Variance. However, Use Variances are only granted under very specific guidelines and a hardship must be proven. This is a strict standard, which is typically difficult to qualify for.

Now That I have my zoning approvals.....

You have made it through your first step to being a business owner and working with local government. If you are planning to construct any new improvements (or make alterations), you will need to determine whether you need to obtain construction permits. Once again, we recommend that you meet with the Department of Community Development to facilitate the permitting process. Please keep in mind that Act 45 of 1999 allows thirty (30) business days to review or deny a permit application. While we will attempt to review applications in a timely manner, we ask that you please be patient as it is our job to ensure a thorough review for code compliance. Here are several suggestions as you seek to obtain your permits:

- Meet with the Department of Community Development to discuss your project. This will help to determine the documentation required for your permits.
- Obtain all required permit applications.
- Hire the proper professional to ensure your construction documents are code compliant and meet the latest code addition as established by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.

- Submit all permit applications, constructions documents and fees to the Township during normal business hours. If anything is missing, the process will be delayed and the permit may not be reviewed and may possibly be denied.
- File for a Use and Occupancy Permit.
- Once you are approved, an inspection process will be outlined. It is your responsibility to ensure that the inspection schedule is followed. Not following the outlined schedule could result in your project being delayed.
- Please note that you must frame and display your Occupancy Limit Certificate
- As a reminder, businesses that prepare and sell food should contact the Montgomery County Board of Health for further information. Final approval from the Board of Health must be granted prior to the Township granting its final occupancy permit.

Please note that the above are general recommendations and that each business may have requirements that are specific to their use. Again, we recommend that you consult with the appropriate professionals (attorney, engineer, architect, etc) during the process.

Finally.....

Now that you're ready to open consider the following as applicable:

- It is your responsibility to contact the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Revenue to register your business and obtain the proper sales tax license. The Department of Revenue can be reached at 717-787-1064. Furthermore, if you will be hiring any employees, you will need to obtain an employer Identification Number (EIN) from the United States Internal Revenue Service and they can be reached at 800-829-4933.
- Contact PECO or other applicable provider to setup electric or gas service for your company.
- Contact your local cable provider to setup service in your company.
- Contact a local telephone service provider to setup phone services for your company.
- Contact the Towamencin Township Police Department to register your alarm system.
- Contact North Penn Water Authority to setup water service.
- Contact Towamencin Township to setup sewer billing.
- Hire a trash hauler.

We wish you the very best success in your endeavors and thank you for choosing Towamencin Township as your home for business.

Credits
PA municipal Planning Code
Towamencin Township Economic Development Committee
Towamencin Business Alliance