Montgomery Township
Business Development Partnership
February 17, 2026
12:30 PM

Montgomery Township's Business Development Partnership (BDP) met on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at the Township Administration Building. A virtual option was available via Microsoft Teams.

The members in attendance included: Jay Haenn, Mary Griffith-Alfarano, Joy Zwicker, and Wesley Nappen.

Chairwoman Tayna Bamford was in attendance as the Board Liaison. Staff members Marianne McConnell (Director of Planning and Zoning), and Ava Komasz (Interim Community Engagement Manager) were also in attendance.

Reorganization Meeting

- **Call to Order –** The reorganization meeting was called to order at 12:33 p.m.
- **Appointment of Business Development Partnership Chair for 2026 –** Members of the BDP unanimously approved Mary Griffith-Alfarano as the 2026 BDP Chair.
- **Appointment of Business Development Partnership Vice-Chair for 2026 –** Members of the BDP unanimously approved Jay Haenn as the 2026 BDP Vice-Chair.
- **Adjournment** – The reorganization meeting adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

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Regular Meeting

- **Call to Order –** The regular meeting was called to order at 12:35 p.m.
- **Approval of Minutes – November 18, 2025 –** On a motion by Mr. Haenn, seconded by Mr. Nappen, the November 18, 2025, meeting minutes were approved.
- **Public Comment**
  - There was no public comment.
- **New Business**
  - **Confirm Meeting Dates –** The BDP will meet on the following dates as long as there is a quorum.
    - ♣ February 17
    - ♣ March 17
    - ♣ April 21
    - ♣ May 12
    - ♣ June 16
    - ♣ July 21
    - ♣ No August Meeting
    - ♣ September 15
    - ♣ October 15
    - ♣ November 20
    - ♣ No December Meeting

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- **Business Updates**
  - **Joy Zwicker (Iron Valley Real Estate) -** Ms. Zwicker reported that real estate prices are beginning to shift, with approximately 8–10% of homes coming off the market due to pricing concerns related to condition and location. Buyer activity is increasing as interest rates decline, with rates currently around 5.9%. She noted that another rate reduction could further stimulate movement in the housing market. The average age of first-time homebuyers has risen to 40 due to affordability challenges. Nationally, 4.2 million homes were sold last year, compared to the typical annual average of 5.5 million, and homes remain overpriced for short-term purchasers.
  - **Wesley Nappen (Nappen & Associates) -** Mr. Nappen reported that some tenants are struggling due to tariffs, reduced consumer confidence, and lower consumer spending. Rental rates remain elevated, and there are limited lower-cost options available. While there is still interest in the market, it is sector-specific and not as strong as the post-COVID surge. He noted that some businesses may close as a result of these pressures, and that tariffs are negatively impacting the automotive industry.
  - **Jay Haenn (Lansdale Auto Groups) -** Mr. Haenn reported that the automotive industry continues to face challenges. Manufacturers have reduced prices in an effort to attract buyers. He discussed the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI) in the industry, noting that AI bots are handling customer questions and initial sales inquiries. While AI provides efficiencies, it can be imperfect and may reduce entry-level job opportunities.
  - **Mary Griffith-Alfarano (Fulton Bank) -** Ms. Griffith-Alfarano reported that she is now the Business Banking Relations Manager for Eastern Montgomery County and Bucks County and continues to maintain an office in Montgomery Township. She explained that customers are asked to indicate their communication preferences, whether hands-on or hands-off service. AI is being used as a productivity tool to support staff, but not to eliminate jobs. She also noted that commercial lending rates remain high, creating challenges for small businesses seeking loans or real estate, and that significant transitions are occurring across industries.
- **Township Updates**
  - **Tanya Bamford (Montgomery Township Board Chairwoman) -** Chairwoman Bamford provided updates on emerging issues and Township initiatives. She noted that artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming marketing practices but is not eliminating the need for marketing teams.

Instead, AI is being used to evaluate and monitor websites and user traffic, placing increased pressure on marketing professionals to adapt to the rapidly evolving digital landscape. She also discussed the global expansion of data centers to support AI growth and the resulting impacts on communities. Pennsylvania is experiencing pressure to accommodate data center development while considering environmental concerns, including the significant water resources required for cooling equipment, which may affect potable water availability. Additional impacts include increased electrical demand, potentially driving up electric costs, and noise concerns. An ordinance is currently being developed to protect the Montgomery Township community and establish restrictions for potential data center developers.

Chairwoman Bamford further reported that the amended 2026 budget was approved, reducing the tax increase to 1.0 mills, allocated among the Fire Fund, Capital Reserve Fund, and General Fund. A third-party consultant is conducting a fire study, and a new Capital Investment Plan is in development. Planning is also underway for America 250 celebrations, including the potential for a choreographed drone show.

- **Marianne McConnell (Director of Planning and Zoning) -** Ms. McConnell provided development updates. Construction at Penn Medicine is progressing, and The Village of Windsor is finalizing land development, easements, and construction. Panera's building permit has been approved, and the Township is awaiting establishment of its escrow accounts. Costco has proposed an expansion to add additional retail space, not liquor sales. Ms. McConnell also shared that she has accepted another position and will no longer serve in her role with the BDP.

- **Old/Other Business**
  - Staff will review BDP membership to determine if vacancies need to be filled.
  - The March meeting will include discussion of presentation topics for future BDP meetings.
    - Potential Topics
      - Tax Collector (March or June)
      - Health Insurance (April)
      - Fire (October)
      - Police
      - Banking (November)
      - Township Manager

- **Adjournment –** The regular meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. in the Township Administration Building. A virtual option will be available.