



Pennsylvania Society of Land Surveyors

908 N 2nd Street | Harrisburg, PA 17102

Phone: 717.540.6811 | Fax: 717.236.2050 | psls@psls.org | www.psls.org

PA House/ Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committees Hearing
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Ref: Joint Public Hearing

Good Morning,

I am Amy Hopkins, PLS, a Professional Land Surveyor licensed in both Pennsylvania and New York. I am the current President of the Pennsylvania Society of Land Surveyors (PSLS). PSLS was established as a non-profit, statewide professional society for Land Surveyors in 1969 for the purpose of supporting, improving, and enhancing the profession, its members, and the practice of land surveying. I joined PSLS in 2003, after returning to Pennsylvania from my service in the United States Marine Corps.

I started my own company, Urban Terrain LLC, a land surveying company, in 2017. The company is certified as a Women Veteran owned business holding certifications as a Woman Business Enterprise (WBE), Women Owned Small Business (WOSB), Veteran Owned Small Business (VOSB), and a Small Diverse Business by the Pennsylvania Department of General Services.

It was brought to my attention that DEP had changed their policy concerning sewage subdivision planning by a Soils Scientist and Sewage Enforcement Officer (SEO) whom I work closely with. We team up when landowners want to subdivide their property. Private landowners typically subdivide to give an acre or two of land to a son or daughter to build a house, or they create buildable residential lots to sell to potential buyers.

Only licensed Professional Land Surveyors can create subdivision plans creating buildable lots for both residential and commercial development. As part of the subdivision process, we are required to submit a sewage planning module to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for each lot we create where public sewer is not available. We work closely with Soil Scientists and SEO's to complete the package that must be submitted. Approval of a subdivision plan is contingent on the sewage planning module being approved.

The Subdivision process is costly for the landowner. The Surveyor's fee to survey the property boundary and create the subdivision plan can be substantial depending on the acreage. Add in the cost to complete the soils testing, percolation testing and to compile the sewage planning module package for submittal to DEP. The application, review and escrow fees required by the township or reviewing agency can amount to more than the Surveyor's fee in some cases and there is no guarantee of approval prior to paying these fees.

Though DEP charges a nominal review fee, their approval has always been the wild card in the process. The February 23, 2021 policy change removed most septic systems that have been used to satisfy the need for septic systems on proposed lots for the last 23 years. The result is the drastic elimination of future lots that could have been subdivided from private lands for new home construction. The end effect of the DEP's policy change is the stripping of landowner's rights to enjoy the benefits of their land, including the subdivision and development of those lands.

I would be happy to answer any questions you might have on the subdivision process and the Surveyors role.

Sincerely,

Amy J. Hopkins, PLS
President, Pennsylvania Society of Land Surveyors