

**Highland Township Planning Commission
Record of the 1422nd Meeting
Highland Township Auditorium
December 5, 2024**

Roll Call:

Grant Charlick, Chairman
Kevin Curtis (absent)
Chris Heyn (absent)
Mike O'Leary
Roscoe Smith
Scott Temple (absent)
Russ Tierney
Guy York
Michael Zeolla

Also Present:

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director

Visitors: 4

Chairman Charlick called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He welcomed Mr. Zeolla to the Planning Commission as a new member and presumably new liaison.

Mr. Charlick moved to postpone the election of officers to a future meeting when more members would be in attendance. Mr. Tierney supported the motion, which passed unanimously by voice vote (all ayes, no nays).

Agenda Item #2: Call to the Public: Opportunity for anyone to bring forward issues of interest or concern for Planning Commission consideration. Each participant limited to 3 minutes.

No public comment offered.

Agenda Item #3:

Parcel #	11-30-200-008, -009, and -030
Zoning:	C2, General Commercial
Address:	268 and 232 S. Hickory Ridge Rd
File:	RZ 24-01
Request:	Rezoning to C3, with offer of conditions for inventory overflow and outdoor storage of recreational vehicles
Applicant:	Jay Feldman, M-59 Highland Properties, LLC
Owner:	M-59 Highland Properties, LLC

Mr. Charlick introduced the agenda item for rezoning of the existing Feldman inventory overflow lot from C-2, General Commercial Zoning District to C-3, Low-impact Commercial zoning to allow expanded use for storage of boats and recreational vehicles.

Mr. Steve Saltz, Facility Manager for Feldman Automotive Group was present to answer questions. He explained that the intent was to recoup some of their investment in the overflow lot by renting space to the public for storage of boats and recreational vehicles. They are not proposing to add any structures to the site.

Ms. Corwin explained that upon discussion with the applicant, staff had determined that open storage of the boats and recreational vehicles is a use best set in the C-3 Zoning District, although it is similar in impact to the vehicle inventory lot that is allowed in the C-2 General Zoning District. The applicant has offered conditions to restrict the use, rather than open the site to all the possibilities under C-3 Zoning District, while preserving the use of inventory overflow lot. The applicant would still be free to approach the Township in the future for other uses, following the appropriate process in place at that time.

Mr. Charlick opened the public hearing at 7:35 pm. There was no comment and the hearing was closed at 7:36 pm.

Mr. Charlick asked if Feldman was planning to bring in a third party to operate the public leasing. Mr. Saltz explained that this operation would be handled “in house”. Once a customer had signed an agreement, they would receive a gate code to enter the site.

Mr. Charlick asked about lighting. Mr. Saltz explained the site was well lit, with lighting decreasing after hours, but motion detectors that brightened the lighting when there is movement on site. Mr. Charlick commented that the site has never been well utilized. Mr. Saltz explained that the COVID era had changed the way dealerships operated. They would like to put the site to productive use since they are not expecting to ever hold the inventories they held in the past.

Mr. Charlick asked if the aisles would be maintained, or if the site would be deep stacked with inventories. Mr. Saltz explained they had not been approached by any other dealerships and were focused on the public. Mr. Charlick asked if the language of the conditions limited the use to the long term storage of boats and recreational vehicles, or if something had to be added to preclude the site from being a daily use “contractor’s storage yard” for construction equipment or industrial vehicles where vehicles would be brought in and out every day. Mr. Tierney expressed concern that the daily movement of heavy equipment would create many different impacts for traffic and noise.

Mr. Saltz expressed Feldman’s understanding that this was a neighborhood and not an industrial zone. Although they have leased space on other sites for utilities for fleets, they are focused on the consumer who would park his recreational vehicle for the season and might only retrieve it for weekends and vacations. There is no plan to seek commercial clients.

Mr. York asked about the property to the south. Ms. Corwin confirmed that the property to the south is the future South Hickory Ridge Pines Park and belongs to the Township. He asked about the landscaping plan, and wondered if the applicant would be open to extending the plantings west, especially for when the park was developed.

Mr. York noted that the parking lot is not currently striped and suggested that some consideration should be given to extra wide and long spaces for the public to maneuver. He noted that where he stores his own recreational vehicle, the vehicles must be parked by staff, and not the vehicle owner, who may have only infrequent experience backing and turning a trailer. He noted that it would not be realistic to expect a yield of as many spaces as are shown on the current site plan. He suggested that Feldman may want to consider a different form of delineating spaces than paint, which would not be visible in snow, and would be very temporary on a gravel surface.

Mr. Zeolla suggested wider aisle widths for the recreational vehicles. Ms. Corwin noted that the pavement is already there. The only option is to reconfigure the spaces, perhaps with diagonal parking to allow more aisle width. Mr. Tierney noted that a primary concern is to keep the public safe by giving them room to maneuver.

Mr. York noted that the applicant might want to include some flexible barriers to separate the public space from the inventory space. Mr. Saltz also offered that another element under consideration is security cameras.

Mr. Charlick asked how best to manage the landscaping requirements for the future. Mr. Smith suggested small plants established now would eventually grow up into a proper screen. Ms. Corwin suggested that this issue might better be left for the Board and Parks committee to work out. They may wish to see some other benefit to the park in regards to the screening requirement rather than implement a landscape plan designed to meet the minimum requirements of the ordinance but not leading to a naturalized appearance.

Mr. Smith asked about outdoor speakers. Mr Saltz stated there were none at this time and none are contemplated.

Mr. York offered a motion as follows: Recommend approval to the Board of Trustees approval of the rezoning request from C-2, General Commercial Zoning District to C-3, Low Impact Commercial Zoning District for parcels 11-30-200-008, -009, and -030, commonly known as 268 and 232 S. Hickory Ridge Road for outdoor storage of recreational vehicles, boats and trailers as well as inventory overflow from the Feldman Automotive Group dealership, specifically excluding the short term storage of commercial vehicles. It is further recommended that the layout of parking and traffic circulation will likely deviate from that shown on the approved site plan by Alpine Engineering, Inc., project 19-346 dated September 18, 2019 and that some areas will be reserved for the exclusive use of the dealership. Mr. Tierney supported the motion.

Mr. Charlick requested an amendment to the motion requiring that the applicant agrees to work out a plan for the screening of the project from the park property on the south boundary line. Mr. York and Mr. Tierney accepted the amendment.

Roll call vote as follows: O’Leary-yes; Tierney-yes; Zeolla-yes; York-yes; Charlick-yes; Smith-yes.. Motion approved (6 yes votes, 0 no votes).

Agenda Item #4:

Parcel #	11-34-176-007
Zoning:	C-3, Low Impact Commercial with conditions
Address:	Vacant S. Milford
File#:	SPR 24-10
Request:	Site Plan Review for Inventory Overflow Lot
Applicant:	Vandrey Properties
Owner:	Vandrey Properties

Mr. Charlick introduced Agenda Item #4, which is for site plan review of an inventory overflow lot on the vacant parcel just north of the multi-tenant site housing Tuffy Muffler. Applicant and property owner, Mr. Andy West was present to answer questions.

Mr. West explained that he has refined the site plan from the plan previously presented with the rezoning action to better reflect the existing topography. Stormwater retention is now delineated in the northwest

corner of the site. The site now shows room for eighty-five boats, although Mr. West expects the operator will park the trailers tightly together and not respect the drive aisles in order to fit more boats on the site.

Mr. O'Leary asked if there was a plan to the way the boats were parked on the site now. Mr. West explained that the boats and trailers onsite today were moved to the site quickly when the operator acquired the inventory of another business. He had intended to hold off on developing this site until next year.

Mr. York asked if the operator was willing to comply with the parking plan presented this evening. Mr. West intends to hold his tenant to the plan.

Mr. O'Leary noted that a screen buffer along Milford Road is absolutely required. He does not appreciate the appearance of the site. Mr. York noted that the public that came out for the rezoning was also not thrilled with the prospect of an ocean of blue and white shrinkwrap.

Mr. West noted that there is a mature red maple in the southwest corner, and that he could plant arborvitae along the edge of the retention basin. He was opposed to planting deciduous trees because he would not want to deal with falling leaves on the boats. He would rather plant evergreens.

Mr. Charlick asked about the required landscape buffer on Milford Road. Ms. Corwin noted that a 12 foot wide buffer is required, as shown, and that one deciduous tree per 30 lineal feet is required, which would result in five trees for the 165 feet frontage. The red maple could count towards that allotment.

Mr. Charlick asked about the placement of the retention basin. Mr. West noted this was the lowest spot on the site. Mr. Charlick also asked if the layout and grades at the south edge of the parking lot met up with the north edge of the existing parking lot. Mr. West explained that the lines of the spaces did not match up but that he would match the grades. Mr. O'Leary noted that the plan was to be able to pull through along the entire shared lot line.

Mr. Charlick noted that although he would like to see the use established, he felt it was important to soften the appearance of the site. He suggested that the basin could be wrapped around parallel to the frontage, and that the excess soil from the basin could be used to build a berm, parallel to the sidewalk. Mr. O'Leary added that landscaping should be added to further soften the lines. Mr. Charlick noted that the deciduous trees are required, but the rest of the plantings could be quick growing low maintenance shrubs or switchgrass. Mr. Charlick thought there would be room to move spaces to the east, away from the road. He also thought there was a benefit to "squaring off" the parking lot, so there were fewer inefficient angles, where boats could be scattered in odd directions.

Mr. Charlick asked if there needed to be a condition that the millings be replaced in the future if the use is changed. Ms. Corwin noted the conditions of rezoning require that the site be represented for any use other than inventory storage.

Mr. York asked about lighting. Mr. West explained this site is only for the use of boat dealership, and not open for the public. Not lighting the site will limit impacts on surrounding residential areas. There is no entrance off Milford Road and the entrance from the site will be blocked off after hours.

Mr. Smith expressed his concern that the Planning Commission has worked hard to improve the appearance of South Milford Road by requiring appropriate tree canopies. He has been disappointed time and again when required landscaping has been removed after the site was established. Mr. West expressed his concern that the root systems of canopy trees were destructive to the sidewalks. He would prefer to see evergreens. Mr. Smith said evergreens were not an acceptable substitute. He noted that if the Planning Commission gave in on this issue, there would never be a canopy anywhere in the Township, nor sidewalks.

Mr. Tierney moved to table the site plan to allow the applicant to revise the site plan. Mr. Charlick supported the motion. Roll call vote as follows: O’Leary-yes; Tierney-yes; Zeolla-yes; York-yes; Charlick-yes; Smith-yes.. Motion approved (6 yes votes, 0 no votes).

Agenda Item #5: Text Amendment discussion –event venues; storage on vacant residential lots, shipping containers as accessory structures, food trucks

Mr. Charlick moved to table the discussion on text amendments to a future meeting. Mr. Tierney supported the motion which passed by voice votes (all ayes, no nays).

Agenda Item #6 Committee Updates

- Zoning Board of Appeals:
- Township Board:
- Highland Downtown Development Authority:
- Planning Director’s Update

Committee updates and future agendas were discussed.

Agenda Item #7: Minutes: November 7, 2024

Mr. Charlick offered a motion to approve the minutes of November 7, 2024, with a correction. Mr. Tierney supported the motion which was approved by voice vote (all ayes, no nays)

Adjournment:

Mr. Tierney moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:54 p.m. Mr. Charlick supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote. (all ayes, no nays)

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary
ARS/ejc