

**Highland Township Planning Commission  
Record of the 1416th Meeting  
Highland Township Auditorium  
July 18, 2024**

***Roll Call:***

Grant Charlick, Chairperson  
Kevin Curtis (absent)  
Chris Heyn  
Mike O’Leary  
Roscoe Smith  
Scott Temple  
Russ Tierney  
Guy York, (absent)

***Also Present:***

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director

Visitors: 24

Chairman Charlick called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**Agenda Item #1: 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 offered comments

***Public Hearing:***

**Agenda Item #2:**

Parcel # 11-30-101-002  
Zoning: LV – Lakes and Villages  
Address: 4501 W. Highland Rd  
File#: URSA 24-03  
Request: Use Requiring Special Approval for child care center  
Applicant: Frederica Kasabasic  
Owner: Spiro and Frederica Kasabasic

Mr. Charlick explained to the audience that this agenda item pertained to the use of the property as a child care center and would not focus on the details of the development. The site plan under the Special Use Approval is considered a general overview of the site to determine how the use fits within the zoning regulation and how it impacts the neighborhood. A more detailed review will come later. He invited the applicant to present the project.

Mr. Marc Kasabasic, project manager, displayed a color rendering of the proposed building along with a site plan for the proposed new 7600 square foot building and parking lot. He explained that the project is intended to improve the quality of the experience for the clients and not to merely increase the capacity or

intensity of the activity. The child care center has been operating out of a historic house since 1978. The proposed building has been designed to complement the architectural styles and materials of the existing house and neighborhood. An effort will be made to preserve the old growth trees (mainly walnuts, pines and oaks) for a buffer to the neighbors.

Mr. Kasabasic went on to explain that the child care has been licensed in the past for more than 100 children, but is limited now to about 50. The proposed capacity is 96 children. The existing house will be renovated and restored for use for expanded programming as an accessory use, such as summer camp. He noted that the number of children under care fluctuates throughout the year. The capacity is limited primarily by the availability of parking. Based on the Highland Township Zoning Ordinance, the 14-space parking lot is suitable for 96 children. The operators will also comply with state licensing limits.

Mr. O'Leary asked for clarification of the capacity. It seems illogical that one could double the area of the building yet not expand the capacity and the intensity of the use. Mr. Kasabasic assured him there was no intent to expand the capacity beyond the 96 children capacity, and that the new space will just allow for a more comfortable setting for the children and employees.

Mr. Charlick opened the discussion to the public at 7:40 p.m.

Mr. Scott Millard, 4458 Pommere asked whether there would be a new driveway to Pommere. He noted that there is cut-through traffic from the drop-off/pick-up activity and he was concerned that this could increase. Speed is an issue. He was satisfied that the site plan showed all access from Highland Road (M-59).

There was no additional comment from the public, and the hearing was closed at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Charlick asked if there was currently a fence along the Pommere right-of-way. Mr. Kasabasic explained that the parking lot is displacing part of the playground and that the fence in this location is newly proposed. Mr. Kasabasic explained that the fences adjacent to the Pommere right-of-way are new 4-foot high decorative vinyl fences. Other fences onsite include extensions of existing fences and fences to separate the playground from the parking lot. These would be 6-foot high privacy fence.

Mr. Charlick also asked about existing tree cover, particularly along Pommere. Mr. Kasabasic explained that the site had been an active farm, and that there had once been a barn and foundation near Pommere. The proposal calls to establish a tree line along the property lines adjacent to the existing residential home to the south and as much as possible to the east. They will attempt to save the mature walnuts, oaks and pines.

Mr. Smith asked if consideration had been given to sidewalk along the M-59 frontage. Ms. Corwin explained that when the Michigan Department of Transportation constructed pathways on the north side of the road only, it was because of constraints on the south side related to steep slopes and drainage concerns. There is also no sidewalk proposed on the south side of M-59 in Hartland. It is appropriate to forego sidewalk along the frontage of this property.

The Planning Commission reviewed the report and recommendations from Megan Masson-Minock of Carlisle-Wortman Associates. Ms. Corwin explained that although the child care center has operated on the site since the late 1970's, there was never a specific authorization as a land use with special approval. This is a land use that is allowed in any residential zone due to special treatment under state law, although reasonable limits may be place on the use. Since the operators are proposing a significant new building, it is necessary for the Planning Commission to consider the use now under the standards for Special Land Use approval.

Mr. Charlick asked about the hours of operation. The operators have proposed 6:30 am until 6:00 p.m. Mr. Kasabasic noted that there tends to be a staggered drop-off with parents arriving at different times and certain programs scheduled with varied start times. Ms. Corwin noted that the ordinance does not specify hours of operation; it is up to the Planning Commission to determine if there if limitations would address a specific concern about impacts to the neighborhood based on the standards of review and approval. The Planning Commission was satisfied that given the proposed hours, the use will satisfy Standard 1 of approval, protecting the health, safety and welfare of the neighboring public.

Under Standard 2, the Planning Commission discussed whether the proposal is consistent with the stated intent of the Zoning district. Mr. Temple noted that the use had been established and has coexisted with the surrounding neighborhood for fifty years. He asked about the setbacks. Mr. Kasabasic verified that the setbacks are 40 feet on the Pommere and M-59 right-of-way lines, and 10 foot minimum on the east side with 30 feet total for the combined east and west sides, which complies with the Zoning Ordinance. Mr. Temple was satisfied that this proposal does not create unreasonable encroachments on the neighbors and satisfies the intent of the zoning district.

Under Standard 3, Mr. Charlick noted that the use of the child care center is allowable in the zoning district and is compatible with the Master Plan. He noted that the architectural details of the building appear to be compatible with a single-family home and that there are many mixed uses within sight of the property.

For Standard 4, the Planning Commission discussed the parking patterns. Mr. Kasabasic was asked to explain the pickup/dropoff procedures and how the parking compares to current operations. It was noted that the parking lot functions as a “box canyon” where the only way out is to execute a 2 or 3 point turn at the south end of the parking lot. He explained that there are currently 5 or 6 employees, but the remainder of the spaces are available for parents to park and enter the building by foot. There is an area preserved for “dropoff” at the door, although this is discouraged. The turning radii of the parking lot have been designed for a delivery truck such as UPS, which is the largest vehicle anticipated on site. There is no designated bus drop-off for the children and the Huron Valley School District does not bring busses onto the site.

Mr. Kasabasic further explained that there are staggered start times for children, ranging from 6:30 a.m. to the pre-K program that runs from 9:00 am to 3:00 p.m. The drop off/pick up procedure has never presented problems in the past.

Ms. Corwin also noted that the Fire Marshal has reported that the Fire Department is satisfied that they could operate from M-59 if there was ever a call to respond to a structure fire.

Mr. Charlick asked if there would be a need for an MDOT approval for the existing driveway. Ms. Corwin noted that MDOT still wants to see driveways if there is a change of use, but since the applicant says this is not an intensification of use, the MDOT review is probably not necessary. However, the drainage system does discharge to the right-of-way, so MDOT will get a chance to see the plans anyway. The Planning Commission believed this standard was met.

Under Standard 5, the Planning Commission was satisfied with the landscaping plan as proposed and that the screening provisions were suitable. This standard is met.

Ms. Corwin verified that there is no significant impact on public services since there is no municipal sewer and water service nor any history of significant police or fire calls to this site. Standard 6 is met.

Finally, the Planning Commission discussed the specific standards for child care centers, specifically the regulations under Section 10.09. Ms. Corwin noted that these are the specific site plan considerations

related to child care centers, including points already discussed this evening such as the hours of operation, pick up and drop off patterns, landscaping screens.

Mr. Charlick asked about lighting. Mr. Kasabasic explained that there is currently one parking lot light, which is turned down after hours, and that the wallpacks on the building are downward directed and consistent with zoning regulations.

Mr. Temple noted that the site plan has operated successfully at the site for over fifty years, and that they details discussed earlier during this meeting all point to evidence that the standards are satisfied.

Mr. Charlick moved to recommend approval of case URSA24-03, for the School Bell Child Care Center expansion, 4501 W. Highland Road, Parcel 11-30-101-002, based upon findings of compliance with the standards of review and approval as discussed and as outlined in the report from Carlisle-Wortman Associates and further based on the site plan by Boss Engineering dated May 31, 2024. Mr. Tierney supported the motion. Vote: Temple, yes; Tierney, yes; Smith, yes; Charlick, yes; Heyn, yes; O’Leary, yes. Motion carried (6 yes votes, 0 no votes).

***Work Session:***

**Agenda Item #3:**

Parcel #            11-30-101-002  
Zoning:            LV – Lakes and Villages  
Address:           4501 W. Highland Rd  
File#:              SPR 24-04  
Request:           Site Plan Review  
Applicant:        Frederica Kasabasic  
Owner:             Spiro and Frederica Kasabasic

Ms. Corwin explained that the Planning Commission was free to initiate and even complete their review of the site plan, since the plans submitted were complete. Any site plan approval, however, would be subject to the use approval by the Board of Trustees. Ms. Corwin noted that there are review letters in the packet from CWA, Hubbell, Roth & Clark (the Township engineer) and from the Fire Marshal.

Mr. Brent Lavanway of Boss Engineering was present to explain the project and answer questions. The project involves construction of a new 7261 square foot building and associated parking. The design of the site includes a new storm water management system with an overflow discharge to the Highland Road (M-59) right-of-way. Hubbell, Roth and Clark has reviewed the plans and has asked for some changes to materials, but is otherwise satisfied that the conceptual plan is sound. Ms. Corwin noted that there will be detailed construction plans submitted which will require that approvals of all outside agencies be submitted.

Mr. Charlick asked if a building of this size required sprinkling. Ms. Corwin explained that child care centers fall under a use designation that does not require sprinkling at this size but does require exterior doors from every classroom space. She noted that the State of Michigan will review these building plans.

Mr. Charlick asked if there was currently a dumpster on site. Mr. Kasabasic noted that there was a dumpster, but not an enclosure. The enclosure is proposed, and access is suitable.

Mr. Kasabasic noted that there was extra space around the proposed turnaround and that they had restricted the number of parking spaces to ensure that the turnaround would function properly.

The lighting plan was discussed. The plan calls for LED lighting which will be limited to a warm spectrum of light, around 3000K and fully cutoff, downward directed. There is one pole light on a timer and the rest are wallpacks.

Mr. Kasabasic explained that they will maintain the existing free standing sign. They would like to add some building mounted signage, but will comply with the ordinance limits.

Mr. Charlick moved to grant conditions approval of SPR24-04, for the School Bell Child Care Center expansion, 4501 W. Highland Road, Parcel 11-30-101-002, subject to final approval of the land use by the Board of Trustees and final review and approval by staff and consultants. Mr. Heyn supported the motion. Vote: Temple, yes; Tierney, yes; Smith, yes; Charlick, yes; Heyn, yes; O'Leary, yes. Motion carried (6 yes votes, 0 no votes).

**Agenda Item #4.**

Committee Updates

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

Committee updates and future agendas were discussed. Note that the August 1, 2024 meeting will be held at the Adult Activity Center, 209 N. St. John and has been noticed for two public hearings, including a gas station at the former Marathon site at M-59/Milford Road and Wiggles and Giggles Child Care Center at N. Milford/White Lake. The application materials are available online for public review.

**Agenda Item #5:**

Minutes: June 6, 2024 and June 20, 2024

Mr. Smith offered a motion to approve the minutes of June 6, 2024 and June 20, 2024 as presented. Mr. O'Leary supported the motion which was approved by voice vote (all ayes, no nays)

***Adjournment:***

Mr. Charlick moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:34 p.m. Mr. Temple supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary  
ARS/ejc