

**Highland Township Planning Commission  
Record of the 1418th Meeting  
Highland Township Auditorium  
September 5, 2024**

***Roll Call:***

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

***Also Present:***

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director

Visitors: 10

Chairman Heyn 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.**

Mr. Thomas Ambers, 38075 Mallory Drive, Wixom was present to speak about his mother-in-law’s property at 2453 Davista. She has received a notice of violation regarding the storage of boats on the parcel opposite of the homesite, which is the site of a garage. He noted that the property had been in the family for 52 years, and admitted that at times, there were as many as three trailers on the site. He was seeking relief to continue to use the lot for his pontoon, which does not fit within the garage. He noted that the site does not perk, and could not support the addition of a house as a principal permitted use. The accessory use of storage is prohibited as there is no principal use of the site.

Planning Commission members agreed that the issue deserves study. There are a number of similar lots in the community that are used for storage, in violation of the current zoning ordinance and an apparent demand for outdoor storage of recreational vehicles and boats. The ordinance addresses concerns that the parcels cannot be combined to parcels on the lakeside of the street, and therefore could come under separate ownership, perhaps even as a commercial activity. Ms. Corwin noted that the ordinance officer would “stand down” enforcement while the Planning Commission studied the issue and determined if ordinance amendments would be undertaken.

Michael Cassise, 2560 Vero Drive, had received a similar notice. He owns a garage only at 2464 Davista, which had been purchased from the property owner on the lakeside of the street. He cannot fit his pontoon or trailer in the garage and parks. He noted that the issue had come up eight years ago with a previous enforcement officer, and he sought to construct a larger storage structure but was denied. The parcel does not perk. He noted that he maintains his property and received no further contact from enforcement until now.

Jacqueline Rhodes, 1450 S. Milford Road spoke about her concerns with the replacement of a solid fence at an adjacent veterinary clinic. The fence was shown on the clinic's original site plan, but had fallen into disrepair and must be replaced. She would prefer a different solution, since the fence obscures the view of her driveway to an accessory dwelling on her parcel and she feared that invasive plants would grow up in the space between an existing chain link fence on her property and the new solid fence, Mr. York had visited the site at the invitation of Ms. Rhodes and suggested the Planning Commission should reconsider the screening requirements between non-residential and residential parcels and allow more latitude. He thought there should be an appeal process accessible to an aggrieved neighbor. Ms. Corwin noted that the main issue was that the veterinary clinic was not present at the table to discuss options, which are permitted under the current ordinance, and changes would come at their request, not the neighbor's request.

Sylvie and Jeff Bulmer, 2417 Davista also spoke about open storage of recreational vehicles on her parcel. She also received a notice of violation. There is no accessory structure on the parcel she parks the equipment, which is located on the opposite side of the street from her lakefront home.

Wendy Hiebert, 893 N. Hickory Ridge Rd explained that she had received civil infractions for operating a food truck with an expired temporary use permit that she believed were unjust. She had appeared at a Planning Commission meeting in June and expected that the Planning Commission would add the issue to a future agenda and would contact her. She had not thought she had to renew her permit while she waited for ordinance revisions. Ms. Corwin noted that the Planning Commission had no authority to dismiss a ticket, and that the Planning Commission had not agreed to take up the ordinance, believing that 180 days (one permit renewal) was sufficient on an undeveloped site, and that any longer use permit should be subject to site plan review and approval as a "permanent" use, even where a mobile installation was involved. She was directed to comply with the ordinance as stands.

**Agenda Item #2:**

Parcel # 11-22-376-009  
Zoning: HS- Highland Station Business District  
Address: 394 N Milford  
File#: SPR 24-05  
Request: Site Plan Review  
Applicant: Tarek Gayer, G&G Investments, LLC  
Owner: G&G Investments, LLC

Tarek Gayer of G&G Investments was present to present the modifications to the site plan which address comments raised in the meeting of August 1. His changes include a revised façade of the building and canopy, extension of the sidewalk and minor modifications to the landscape plan. He explained that he had met with the owners of the neighboring day care center to the south and that they had an agreement about grading and removal of a tree.

Mr. Tierney asked about the extension of the sidewalk to meet existing sidewalk in Milford Road, and the treatment of the west façade. He also wanted assurance that the sidewalk in the Highland Road right-of-way labelled "possible" will be installed. Mr. O'Leary added that if the west window becomes a service window for pass through sales of food, a sidewalk should be extended to the window as well. He further noted that the sidewalk in front of the building was only 5 feet, which would be rendered inaccessible if vehicles overhang. Mr. Gayer suggested bumper blocks, but Ms. Corwin noted these are disallowed by the Zoning Ordinance. It was agreed the sidewalk should be increased to 7 foot wide with integral curb.

Mr. Gayar explained the façade modifications. There will be a dark grey brick base and a neutral tan to grey horizontal lap siding of cement hardie board with cultured stone pillars. The roof will be standing metal in a green that would fit with BP's corporate color scheme. The columns of the gas canopy would utilize the brick and cultured stone materials, and would include a crown molding detail at the top of the corporate identity band to add some interest. Mr. York suggested that the Planning Commission expects to see color renderings of the proposal with the final site plan submissions.

Mr. York noted that he was still very concerned about the site circulation. He noted that there was little or no stacking space for the pumps, and that the turning movements of a fuel delivery truck conflicted with customer traffic. Mr. York was concerned that a left turn southbound on Milford Road would cause a dangerous disruption in traffic. Mr. Gayar explained that the trucks are likely to turn right and head northbound since they would be headed back to the highway, and not into Highland's downtown. He believed the driveway geometry would accommodate the turn. He also noted that fuel deliveries could be scheduled for evening or non-peak hours.

Ms. Corwin noted there were still two ordinance issues to take up. First, the current zoning ordinance requires one space per 125 square feet of net usable building space (the only land use relying on net space, since others are based on gross floor area). This would suggest a parking requirement of 20 spaces. If this building were later converted to a retail use, with no pumps, it would only be required one space per 200 square feet of gross floor area or 15 spaces. The result of this ordinance requirement is that some sites would likely have more paving than justified. She recalled the secondary parking lot proposed on the west side of the pending Wardlow Road gas station, which is unlikely to ever be used. She provided a study of the other six gas stations that currently exist in Highland Township and note that none of them provide one space per 125 square feet. Mr. York asked about the impact of adding a restaurant. Ms. Corwin noted the ordinance parking requirements assume such a use.

The second issue was the maximum lot coverage is too small given the typical lot size in the Highland Station Zoning District. This amendment will also be pursued.

The Planning Commission members discussed whether it would be better for the applicant to seek a variance. Ms. Corwin thought an ordinance amendment could be accomplished before the applicant could return with all his agency approvals, whereas it is always possible the Zoning Board of Appeals might not grant a variance.\

Ms. Corwin also noted that the landscaping plan might need a little more tweaking to provide a greater diversity. Both of the deciduous tree species noted are maples, and Japanese maples are typically smaller decorative trees. A different species should be introduced.

Mr. York offered the following motion: To grant preliminary approval of the Site Plan, SPR24-05 for a gas station in the Highland Station Business District, 394 N Milford Road, Parcel 11-22-376-009, based on the site plan by Ziad Al-Baba Engineering, dated August 26, 2024 with the following conditions: a) the applicant submit a color rendering and/or materials samples for the proposed façade prior to final site plan approval; b) the 15 parking spaces are acceptable provided either an ordinance change is implemented as discussed or a variance is approved for the reduction from current ordinance standards; c) the sidewalk in front of the building is widened to 7 foot to accommodate the vehicle overhang; d) canopy height is acceptable given the architectural details provided in the revised plans. Mr. Tierney supported the motion. Vote: O'Leary, yes; Tierney, yes; York, yes; Curtis, yes; Heyn, yes; Smith, yes. Motion carried (6 yes votes, 0 no votes).

**Agenda Item #3:** Review of Master Land Use Plan and future Land Use Map

Ms. Corwin explained that she had sent some edits to the draft Master Plan to Carlisle-Wortman, and that they expect to have a final draft for the meeting of September 19 that should be ready to send forward to the Board of Trustees for approval to release for the public comment period.

Mr. Tierney is still concerned about separating agriculture and large lot residential. Ms. Corwin noted that there is no intent to change the ordinance at this time, and that no one will have a right to agricultural use curtailed as it is protected by Michigan Right to Farm Act. It is more of a notice to the public that certain areas are more tolerant of the quasi-industrial impacts of agricultural use, and others are more suited to resource preservation. This is more in anticipation of state laws that allow certain activity in agricultural zones, to protect those areas that are more truly residential in nature.

Ms. Corwin asked anyone with further markups or comments to get them to her in the coming week for incorporation into the draft before the next meeting.

**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.

**Agenda Item #5:**

Minutes: August 1, 2024

Mr. York offered a motion to approve the minutes of August 1, 2024, with corrections. Mr. O'Leary supported the motion which was approved by voice vote (all ayes, no nays)

***Adjournment:***

Mr. York moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 p.m. Mr. Tierney supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary  
ARS/ejc