CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
APPROVED MINUTES
April 2, 2025

The meeting was held at Highland Township Auditorium, 205 N. John St, Highland, MI, 48357.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

David Gerathy, Chair
Michael Borg, Vice Chair
Anthony Raimondo, Secretary
Michael Zeolla, P.C. Liaison
Peter Eichinger
Robert Hoffman
Gary Childs
Chuck Benke, Alternate
Jacob Probe, Alternate - absent

Kariline P. Littlebear, Zoning Administrator

Visitors: 6

Chairman Gerathy welcomed the public to the meeting and reviewed the procedures for addressing the Board. He stated that four affirmative votes are required to approve a variance. If a variance is approved, the applicant has one year to act upon the variance.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. CASE NUMBER: 25-05
   ENFORCEMENT:
   ZONING: ARR – Agricultural and Rural Residential (5-acre min)
   PARCEL #: 11-06-100-019
   PROPERTY ADDRESS: 6040 N. Tipsico Lake Rd
   APPLICANT: Karol Grove
   OWNER: Barbara Petersmark
   VARIANCE REQUESTED: A 26.12-foot variance from the required 330-foot minimum lot width to 273.88-feet provided for proposed parcel A; and
   A 5.57-foot variance from the required 330-foot minimum lot width to 294.43-feet provided for proposed parcel B.
   (Sec. 4.15.)
   This request is for the completion of a land division request to allow for the two new parcels to have a lesser lot width than required.

Chairman Gerathy introduced the case and asked if the applicant was present and, if so, to please step up to the podium. Mrs. Littlebear stated that the variance requested had been calculated incorrectly and so the case would need to be tabled to the next meeting so that the mailing can be redone.

Discussion from the Applicant:
Karol Grove, applicant, confirmed the calculation error and that she can attend the next meeting. She stated that Mr. Petersmark is unwell and Mrs. Petersmark is caring for him.

Discussion from the Public:
Humberto Serna, Davisburg, MI, noted that he owns the vacant parcel 11-06-100-020 east of the Petersmark property. He stated that he doesn't know what they are asking for. Mrs. Littlebear stated that the digital case file has been available on the website for a couple of weeks for public review and he responded that he could not access it. She then showed him a hardcopy of the survey of the proposed parcels. He stated that he is opposed to granting variances because he feels that it will devalue his property. He also stated that if he has to follow the rules then the Petersmarks should have to follow the rules too. He stated that currently one leg of the circle drive that accesses this parcel actually comes off the driveway located on the flag leg of his parcel that he uses to access his vacant property. He stated that he does not want that access to continue. Ms. Grove stated that the Petersmarks are willing to install a new driveway for proposed Parcel B if that is what Mr. Serna would prefer. He then stated that he thinks adding a new driveway will be too close to the existing driveways. He went on to discuss a lawsuit he won several years ago against the Petersmarks pertaining to trespass and property damage on his vacant parcel.

Discussion from the Board:
Mr. Gerathy thanked Mr. Serna for coming out to express his concerns. Mr. Raimondo reminded Mr. Serna that he is welcome to come to the next meeting as well to express his concerns again. Mrs. Littlebear stated that Mr. Serna is also welcome to email the Planning Department if he is unable to attend the next meeting.

Motion:
Mr. Hoffman made a motion in Case #25-05, parcel # 11-06-100-019, commonly known as 6040 N. Tipsico Lake Rd, to table the case to the next meeting. Mr. Childs supported the motion, and it carried with a unanimous voice vote.

MINUTES:
Mr. Borg made a motion to approve the minutes of March 19, 2025, as corrected. Mr. Zeolla supported the motion, and it was approved with a unanimous voice vote.

DISCUSSION:
Mr. Zeolla stated that as the Planning Commission liaison, he wanted to know whether anyone has opinions of detached accessory dwelling units which are commonly called granny units or in-law units. He stated that he wanted to investigate why they are not allowed in Highland. Mr. Borg stated that this has become a trend. Mr. Gerathy stated that it seems like you need to be determined on a case-by-case basis because it could work on some properties but not on others. Mr. Hoffman noted that the ADU could end up being rented out to people other than the family of the property owner. He also noted that the homeowner's principal residency tax exception would be reduced. Mr. Borg noted that there would be a number of issues to address for this to work such as increased numbers of driveways, potential well and septic system issues, etc. Mr. Raimondo cautioned the Planning Commission to be careful changing or creating ordinances based on trends as it could cause more problems than it solves. Mr. Gerathy opened the discussion for public comment as well. Mr. Serna noted that having an ADU that may be rented out could cause issues for the septic system as those who do not own the property may not be as cautious about what they dump into the septic. Mrs. Grove, 5201 Knobby Hill, believes that ADU's would reduce property values.

ADJOURN:
At 8:11 p.m., Mr. Raimondo made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Borg supported the motion, and it carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Raimondo
AR/kpl