

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
APPROVED MINUTES  
August 20, 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 - **absent**  
Robert Hoffman  
Gary Childs  
Chuck Benke, Alternate - **absent**  
Jacob Probe, Alternate - **absent**  
Kariline P. Littlebear, Zoning Administrator

Visitors: 2

Chair Gerathy welcomed the public to the meeting and reviewed the procedures for addressing the Board, stating 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: 25-16  
ENFORCEMENT: **EE25-0174**  
ZONING: LV – Lake and Village Single-Family Residential District  
PARCEL #: 11-12-176-017  
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 4253 Hunters Dr  
APPLICANT: Jacquelyn Spohr  
OWNER: Daniel Spohr  
VARIANCE REQUESTED: A 3-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot ordinary high-water mark setback to 27-feet provided; and  
A 2.5-foot variance from the required 10-foot side yard setbacks to 7.5-foot provided.  
(Sec. 9.02.D. and Sec. 9.02.B.b.)  
This request is for a reduction of the ordinary high-water mark setback and the side yard setback for the construction of a covered porch.

Chair Gerathy introduced the case and asked if the applicant was present and, if so, to please step up to the podium.

**Discussion from the Applicant:**

Chair Gerathy stated that since there was not a full board present, the applicant could choose to table the case to the next meeting so that a full board could be present. Ms. Jacquelyn Spohr, applicant, stated that she was comfortable moving forward with the case. She reviewed the case stating that she is requesting these variances due to the narrowness and shallowness of the parcel. She noted that many of the other properties on

this street have been granted variances due also to their shallowness and narrowness, noting that the homes were constructed primarily in the 1940's and 50's, prior to modern zoning. She believes that the neighboring properties have overhangs that exceed what she has requested and that her request is consistent with the character of the neighborhood. She stated that the original deck was much larger.

**Discussion from the Public:**

None

**Discussion from the Board:**

The Zoning Administrator noted that there is an enforcement action on this parcel for building without a permit. She has not received any calls, letters or emails from any neighbors regarding this proposal.

Mr. Borg asked if a permit is required for the deck. Ms. Spohr explained that the deck had wrapped around the house and extended to the property line in the past, but that her family had reduced its footprint. Mr. Borg asked if there was evidence of the pre-existence of the deck. Ms. Littlebear explained that there was no past permit or variance for a deck on the property.

Mr. Hoffman noted that variances would be required for any construction in this neighborhood due to the 40-foot prevalent lot width. He noted most homes extend closer to the lake than would be required by the zoning regulations. He has no issues with approving the variance.

Mr. Raimondo asked the property owner if she lived at this address, since her address on the application is on Craven. She explained that she recently purchased the Craven residence, and that she has listed the property on Hunter's Drive and intends to sell it.

Mr. Raimondo asked the applicant if she was aware of any permits acquired by neighbors for the improvements on the houses she had cited as comparable. She was aware of one new build in the neighborhood.

Mr. Raimondo also asked if this improvement had been constructed by a licensed builder. Ms. Spohr stated that her friends and family came over and they had a building party. Mr. Hoffman explained that a homeowner's permit would have been appropriate. Ms. Littlebear explained the permit process in more detail.

Mr. Zeolla asked if building plans were available. Ms. Spohr noted that an experienced friend had prepared plans for their use in pulling permits if the variance is approved. She believed that the overhang will meet building code requirements, including snow load.

Mr. Raimondo noted that the practical difficulties for the parcel are not self-created, based on review of the other lots along Hunter Drive. He further noted that the proposal will not alter or detrimentally affect the character of the neighborhood and that the request is consistent with its surrounding neighborhood and others within the Lakes and Village Zoning District.

Mr. Borg also noted that the deck was pre-existing when the owners purchased the home in 2011. He was originally opposed to the side-yard variance, but as there is no evidence that the deck did not encroach into the side yard at the time of sale, he will take the word of the applicant. He complimented the applicant on the care and upkeep of the home.

**Motion:**

Mr. Hoffman made a motion in Case #25-16, parcel # 11-12-176-017, commonly known as 4253 Hunters Dr, to approve a 3-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot ordinary high-water mark setback to 27-feet provided and a 2.5-foot variance from the required 10-foot side yard setbacks to 7.5-feet provided for the construction

of a covered porch. Mr. Borg supported the motion.

**Facts and Findings:**

This parcel is exceptionally narrow and shallow.

The proposed structure encroaches less than the original deck.

This request is the minimum necessary.

This request is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.

This request will not be detrimental nor alter the essential character of the neighborhood.

**Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Gerathy -yes, Mr. Borg -yes, Mr. Zeolla-no, Mr. Hoffman -yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Raimondo -no (4 yes votes, 2 no votes). The motion passed and the variance request was approved.

**MINUTES:**

Mr. Borg made a motion to approve the minutes of August 6, 2025, as presented. Mr. Childs supported the motion and it was approved with a unanimous voice vote.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mrs. Littlebear briefly reviewed the Open Meetings Act stating that the Act prevents board members from speaking to each other or the applicants about a case except at the public meeting. She reminded the board members that the Planning & Zoning Department staff are, however, at their disposal to review and discuss the facts of any case if they so desire.

**ADJOURN:**

At 7:54 p.m., Mr. Childs made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Raimondo supported the motion, and it carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Raimondo  
AR/kpl