

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
APPROVED MINUTES
January 21, 2026

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 - **absent**
Peter Eichinger
Robert Hoffman
Gary Childs
Chuck Benke, Alternate - **absent**
Jacob Probe, Alternate

Kariline P. Littlebear, Zoning Administrator
Samantha George, Assistant Zoning Administrator

Visitors: 6

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. He noted that P.C. Liaison Michael Zeolla is absent and so alternate member, Jacob Probe, will sit in on this meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. CASE NUMBER: 25-23
ENFORCEMENT: **Tabled from December 3, 2025**
ZONING: RPUD – Residential Planned Unit Developments
PARCEL #: 11-32-101-002
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 1604 Turtle Creek
APPLICANT: Jose & Avelia Trevizo
OWNER: Jose & Avelia Trevizo
VARIANCE REQUESTED: A 21-foot variance from the required 100-foot rear yard setback to 79-feet provided.
(Sec. 7.02.C.5.)
This request is for a reduction of the rear yard setback for the construction of a pool and 3-foot cement apron.

Motion:

Mr. Raimondo made a motion to remove the case from the table. Mr. Hoffman supported the motion, and it was approved with a unanimous voice vote.

Chair Gerathy introduced the case and asked if the applicant was present and, if so, to please step up to the podium. He then asked the Zoning Administrator if there was anything new to add.

Mrs. Littlebear stated that there has not been any public comment for this case sent to the Planning Department regarding this case.

Discussion from the Applicant:

Mr. and Mrs. Trevizo, applicants, went over the case as presented.

Discussion from the Public:

None

Discussion from the Board:

Mr. Hoffman noted that the neighbor to the south has a pool and asked the Zoning Administrator if they had to request a variance. Mrs. Littlebear explained that they did not need a variance because their pool was just inside their building envelope. He stated that this condominium subdivision has extensive open space and that this in-ground pool will not interfere with the intended wooded feel of the parcel or neighborhood.

Mr. Eichinger asked why the rear yard setback of this building envelope is 100 feet. Mrs. Littlebear stated that it appears that the building envelope was based on the setbacks for a new house in the R3 zoning district. He asked what the setback for a pool is in that zoning district. Mrs. Littlebear stated that the rear setback for detached accessory structures such as swimming pools in the R3 district is 50 feet.

Mr. Raimondo stated that the difficulty was not created by the applicant or the previous property owner, that this request seems to be the minimum necessary, and granting the request would not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Childs stated that since this property backs up to permanent open space and the request is minimal that he is inclined to approve it.

Motion:

Mr. Eichinger made a motion in Case #25-23, parcel # 11-32-101-002, commonly known as 1604 Turtle Creek, to approve a 21-foot variance from the required 100-foot rear yard setback to 79-feet provided for the construction of a pool and 3-foot cement apron per the facts and findings provided during discussion. Mr. Childs supported the motion.

Facts and Findings:

This request is the minimum necessary.

This request is consistent with the surrounding parcels.

This request will not interfere with wooded sightlines for any of the neighbors.

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

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Gerathy-yes, Mr. Borg-yes, Mr. Raimondo-yes, Mr. Probe-yes, Mr. Hoffman-yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Eichinger-yes, (7 yes votes). The motion passed and the variance request was approved.

2. CASE NUMBER:	25-25
ENFORCEMENT:	Tabled from December 3, 2025
ZONING:	C-1 – Local Commercial
PARCEL #:	11-15-127-003
PROPERTY ADDRESS:	2800 N Milford Rd

APPLICANT:	Phillips Signs & Lighting LLC
OWNER:	AML Ventures LLC
VARIANCE REQUESTED:	A 3-foot variance from the 6-foot maximum allowable height to 9-feet provided. (Sec. 14.07. Table 14.2) This request is for an increase in the height of a sign in the required front yard.

Motion:

Mr. Borg made a motion to remove the case from the table. Mr. Hoffman supported the motion, and it was approved with a unanimous voice vote.

Chair Gerathy introduced the case and asked if the applicant was present and, if so, to please step up to the podium. He then asked the Zoning Administrator if there was anything new to add. Mrs. Littlebear stated that there has not been any new public comment sent to the Planning Department regarding this case.

Discussion from the Applicant:

Ed Phillips with Phillips Sign & Lighting, representative for the applicant and owner, stated that the board members at the previous meeting felt that perhaps the north side of the driveway would be a better location for the sign without the need for a variance. Mr. Phillips handed out a few photos of that location from the north and the south stating that the north location would still be blocked by the vegetation and so would still need a variance. He noted that the area is very dark which also makes the sign harder to see. He stated that Mr. Raimondo had been correct in the last meeting when he stated that public safety for events is not a practical difficulty.

Discussion from the Public:

None

Discussion from the Board:

Mr. Gerathy asked the Zoning Administrator if she was able to find the information that the board had requested at the last meeting regarding the approved site plan. Mrs. Littlebear stated that she found that the landscape plan from 2013 was approved with only the standard landscaping of 1 tree per thirty (30) linear feet of street frontage but no mention of any other required vegetation, the approved site plan had the parking spaces facing the building and not the road, and that the signed recorded Special Land Use permit states that LaFontaine will be responsible for directing traffic during special events. She also stated that since public safety was cited as a practical difficulty by the applicant, she reached out to the Oakland County Sheriff to ask if there had been any significant public safety issues at this site. Lt. Matt Snyder emailed her stating that after doing a search for this address he found that the last call was in 2014.

Mr. Eichinger stated that when he went down to the parcel again recently, he found that only the top third of the sign is visible above the vegetation and the snow and he felt that this request is reasonable.

Mr. Raimondo stated that he appreciated the applicant doing his due diligence to try to find a solution that would not require a variance. He noted that darkness is not a practical difficulty as Highland Township has regulations to limit light pollution. He further stated that the need for a variance is not self-created. He stated that the parcel is unusual because it is very narrow and lacks a greenbelt where a sign would normally be located as most commercial parcels do. He further stated

that this request would not alter the essential character of the area, nor would it be harmful to the township, and is the minimum necessary.

Mr. Hoffman stated that the topography also creates a practical difficulty as it is at a low spot that makes it difficult to see the sign.

Mr. Gerathy stated that he thought that when LaFontaine was approved to be on this site, that it was supposed to be just for storage of personal classic cars and not open to the public. Mrs. Littlebear stated that while researching the original site approvals, she found that initially it was going to be for personal use only but that LaFontaine then requested and was approved for limited classic car events.

Mr. Probe as what the previous variance on this site had been for. Mrs. Littlebear stated that a variance was previously granted for the construction of the detached accessory structure on the north of the parcel.

Motion:

Mr. Eichinger made a motion in Case #25-25, parcel # 11-15-127-003, commonly known as 2800 N Milford Rd, to approve 3-foot variance from the 6-foot maximum allowable height to 9-feet provided to allow for an increase in the height of a sign in the required front yard per the facts and findings provided during discussion. Mr. Raimondo supported the motion.

Facts and Findings:

This request is the minimum necessary.

The practical difficulty was not self created.

This parcel is exceptionally narrow and sits at a low spot.

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

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Gerathy-yes, Mr. Borg-no, Mr. Raimondo-yes, Mr. Probe -no, Mr. Hoffman-yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Eichinger-yes, (5 yes votes, 2 no votes). The motion passed and the variance request was approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

3. CASE NUMBER: 26-01
ENFORCEMENT:
ZONING: LV – Lake and Village Single-Family Residential District
PARCEL #: 11-12-203-011
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 3201 Lester Dr
APPLICANT: James Cooper
OWNER: James Cooper
VARIANCE REQUESTED: An 11-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot southwest front yard setback to 19-feet provided.
This request is for a reduction of the southwest front yard setback for the construction of a house with covered porch.
(Sec. 9.02.B.a)
A 2.5-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot southwest front yard setback to 27.5-feet provided.
This request is for a reduction of the southwest front yard setback for the construction of a detached garage.
(Sec. 9.02.B.a)

Chair Gerathy introduced the case and asked if the applicant was present and, if so, to please step up to the podium. He then asked the Zoning Administrator if there was anything new to add. Mrs. Littlebear stated that there has not been any new public comment sent to the Planning Department regarding this case. She further stated that there was previously a house on this parcel which was demolished sometime before 2005 and that it had

Discussion from the Applicant:

James Cooper, applicant, went over the case as presented. He also provided the final septic variance approval from the Oakland County Health Division and the permit to install an engineered septic field for a two (2) bedroom house. He also noted that he has had the well abandoned per the county regulations and will apply for a new well soon.

Discussion from the Public:

None

Discussion from the Board:

Mr. Borg asked if Planning & Zoning would approve the proposal of two separate driveways. Mrs. Littlebear stated that the approval or denial for that will be up to the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) since it is a public road. She explained that if he receives approval from the ZBA then when he applies for the building permit he will have to provide a copy of the approved driveway approach permit from RCOC.

Mr. Childs asked for clarification of the depth of the crawl as the construction drawings shows two different depths. The applicant stated that the crawl will be 3 feet deep.

Mr. Raimondo stated that this request is not of a personal nature and that this parcel is an oddly shaped corner lot.

Mr. Borg noted that this is an existing LV lot of record.

Mr. Probe stated that this request is for a modest home and so is the minimum request necessary.

Mr. Hoffman stated that this lot of record is in a subdivision that was platted in the 1920s. He stated that the request will be in keeping with the neighborhood and will be an improvement as it will have a modern engineered septic system.

Motion:

Mr. Raimondo made a motion in Case #26-01, parcel # 11-12-203-011, commonly known as 3201 Lester Dr, to approve an 11-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot southwest front yard setback to 19-foot provided for the construction of a two (2) bedroom house with a covered porch and a 2.5-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot southwest front yard setback to 27.5-foot provided for the construction of a detached garage per the facts and findings provided during discussion. Mr. Hoffman supported the motion.

Facts and Findings:

This request is the minimum necessary.

This request is not of a personal nature.

This parcel is small and oddly shaped.

This request is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood parcels.

This request will benefit the neighborhood due to the modern engineered septic system.

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

Roll Call Vote: Mr. Gerathy-yes, Mr. Borg-yes, Mr. Raimondo-yes, Mr. Probe -yes, Mr. Hoffman-yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Eichinger-yes, (7 yes votes). The motion passed and the variance requests were approved.

MINUTES:

Mr. Childs made a motion to approve the minutes of December 17, 2025, as presented. Mr. Borg supported the motion, and it was approved with a unanimous voice vote.

DISCUSSION:

Election of Officers:

Mr. Hoffman moved to elect Mr. Gerathy as Chair. Mr. Eichinger supported the motion and it passed with a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Raimondo moved to elect Mr. Borg as Vice Chair. Mr. Gerathy supported the motion and it passed with a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Gerathy moved to elect Mr. Raimondo as Secretary. Mr. Childs supported the motion and it passed with a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Borg asked what was coming up for the next meeting on February 4, 2026. Mrs. Littlebear stated that there are no cases for the next meeting so it would be to review the minutes only.

Mrs. Littlebear reminded the board members that the Joint Boards meeting will be held on February 11, 2026 at 7:30pm.

ADJOURN:

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

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony Raimondo, Secretary
AR/kpl