

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
APPROVED MINUTES  
April 15, 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 - **absent**  
Michael Zeolla, P.C. Liaison  
Peter Eichinger  
Robert Hoffman  
Gary Childs  
Chuck Benke, Alternate  
Jacob Probe, Alternate

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

Visitors: 7

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. Chair Gerathy noted that since Secretary Raimondo is absent, alternate member, Mr. Benke, will sit in on this meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. CASE NUMBER: 26-04  
ENFORCEMENT: **EE25-0333**  
ZONING: ARR – Agricultural & Rural Residential  
PARCEL #: 11-03-400-006  
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 5046 N. Milford Rd  
APPLICANT: Anthony Reitano  
OWNER: Anthony Reitano  
VARIANCE REQUESTED: A 19-foot variance from the calculated 65-foot ordinary highwater mark setback to 46-feet provided; and  
A 57-foot variance from the calculated 100-foot rear yard setback to 43-feet provided.  
(Sec. 4.15 Table 4.1)  
This request is for a reduction of the ordinary highwater mark setback & the rear yard setback for the construction of an uncovered deck.

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:**

Mr. Reitano explained he had a deck that was not safe and tore it off not knowing about permits, variances or ordinary highwater marks and is now here to fix his mistake.

**Discussion from the Public:**

None

**Discussion from the Board:**

Mr. Eichinger stated that the parcel was a very irregularly shaped lot and is in favor of the request. Mr. Hoffman agreed with Mr. Eichinger and stated that one of the reasons for a setback from the ordinary highwater mark is to prevent possible flooding of structures. However, in this case there is a 6-foot sloping elevation from the house down to the ordinary highwater mark that will accomplish the same thing.

Mr. Borg stated that the parcel is zoned ARR which requires 5 acres minimum per parcel, but this parcel is just under 3 acres. He noted that a majority of the property is wetlands with sloping topography, so a deck is necessary to utilize the backyard.

Mr. Zeolla asked if this was an exact rebuild of the existing deck and if not, in what way? The applicant, Mr. Reitano, explained he built it a little wider than the previous deck and offset it to add a set of stairs. He stated that he built the stairs on that side, due to the septic field on the other side of the house.

Mr. Eichinger asked the Zoning Administrator if the house meets the current setbacks. Mrs. Littlebear stated that the house itself is non-conforming. Mr. Eichinger stated that this seems to be a minor request and it would fit in with the neighborhood.

**Motion:**

Mr. Eichinger made a motion in Case #26-04, parcel # 11-03-400-006, commonly known as 5046 N. Milford Rd, to approve a 19-foot variance from the calculated 65-foot ordinary highwater mark setback to 46-feet provided, and a 57-foot variance from the calculated 100-foot rear yard setback to 43-feet provided for the construction of an uncovered deck per the facts and findings provided during discussion. Mr. Childs supported the motion.

**Facts and Findings:**

The parcel is substandard in size.

The parcel is irregularly shaped.

The parcel has significant wetlands.

This request is the minimum necessary.

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. Benke -yes, Mr. Zeolla-no, Mr. Hoffman-yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Eichinger-yes, (6 yes votes, 1 no votes). The motion passed and the variance requests were approved.

2. CASE NUMBER:	26-05
ENFORCEMENT:	
ZONING:	R1.5 – Single Family Residential
PARCEL #:	11-27-328-004
PROPERTY ADDRESS:	1291 N. Lakeview Ln
APPLICANT:	John Fisher

OWNER: John Fisher  
VARIANCE REQUESTED: A 23.6-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot north side yard setback to 6.4-feet provided.  
(Sec. 4.15 Table 4.1 Schedule of Reg.)  
This request is for a reduction of the north side yard setback, for the construction of a residential addition and attached garage.

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:**

Mr. Fisher stated he is asking for a variance for an addition and attached garage which will not be going any closer to the side lot line than the existing structures.

**Discussion from the Public:**

Mrs. Littlebear read into record three emails in support of this request from Larry Danaher at 1267 N. Lakeview Lane, Brian Rand at 1285 N. Lakeview Lane, and Cheryl Thrushman at 1277 N. Lakeview Lane.

**Discussion from the Board:**

Mr. Hoffman stated that he is in favor of this request because the applicant is improving his parcel and in doing so is complimenting the neighborhood.

Mr. Eichinger stated that it is a thin lot which creates a practical difficulty and noted that the applicant's neighbor came last year for a variance, so he is in favor of this request.

Mr. Benke stated the properties in this neighborhood are often referred to as bowling alley lots because they are long and skinny. He stated that he is in favor of this request.

Mr. Zeolla stated he is in favor of granting a smaller variance from the side yard for the addition and attached garage that would maintain the existing non-conforming side yard setback to the existing garage, but he does not want to grant the requested variance to increase the existing non-conforming structure. He further stated he does not favor side yard variances due to fire safety concerns. Mr. Fisher stated that the existing deck to be removed encroaches on the side yard even further than his new request and so this request is decreasing the existing non-conformity.

**Motion:**

Mr. Benke made a motion in Case #26-05, parcel # 11-27-328-004, commonly known as 1291 N. Lakeview Ln, to approve a 23.6-foot variance from the calculated 30-foot north side yard setback to 6.4-feet provided for the construction of a residential addition and attached garage per the facts and findings provided during discussion. Mr. Hoffman supported the motion.

**Facts and Findings:**

The parcel is substandard in width.

This request is the minimum necessary.

This request encroaches less than the existing structures.

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. Benke -yes, Mr. Zeolla-no, Mr. Hoffman-yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Eichinger-yes, (6 yes votes, 1 no votes). The motion passed and the variance

requests were approved.

3. CASE NUMBER: 26-07  
ENFORCEMENT:  
ZONING: LV – Lake and Village Residential  
PARCEL #: 11-12-104-003  
PROPERTY ADDRESS: 2485 Jackson Blvd  
APPLICANT: Keith Sizemore  
OWNER: Keith Sizemore  
VARIANCE REQUESTED: A 10-foot variance from the calculated 20-foot total side yard setback to 10-feet provided.  
(Sec. 9.02.B.b.)  
This request is for a reduction of the total side yard setback for the construction of an attached garage.

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:**

Mr. Sizemore, applicant, stated that the request for a variance does not change the nature of the property or the neighborhood. It's a modest and practical improvement made necessary by the unique configuration of the lot and existing structures. The breezeway is a practical solution to weather exposure and Michigan winters.

**Discussion from the Public:**

None

**Discussion from the Board:**

Mr. Gerathy asked the Zoning Administrator if there was any more additional information regarding this case.

Mr. Zeolla, Mr. Hoffman, and Mr. Eichinger asked the Zoning Administrator for clarification regarding conforming and nonconforming structures.

Mrs. Littlebear stated the applicant got a permit for a garage as a detached structure that was smaller and met the 5 foot side yard setback, but now that he wants to connect the two structures, to make one large structure, the applicant only has 5 feet on each side to total 10 feet, and this zoning district requires a total of 20 feet. Even though the applicant meets the 5-foot minimum he doesn't meet the 20-foot total because of the 5 feet on each side.

Mr. Zeolla stated that the minimum side yard setback is met on both sides of the parcel and so he is in favor of this request.

Mr. Hoffman noted that the neighboring parcels have structures that are also 5 feet from the property line and this request will not be encroaching any further than any other parcel.

**Motion:**

Mr. Zeolla made a motion in Case #26-07, parcel # 11-12-104-003, commonly known as 2485 Jackson Blvd, to approve a 10-foot variance from the calculated 20-foot total side yard setback to 10-feet provided for the construction of an attached 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 consistent with the surrounding parcels.

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. Benke -yes, Mr. Zeolla-yes, Mr. Hoffman-yes, Mr. Childs-yes, Mr. Eichinger-no, (6 yes votes, 1 no votes). The motion passed and the variance requests were approved.

**MINUTES:**

Mr. Borg made a motion to approve the minutes of March 18, 2026, as presented. Mr. Zeolla supported the motion, and it was approved with a unanimous voice vote.

**DISCUSSION:**

Mrs. Littlebear stated that because there are a few newer board members, she wanted to briefly discuss the ZBA bylaws. She spoke specifically about ex-parte communication and crafting motions.

Mr. Hoffman brought up a small discussion on the new subdivision laws.

Mr. Zeolla stated he attended the sign ordinance meeting on Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2026 along with Mr. Eichinger. They each talked about the current sign ordinance and some of the changes that are being suggested. Mr. Zeolla noted that this review process is just getting started and that it may take several months before any changes are actually adopted.

**ADJOURN:**

At 8:26 p.m., Mr. Zeolla made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hoffman supported the motion, and it carried with a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Borg, Secretary  
AR/kpl