

**Highland Township Planning Commission  
Record of the 1435th Meeting  
Highland Township Auditorium  
November 6, 2025**

***Roll Call:***

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

***Also Present:***

Elizabeth Corwin, Planning Director

Visitors: 3

Chairman Curtis called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. Mr. York agreed to act as Secretary in Mr. Smith's absence.

**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.**

No public comment was offered.

***Public Hearing/Work Session:***

**Agenda Item #2:**

Parcel # 11-29-100-025  
Zoning: R1.5, Single Family Residential, 1.5 Acre  
Address: 3151 W Highland Rd  
File #: RZ 25-02  
Request: Rezoning Request  
Applicant: Ralko Properties, LLC  
Owner: Ralko Properties, LLC

Mr. Curtis introduced the agenda item.

Mr. Ron Ralko was present to explain his proposal and answer questions. He explained that he owns a landscaping property that operates on the whole property, but that the zoning is split between C-2, General Commercial Business and R-1.5, Single Family Residential, with approximately 2/3 of the parcel zoned residential. He has been allowed to operate on the residential property as a non-conforming use, but cannot improve the property or add structures until it is compliant with zoning.

Mr. Curtis opened the public hearing at 7:34 p.m. There was no public comment and the hearing was closed at 7:35 p.m.

Mr. Charlick asked for clarification of the process. Ms. Corwin explained that the property was studied as part of the West Highland Micro-area Analysis conducted in 2018. The Master Plan was amended at that time to identify this property as Transitional Commercial, which would lead to the C-3 Zoning. Since the access to this area is through the commercial zoned property, and there are environmental challenges, the study concluded that C-3 is an appropriate zoning classification. It is not necessary to present a site plan at this time, but the Planning Commission should consider all possible uses allowed under that classification.

Mr. Tierney asked for clarification about the split zoning. The map led him to believe there were two parcels but wondered about access to the rear parcel. Ms. Corwin explained it was one parcel, split zoned as the result of a much older micro-area analysis when this and other properties nearby were under the same ownership.

Mr. York asked for an explanation of how the southern part of the property was used in the business. Mr. Ralko explained that he had concrete bins to contain landscape materials. He has graded the property and cleaned it up. Mr. Charlick noted that the prior use of the site included an automotive junk yard.

Mr. York asked if plans included a new building on the southern part of the site. Mr. Ralko explained that he had considered that, but his operations would be better served if the building were farther north, and he had freedom to park his equipment and operate more freely on the southern part of the site.

Mr. York asked if the request was to change the entire parcel to C-3. Ms. Corwin explained that this would be a voluntary surrender of some property rights that is not necessary. Mr. Ralko should be allowed to retain the uses allowed in C-2 Zoning for the northern portion of the property.

Mr. Charlick asked if there had ever been a site plan. Mr. Ralko explained that

Mr. Charlick offered the following facts and findings:

- The existing and proposed use is consistent with basic intent of the proposed Zoning District
- The proposal is concurrent with the approved Master Land Use Plan.
- Conditions have not changed since the current zoning was adopted
- The proposal would not set an inappropriate precedence since its consistent with the plan
- The proposal is compatible with surrounding land uses.

Mr. Charlick was concerned about a buffer to the east. Ms. Corwin noted that this would typically be handled during site plan review. Mr. Charlick asked about the bins that lie basically at the property line. Ms. Corwin thought those might have been approved administratively by the Zoning Administrator since they are not considered permanent structures needing foundations and were typically accessory to the landscaping use.

Mr. Charlick concluded that he believed the site could be developed in accordance with the regulations of the proposed zoning district and that it would not negatively impact environmental features of the site.

He did caution the applicant that the east property line will need a buffer in the future when a site was presented since the adjacent property is zoned residentially. Mr. Ralko asked whether the existing chain link fence with privacy slats would provide an appropriate buffer. Mr. Charlick explained that this would be evaluated when the site plan is reviewed, and that the Planning Commission might ask for relocation of the bins then.

Mr. York agreed, and also noted that there would be a more detailed review of storm water management when the site was further developed, noting the location of the pond.

Mr. Charlick noted that the C-3 Zoning District would provide the least impactful use of the property, at least in terms of zoning. He acknowledged the past history of the site as a junkyard and thought this was a reasonable proposal.

Mr. Heyn asked if this zoning action was similar to the proposal for the overflow parking lot on South Hickory Ridge Road, which included some conditions of approval. Ms. Corwin explained that the other parcel was not Master Planned for that transitional commercial district, whereas this one is, and the idea of residential development here is not ideal. The use list was reviewed by the Planning Commission.

Mr. York offered the following motion: Move to recommend approval of file 25-02, to rezone the southern 2/3 of parcel 11-29-100-025, commonly known as 3151 W Highland Road from R-1.5, Single Family Residential Zoning District to C-3, Low Impact Commercial Zoning District; applicant and property owner Ralko Properties, LLC based on the facts and findings articulated earlier by Mr. Charlick in particular considering the history of the property.

Mr. Curtis supported the motion. Roll Call vote: Zeolla, yes; York, yes; Tierney-yes; Temple-yes; Heyn-yes; Curtis, yes; Charlick, yes. Motion carries (7 yes votes, 0 no votes).

**Agenda Item #3:**

Parcel #	11-22-301-007
Zoning:	C-1, Local Commercial Zoning District
Address:	140 W Highland
File#:	SPR 25-01
Request:	Site Plan Review for Jimmy John/Dunkin
Applicant:	Steve Kolber, Kolbrook Design
Owner:	OM Group

Mr. Curtis introduced the agenda item. Mr. Kevin Rucker of Kolbrook Design was present to answer questions.

Mr. Rucker explained that his firm has been working on addressing comments received in March and other comments that had been provided by staff and other agencies since. They are still working on approvals from the Oakland County Health Division.

Mr. Charlick asked about the parking deficiency identified in an earlier memo from staff. Ms. Corwin explained that the applicant has since provided the requested parking calculations, based on the net floor area for each of the businesses, employee counts and other factors. The revised calculation shows the parking provided is adequate for the ground floor business but does not include any information regarding use of the basement.

Mr. Rucker agreed that this proposal does not include any use in the basement. Mr. Temple asked if the Planning Commission should consider the use of the basement at this time. Mr. York noted it is likely that the occupants would just start using the basement with or without approval. Mr. Rucker thought the plan was only for a handful of people in offices for the regional operations.

Mr. Temple asked about the floor plan for the basement. Mr. Rucker has not personally been in the basement, but thought between the mechanical room and the foundation of the safe, there is not a lot of space left, perhaps less than half of the first floor footprint.

Mr. Charlick asked about the lighting, since it exceeds the levels allowable at the property lines. Mr. Rucker explained that their lighting designers are reanalyzing the lighting levels and may suggest new fixtures. They hope to use the existing pole locations.

Mr. Charlick asked about the landscaping plans. He noted that there is not a good explanation of the planting beds provided for the trees. Ms. Corwin noted that it would seem difficult to maintain the mowing given the spacing of the trees. Mr. Temple thought it was critical to provide an appropriate screen for the cemetery, so that visitors are not disturbed by the commercial activity. Mr. Curtis affirmed that this was also an issue for Mr. Smith. Mr. York thought this landscaping proposal was not as robust as they had expected or hoped for.

Mr. Temple asked about the cloud areas on the drawing. These areas will be selectively cleared of invasive species and any diseased plants. He asked if a fence might be considered at the north property line. Mr. Temple thought smaller plants against the backdrop of the fence might be more appropriate. Ms. Corwin noted that the Supervisor had expressed a preference for a fence at one time. Mr. Charlick also noted that the landscaping proposed might be vulnerable to the plowing operations for the site. Mr. York noted that it might be necessary for the snow to be removed from the site.

Mr. Temple expressed his concern that we adequately buffer the cemetery, because that is a precious site to the Township residents. He would prefer to see a solid fence. Mr. Zeolla asked if there was any thought about the materials. Mr. Temple thought a vinyl fence could be appropriate, with landscaping to soften the look. Mr. York suggested some brick or stone pillars would be appropriate.

Mr. Heyn asked if there were color renderings of the building facades. He noted this was a complex design with a variety of materials. Mr. Rucker said he would send in color renderings.

Mr. York noted the concern of the signage package. He thought the only way to meet the ordinance requirements is to eliminate half the proposed signs. Mr. Rucker said they are working with the brands and the clients to limit the signage.

Mr. Charlick asked about Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) approval of the road approaches, since there is no proposed work in the right-of-way. Ms. Corwin explained the County must review the change of use, and that their staff had expressed a concern about turning movements. RCOC may limit turns in and out of the Milford Road driveway. MDOT has apparently approved the change of use.

The Planning Commission discussed the variety of issues that could arise from different turning movements. Mr. Charlick thought until the RCOC review is complete, it would be difficult to approve the site plan. Mr. Tierney thought it will be difficult to prevent left turns out of the site, and no room for another driveway.

Mr. Charlick thought the issues remaining include the RCOC approval of the driveway, the Health Division approval of the septic system, lighting and a decision about the landscaping plan—whether a fence is required or not. The parking question has been adequately addressed.

Mr. Charlick moved to table the site plan until such time as the applicant addresses the issues identified in the discussion. Mr. Heyn supported the motion. Roll call vote. Roll Call vote: Zeolla, yes; York, yes; Tierney-yes; Temple-yes; Heyn-yes; Curtis, yes; Charlick, yes. Motion carries (7 yes votes, 0 no votes).

**Agenda Item #4:**

Parcel #	11-22-176-016
Zoning:	IM, Industrial Manufacturing
Address:	828 N Milford
File #:	SPR24-07
Request:	Minor Site Plan Amendment
Applicant:	Deanna & Juan Bueno
Owner:	828 N Milford Rd, LLC

Mr. Curtis introduced the agenda item. Ms. Deanna Bueno was present to answer questions.

Ms. Bueno explained that she and her husband have been working diligently to complete their required site improvements. They operated the taco truck, as approved, a few days a week throughout the summer months. In an effort to continue the operations through the cold weather season, they would like to relocate the truck from the approved location to the middle of the driveway during the dinner hour so that people could access the order window from their cars. She explained that many regular customers call ahead or text in their orders so they are ready when they reach the site.

Ms. Bueno explained her process. She buys all ingredients fresh very early in the morning, preps them on the truck and once all the customers have been served, all the leftovers are donated. There is never food storage of prepared foods overnight. She has never had an incidence of food borne illness in 300 events per year for 8 years of experience.

Mr. Temple asked if there was room to loop back around the truck or if the customers had to make a three-point turn. Ms. Corwin had visited the site and found there was adequate room to turn a passenger vehicle around a portable marker they have placed behind the building.

Mr. Curtis asked what the principal business was at the property. Ms. Bueno explained that her husband has his private security firm in the former home, and that they have offered space for indoor secured storage within their pole barn. They have explored interest in outdoor storage, but there does not seem to be enough interest to pursue that and make it profitable for them. Ms. Corwin noted these are acceptable uses in the IM, Industrial Manufacturing Zoning District, but we would need to document locations on the site for outdoor storage if they chose to try that in the future.

Mr. Temple asked if there was a difference between this operation and the other food trucks that have been considered in the past, and the ordinance language was drafted for the Board of Trustees. Ms. Corwin said the difference is that this is a permanent owner-occupied site, whereas the draft ordinance addressed temporary land use permits. Mr. Charlick noted, on behalf of the Board, that the attorney had been asked to review the Planning Commission's draft ordinance regarding temporary uses and found it to be acceptable. The Board may send it back to the Planning Commission for some clarifications.

Ms. Corwin noted that Ms. Bueno might want to do some lighting on the south side of the truck, since the truck is easy to see from the north driving south, but it is very easy to miss the driveway driving northbound. There was some suggestion that small solar pathway lights might be appropriate. Mr. Temple thought it was not necessary to discuss this in detail.

Mr. York is concerned that the site is just too tight for safe flow of traffic around the truck. He has no problem with being flexible and allowing some more experimentation with placement. But he is concerned that a motorist could hit the house; or hit the truck or both. There is also danger for her employees that might be exiting the truck to run an order to a customer in the dark.

Mr. Zeolla asked why the food truck would not just be parked where it had been parked during the warmer season, and require customers to order by an app or by text. It would essentially be a car hop service. Ms. Bueno explained why she finds it preferable to interact with the customers at the window.

Mr. York asked about the use of the property to the south. Ms. Corwin explained that the property belongs to the owners of Highland Treatment. One of their employees rents the house, but the other accessory structures support testing operations.

Mr. Charlick summarized that the Planning Commission understands that the actual location of the truck may not be exactly placed per the engineering drawing. He suggested that rather than spend any more time with the engineers, the applicant should find the optimal spot for the truck, pull some measurements from the pavement to the truck, measure the signs, and totally document what she sees as a workable layout. Mr. Charlick noted that he is confident that she is trying to comply with the ordinance, but is addressing issues as they arise. He does not want to rehash issues that were already resolved during site plan approval, such as lighting or drainage.

Mr. Charlick moved to table the site plan amendment for insufficient information, noting that the applicant should take time to try other placements and document the location of the truck, signage, lighting and traffic patterns sketched on her approved plan. He noted that the Planning Commission understands that this is a work in progress. Mr. York supported the motion. Roll call vote. Roll Call vote: Zeolla, yes; York, yes; Tierney-yes; Temple-yes; Heyn-yes; Curtis, yes; Charlick, yes. Motion carries (7 yes votes, 0 no votes).

**Agenda Item #5:** Text amendment discussion: Ordinary highwater mark in LV District, Commercial and Recreational Vehicle Parking in Residential Districts, Generator placement, others of interest

Ms. Corwin suggested that this discussion be postponed for a later date due to the time. She also suggested that the Planning Commission entertain a discussion of a mixed use planned unit development ordinance in the near future. This might include expanding the definitions to allow a variety of attached and detached single family units within an open space residential planned unit development.

**Agenda Item #6:** Committee Updates

- Zoning Board of Appeals:
- Township Board:
- Highland Downtown Development Authority:
- Planning Director's Update

Committee liaisons reported on the activities of their respective organizations.

**Agenda Item #7:** Minutes: October 16, 2025

Mr. Charlick offered a motion to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2025 Planning Commission meeting as presented. Mr. Zeolla supported the motion which was approved by voice vote (all ayes, no nays)

**Adjournment:**

Mr. Curtis moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 p.m. Mr. Tierney supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote. (all ayes, no nays)

Respectfully submitted,

Guy York, Acting Secretary  
GY/ejc

Unapproved