



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission Members
From: Elizabeth J Corwin, PE, AIPC; Planning Director
Date: February 19, 2026
Re: URSA 26-01
Applicant: James A. Lee, IV
2115 White Lake Road
PIN 11-02-426-002

The application before you today is for a Special Land Use Permit for Barn 45. Barn 45 occupies a 13.4 acre parcel on White Lake Road, in an area zoned ARR, Agriculture and Rural Residential. The first building constructed on the site was an 1824 square foot single-family home with a very open floor plan. Soon after, the property owners added a 1200 square foot pole barn and 1200 square foot pavilion, all with homeowner issued residential permits.

The property owner describes in his narrative how this property evolved from a personal retreat to a church that draws substantial activity that is atypical of a single-family residence, although not all the activity would be considered incompatible with single-family neighborhoods. What drew Township attention, and ultimately enforcement action, was the addition of a few sheds without permits, a sign without permit and a parking lot at the north property line complete with pole mounted lighting, all without permits. The Township also received reports of light trespass from neighbors and complaints of sound nuisance.

The Zoning Administrator opened a dialogue with the property owner, and brought all the necessary Township staff together to assess the steps necessary to bring this site into compliance. Obviously, the easier path would be to discontinue the public gatherings, remove the improperly constructed parking lot and lighting and either remove or get permits for the sheds. The property owner prefers to continue the use of the site as a church, which is considered a "small scale institutional use" under the Zoning Ordinance. This use is permissible with special approval in the ARR, Agricultural and Residential Zoning District.

The property owner is cooperating with the Building Department, Fire Marshal and Planning Department staff to provide access to the site and correct obvious deficiencies. He has obtained permits for the sheds that function on the site as a gift shop and as a chapel. There may be some improvements that would be required, particularly in the electrical code, if the use is approved for a church that would not be necessary for a single-family residence.

The property owner also acquired a survey of the site and documented the grading and drainage work that he conducted to address drainage concerns. This was done without engineering oversight but appears to be functioning adequately up to now.

In your review of this land use, you must consider the factors published under Section 6.03.J. In the following analysis, I have outlined some of the factors you should consider in evaluating whether the proposal could meet the required standards of approval:

J. *Standards for special land use.* The Township Board shall approve the proposed special land use if it is determined to be in compliance with the standards and requirements of this Ordinance and the Standards for Site Plan Approval listed in Section 5.04.

1. All special land uses shall be designed, located, planned and operated so that the public health, safety and welfare will be protected.

The issue here is that the site has not actually been planned with the review of the Planning Commission. Obvious issues include the proximity of the parking lot to the neighboring property to the north, and whether the residential driveway can safely accommodate the traffic volumes that have been witnessed at peak times as reported by neighbors. We have consulted with the Oakland County Health Division (OCHD) about whether the well and septic would be suitable for such use—they have noted that there are operational considerations, such as whether portable toilets are brought in for peak events, and what the sustained service population might be. The septic system and well are sized and designed for a single-family home.

2. All special land uses shall be compatible and harmonious with the surrounding land uses taking into consideration the size, location and character of the proposed special land use within the context of surrounding land uses and the Master Plan. Furthermore, the proposed special land use shall not cause substantial injury to the value of other property in the area in which it is located.

*Much of the activity on the site is small scale gatherings, facilitation of online study groups, and work in the community garden. There has been no suggestion that these activities are not compatible or harmonious with the neighborhood. What seems to be of concern is the outdoor activity at the pavilion. As you know, the other churches in Highland Township conduct most activity indoors. It is difficult to manage the impacts of amplified sound. The annual Worship and Baptism Night reportedly draws people from well beyond the immediate area, which clearly involves a stage and amplified music. These outdoor activities should be discussed with the applicant and may represent “special events” that would need additional permissions and limitations and would **not** have a blanket approval in the Special Use Permit.*

3. The proposed special land use shall be in general agreement with the Master Plan designation for the area where the use is proposed.

This use is permissible under the zoning ordinance with special approval and is compatible with the goals of preserving open space.

4. All special land uses shall provide facilities for safe and convenient vehicular and pedestrian traffic, including but not limited to: turning movements, traffic flow, proximity and relationship to intersections, adequacy of sight distances, location and access of off-street parking, and provisions for pedestrian traffic.

As noted, the driveway for this site is residential by nature, and designed to facilitate household traffic. It appears to be wider than the typical driveway, but there are no acceleration/deceleration lanes as would be required of a commercial driveway, which would be required to be 26 foot wide with proper radii. Within the site, there is a winding driveway, which while not wide enough for two-way traffic, does have flat lawn areas at the edges, providing space for vehicles to pull off so another could pass safely by.

The Planning Commission may require improvements such as redesign of the entrance with RCOC input and permissions and relocation or modification of the parking lot.

5. All special land uses shall be designed, constructed and operated in a manner that prevents detrimental impacts to surrounding properties such as noise, dust, fumes, smoke, air, water, odor, light and/or vibration, etc. The special land use shall be designed, constructed and operated in a manner that does not detract from area aesthetics.

As discussed in the above factors, the Planning Commission should discuss noise and lighting in particular and possible screening or increased buffers to the neighboring properties.

6. The proposed special land use shall not unreasonably burden the capacity of public services and/or facilities.

Barn 45 does not currently burden the capacity of public services and/or facilities. The fire marshal is working with the applicant to ensure that the site and its access does not create concerns for emergency response teams. The site is served by private water supply and sewage disposal.

7. The proposed special land use shall comply with any specific standards set forth in Article 10, Supplemental Use Regulations, that are applicable to the use.

Sec. 10.17. – Institutional Uses. *sets for a number of requirements for churches that are not currently satisfied by this operation. If one were to bring forward a proposal for a new site they would be required to submit a traffic management plan, comply with screening requirements, and limit activities to within fully enclosed buildings except where otherwise permitted by the Planning Commission. Loudspeakers and amplified sounds are not permitted outdoors. No structures may be leased or rented for commercial purposes. Each of these provisions should be discussed with the applicant in detail as part of your review of the land use.*

In summary, there are a number of issues to be discussed with the applicant after you have had an opportunity to hear what other concerns the neighboring property owners might share. There has been a show of support for Barn 45 as evidenced by the correspondence in your packet. Any recommendation for a Special Use Permit will likely include a number of conditions and restrictions. But I anticipate reasonable use may be accommodated at this site with the proper guard rails established.

Barn 45



-  2 Foot Contours
-  5 Foot Contours
-  FEMA Base Flood Elevations
-  FEMA Cross Sections
-  100 yr - FEMA Floodplain
-  100 yr (detailed) - FEMA Floodplain
-  500 yr - FEMA Floodplain
-  FLOODWAY - FEMA Floodplain

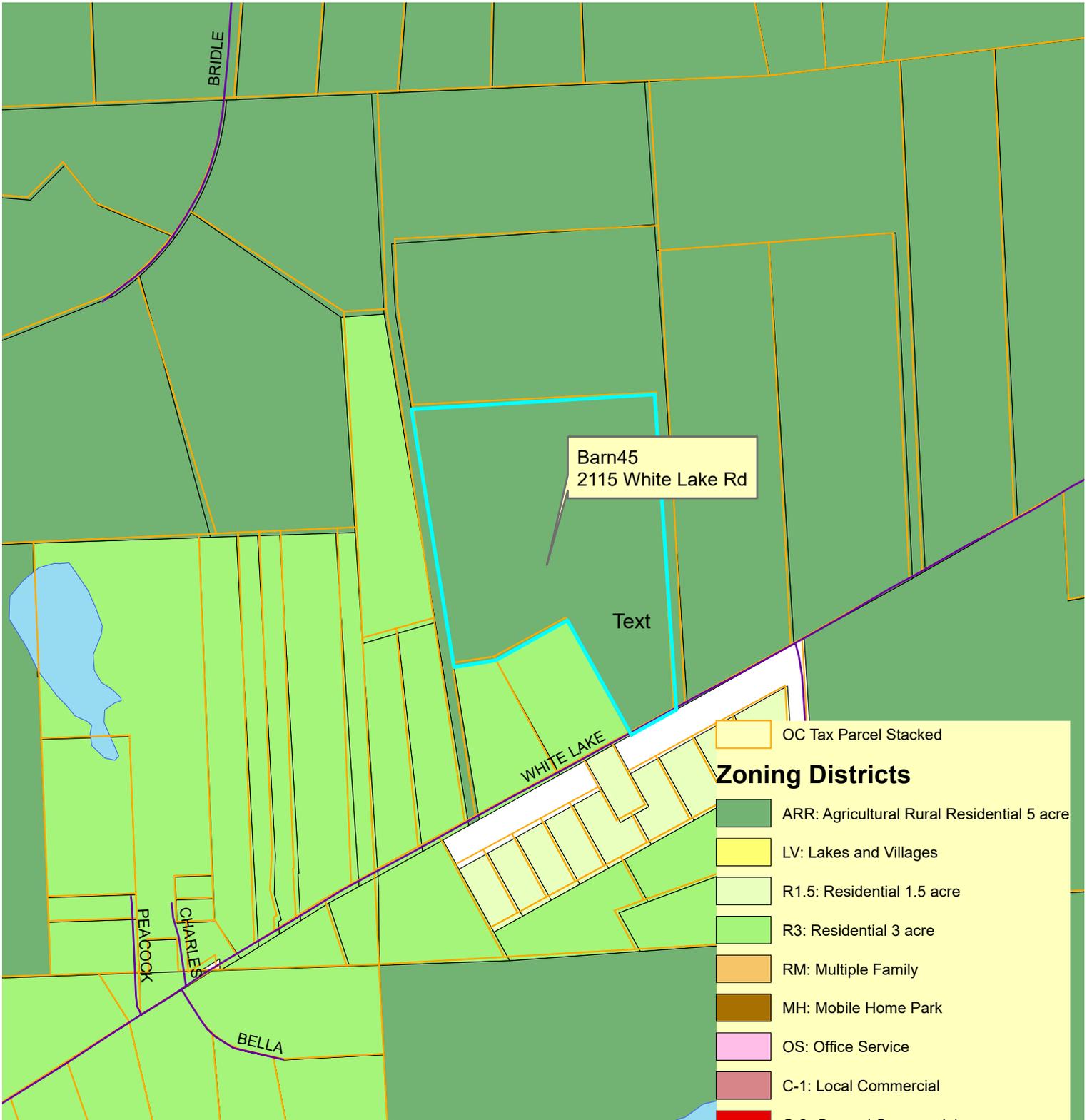
Disclaimer: The information provided herewith has been compiled from recorded deeds, plats, tax maps, surveys and other public records. It is not a legally recorded map or survey and is not intended to be used as one. Users should consult the information sources mentioned above when questions arise. FEMA Floodplain data may not always be present on the map.


David Coulter
 Oakland County Executive

Date Created: 2/13/2026


NORTH
 1 inch = 200 feet

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF HIGHLAND ZONING MAP



Zoning Districts	
	OC Tax Parcel Stacked
	ARR: Agricultural Rural Residential 5 acre
	LV: Lakes and Villages
	R1.5: Residential 1.5 acre
	R3: Residential 3 acre
	RM: Multiple Family
	MH: Mobile Home Park
	OS: Office Service
	C-1: Local Commercial
	C-2: General Commercial
	HS: Highland Station
	TR: Technology and Research
	IM: Industrial Manufacturing



ENACTED: November 18, 2010



Outlook

Barn45

~~mralston@copper.net - mralston@copper.net~~

Date Thu 2/12/2026 9:59 AM

To HTPlanning <htplanning@highlandtwp.org>



IRONSCALES couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender
mralston@copper.net

Good afternoon,

Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the upcoming hearing because of a prior commitment out of State. Please let it be known Barn45 has been a blessing in my life. It has impacted my entire family, my wife and three young adult sons and I are loyal to them forever. I cannot begin to tell you how many peoples lives it has changed for the better.

Kind regards,
Michael Scott Ralston
1624 Blue Heron Dr.
Highland, MI 48357
(248) 410-1958

Barn45 /Highland Twp Planning Commission Meeting 2/19/26

From: Melanie Leix <mleix@BudgetBlinds.com>

Date: Thu 2/12/2026 9:50 AM

To: HTPlanning <htplanning@highlandtwp.org>

Cc: Melanie Leix <mleix@BudgetBlinds.com>



IRONSCALES couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender mleix@BudgetBlinds.com

To whom it may concern:

As I am sure you will have received many letters in support of Jamie & Joy Lee and the Barn45 community, I will keep this short

Barn45 is a beautiful ministry that is more than just bible studies and fellowship. It offers a community of love and support in a world that needs to know more about the love of God.

It is also The.Best.Bible Study that has changed my life immeasurably! I am so grateful for the Lee Family and Barn45!

Please help Barn45 to be rezoned as needed to continue it's mission, but also to be a good neighbor and responsible part of the Highland Community.

Thank you!

Prayerfully,

Melanie Leix (pronounced Likes)

Dear Members of Highland Township,

I am writing to express my sincere appreciation and strong support for Barn 45 and the incredible work they are doing within our community.

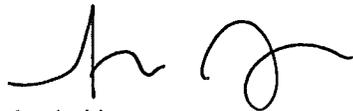
Barn 45 is a faith-based organization that has had a profound impact not only on the community at large, but on my personal life as well. Through their guidance, support, and commitment to helping others, Barn 45 quite literally helped save my marriage. The encouragement, accountability, and sense of purpose they provide is something that is difficult to put into words, but deeply meaningful to those who experience it.

Beyond individual lives and families, Barn 45 consistently demonstrates a genuine commitment to serving the Highland community. They foster connection, promote healing, and create a welcoming environment where people can grow emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. Their work strengthens families, builds character, and contributes to a healthier, more connected community overall.

Organizations like Barn 45 are rare and invaluable. They operate with integrity, compassion, and a clear mission to uplift others. I am truly grateful for their presence in Highland Township and hope they continue to be supported as they carry out their important work.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective and for all that you do to serve our community.

Thank you and God Bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andy Hager', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andy Hager

(586) 337 0663

Andrewhager52@icloud.com

colleen ralston

HTPlanning

Wed, Feb 11, 2026, 6:40 AM

 **IRONSCALES** couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender colleenralston@yahoo.com

Hello,

My name is Colleen Ralston, and I am a 21 year resident .

I need to tell you how barn 45 has not only changed my life but the ripple effect to my grown sons, my husband who was never into Jesus until now.

The barn is a place to come that is filled with the holy spirit a community that is so beautiful, I prayed for a place like this for years and it came true basically in my back yard.

We built a house in Traverse City were my husband grew up. We had plans to move there full time a few years ago, I just can't leave this community, and my husband agrees. Because we're are better people, parents with daily life with the barn.

When it comes down to it life is short and I want to be around people that love Jesus like me so someday we can all be in heaven together this should be the end goal for everyone 

Joy and Jaime are such good people they don't have to do this but the lives that have been changed because of this place, I have personally witnessed over and over .

Thanks for listening. I can't be there on the 19th .

Colleen Ralston

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Barn45 Property Zoning

Susan Wiberg

HTPlanning

Marty Wiberg

Tue, Feb 10, 2026, 4:38 PM

 **IRONSCALES couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender swiberg065@comcast.net**

To: The Highland Township Planning Commission

My Husband and I would like to recommend the zoning change for Barn45 at 2115 White Lake Rd. Barn45 has been such a help to both of us, our family, our relationships with Jesus, and relationships to others in the area of Highland. We would like to see Barn45 continue to offer growth opportunities to others which we believe will be made possible with the zoning change.

I found Barn45 during a time when I was struggling in my marriage. I heard about the story of the owners, Joy and Jamie Lee, who had almost lost their marriage. They found healing through the relationship and transforming love of Jesus and felt led to point people directly to Him by building the Barn and doing Bible Studies. Through attending Bible Studies, I was led to connect more directly with Jesus daily in personal Bible Study, honestly bringing my heart and struggles to Him. I have learned that Jesus is everything that my heart needs and this allowed me to release the pressure from my husband to be what only Jesus can be for me. As a result, we have more grace for each other and our marriage is becoming stronger.

At Barn45 I have made some amazing friends in Christ where all are accepted as they are. We are open and honest about our life struggles, and we encourage and help one another, pointing each other to God, praying over one another to allow His transforming and help in our hearts and lives. All are welcome, always!

My husband has been a part of the strong community of men that meet on Monday nights to do Bible study and support and pray for one another. This group has men of all ages from young adults to seniors, and there are many stories of changed lives and strengthened families.

Barn45 has assisted those in Highland and elsewhere that have financial burdens or

other difficulties. The greater Barn community has been very generous to give to those in need at Christmas. Often, donations are taken at events for the local food pantry at the Church of the Holy Spirit. Additionally, all the produce from the Barn45 garden is donated to the pantry. My husband and I have been blessed to help in these efforts at the Barn.

We have both heard many stories and seen many hearts healed and changed and families strengthened as a result of what is happening at Barn45. We believe it is has a deep, positive impact in Highland Township. We truly appreciate your careful and thoughtful consideration of the proposal to re-zone the property of Barn45.

Sincerely and Prayerfully,
Susan & Marty Wiberg
1501 W Wardlow Rd, Highland, 48357
248-310-0458

Sent from my iPad

Barn45 Property Zoning

From Susan Wiberg <swiberg065@comcast.net>
Date Tue 2/10/2026 4:38 PM
To HTPlanning <htplanning@highlandtwp.org>
Cc ~~Marty Wiberg <Marty.W.Wiberg@skf.com>~~



IRONSCALES couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender swiberg065@comcast.net

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Barn45

Joyce Heatherington

HTPlanning

Fri, Feb 6, 2026, 9:54 AM



IRONSCALES couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender
joyceheatherington@gmail.com

Highland Township ATTN Planning Commission,

Blessings, the Barn45 has helped bring The Bible to life and make His Word come alive. My life would not be the same. and glad able to watch this group Monday to Friday on YouTube. Thru humbleness, hardship and struggles they provide encouragement, support and hope.

From a fan, Joyce Heatherington
Salem, Oregon

Fwd[2]: Barn 45

[REDACTED]

HTPlanning

Fri, Feb 6, 2026, 9:26 AM

 **IRONSCALES** couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender lv704@optonline.net

Sent from myMail for iOS

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Lucille Ventura <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>
To: Lucille Ventura <[REDACTED]@optonline.net>
Date: Friday, February 6, 2026 at 7:27 AM -05:00
Subject: Fwd: Barn 45

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lucille Ventura <[REDACTED]@gmail.com>
Date: February 5, 2026 at 8:03:43 AM EST
To: connect@barn45.org
Subject: Barn 45

Hello,

I am writing to express my support for Barn 45. I first discovered the Barn on Facebook in September 2024, and despite living in New York, I have been an active participant ever since.

I attended my first online Bible study with them in September 2024 and have continued to do so through today. The Lord led me to Barn 45, and I have been truly transformed in my journey and love for Jesus Christ. The daily support and encouragement I receive from this community has been a profound blessing.

Please consider the positive impact Barn 45 has made, even reaching those of us as far away as New York.

Sincerely,

Lucille Ventura

Re: Barn45 Rezoning impact Letter of Support

Melissa Dills
HTPlanning
Wed, Jan 28, 2026, 5:08 PM

 **IRONSCALES** couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender realtormelissadills@gmail.com

To the Zoning Commitee,

Please know that I am located in Jacksonville, FL. I have been following Barn 45 for five years now. When Covid hit, I was drawn to the Daily Bible Study. The joy and growth I have experienced has been huge. My family lost 10 family members and without Barn 45, I would have stayed in an isolated dark state of mind. Waking up daily helped me stay connected to the Lord's Word. Listening to the ladies made me feel less alone. I know Jesus and the Holy Spirit draw me back into society with a new Hope and peace from the Lord. Please approve thier growth as I still need them as a spiritual intercession with Christ. No distance or thing can seperate us from the love of Christ. Plz approve the zoning so they stay connected to all of us, near and far. I need them in my senior years as I am now facing myopic macular degeneration, vision loss. I need to hear and have access to all thier resources, preaching, and encouragement. I love their guest speakers too! The love of Christ connects us all over the world. Thank you for your consideration.

Mrs. Melissa Dills
FB Bibe Study Morning
Women's Group Online Attendee
11299 Justin Oaks DR N
Jacksonville, FL 32221

Melissa Dills

Fw: Barn45

carolyn coffey

HTPlanning

Wed, Jan 28, 2026, 3:50 PM

 **IRONSCALES** couldn't recognize this email as this is the first time you received an email from this sender ccecoffey@yahoo.com

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: carolyn coffey <ccecoffey@yahoo.com>

To: htpplanning@highlandtwo.org <htpplanning@highlandtwo.org>

Sent: Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 03:49:46 PM EST

Subject: Re: Barn45

On Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 03:48:45 PM EST, carolyn coffey <ccecoffey@yahoo.com> wrote:

Please accept my letter for the town Hall coming up in February. The barn45 has become a huge part of my daily routine. I join in from North Carolina. I have enjoyed their devotion and biblical teaching so much that I have invited several friends to join in and they love it too.

There teaching has been a huge inspiration to me and hundreds of others. I support them fully. I hope you will weigh in Favor of the Barn45. I know it is a wonderful spiritual tool for so many women. we know they just want to help the community and the people. And we are praying that you help them in the refining process to further their community worship at Barn45

Sincerely

Carolyn Coffey

North Carolina

2/1/25

Hello.

Highland Township zoning board.

This is a note to tell you how much

Barn 45 has help me & my family.

They have supported me with prayers and friendships during times of hardships and anxiety in my life.

Barn 45 has given me hope when I thought God forgot about me.

They have encourage my faith & increased my knowledge of Jesus Christ to the point I started teaching Sunday School & shared my faith with family & friends going through difficulties by letting them know there is a God who cares & loves us. I am in support of the Barn being rezoned as a Church & pray they continue to grow & help many more people young & old.

Sincerely

Love Rea
HIGHLAND TOWNSHIP.