



Memorandum

To: Planning Commission Members
From: Elizabeth J Corwin, PE, AIPC; Planning Director
Date: September 16, 2025
Re: SPR25-11
Applicant: Skilken/Gold and Property Owner: Hannah & Hannah Investments, LLC
Vacant W Highland Road
PIN 11-22-352-005, -006, -010, and -011,

The project before you is the resubmittal for final approval of the Sheetz Gas Station/Convenience Store at the SW Corner of Highland Rd (M-59) and Milford Road. The plans were previously submitted for Special Use Approval and Preliminary Site Plan review in December of 2024. The Board approved the Special Use Permit on February 3, 2025 (see attached minutes). The Planning Commission granted preliminary approval of the site plan on January 23, 2025 (see attached minutes).

The applicant has spent the months since obtaining the necessary permits and working through agreements with the Huron Valley School District and Highland Township. The revised site plan is the result of addressing comments from the Planning Commission and outside agencies.

The most significant departure from the original preliminary site plan is the relocation of the Milford Road driveway to the south end of the site to increase the space available for turns to and from the site without impeding Milford Road traffic. This change triggers a relocation of the dumpster enclosure and parking spaces. 31 parking spaces are required (1 space per 200 square feet gross area) and 39 spaces are proposed on site. The calculations in the site data are incorrect but adequate parking is provided. As noted in the preliminary review, the two required longer spaces for recreational vehicles are not identified, although there is space on the site for them to stop, stand and not impede traffic.

The current landscaping plan was developed in consultation with the HDDA and differs significantly from the original plan reviewed by the Planning Commission. The plant selection and density is designed to complement the surrounding neighborhoods, rather than simply meet any numeric requirements of the ordinance.

**Highland Township Planning Commission
Record of the 1424th Meeting
Highland Township Auditorium
January 23, 2025**

Roll Call:

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

Also Present:

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director

Visitors: 12

Chairman Curtis called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

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.

Mr. Charles Ahmed, property owner at 1575 S. Milford Road, owns and operates the Shell gas station. He is concerned about impacts to the community by the introduction of a large, out of state corporation such as Sheetz and is concerned that local businesses, such as his, will be driven out. It is his opinion that there is not enough business to support additional gas stations in Highland Township.

Mr. Brendan Robinson, property owner at 2650 S. Milford Road, owns and operates the Citgo gas station. He notes that he has served the local community for years and reiterated Mr. Ahmed's concern that there is not enough business to support an additional gas station in Highland Township.

Public Hearing:

Agenda Item #2:

Parcel #	11-22-352-005, -006, -010, -011
Zoning:	HS, Highland Station Business District
Address:	Vacant W Highland Rd
File#:	URSA 24-06
Request:	Use Requiring Special Approval for gas station
Applicant:	Skilken/Gold
Owner:	Hannah & Hannah Investments, LLC

Chairman Curtis introduced agenda item #2, a request for special use approval for a Sheetz gas station and convenience store with drive-thru for parcels in the block bounded by Highland Road, Milford Road, Ruggles Road and John Street.

Mr. Alexander Siwicki of Sheetz provided a brief presentation introducing Sheetz to the audience, explaining the company's history and culture. He stressed that Sheetz is family owned and that the family is actively involved in the business. He highlighted the "Made to Order" model for food service and coffee, as well as convenience store offerings of groceries and household staples. He provided an overview of the architecture and site layout, including 3-dimensional perspectives of the developed site. He noted that Sheetz will be investing \$10 million in developing the site and creating 30 to 35 full time jobs.

Chairman Curtis opened the public hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Mr. Isaac Hannah, Hannah & Hannah Investments, LLC, property owner. He explained that he opened his first business in Highland Township in 1991 as a family-owned business. He is excited to bring this development to the community which will provide a modern, innovative, technology driven business the Township can be proud of.

There are letters from the Chaldean American Chamber of Commerce and the Middle East and North Africa American Chamber of Commerce opposing the Sheetz development.

Chairman Curtis closed the public hearing at 7:48 p.m.

Ms. Corwin briefly explained the difference between the Special Use Approval recommendation and the Site Plan review and approval process. A conceptual site plan is necessary to demonstrate whether and how a proposal complies with the standards of approval for a Special Land Use, but the Planning Commission should limit their review to big picture issues like site circulation, architectural character and its compatibility with the Master Plans. Details like the number of parking places or the size of signs are site plan issues that will be discussed under the next agenda item.

Mr. Charlick reflected on the seven standards of approval required for Special Use Approval as outlined in Section 6.03H of the Zoning Ordinance. The Planning Commission will base its recommendations on how and whether the proposal addresses those standards that deal with health, safety and welfare of the community and compatibility with planning documents.

Mr. Curtis called on Cassie Blaczyk, the Highland Downtown Development Authority's (HDDA's) design committee chairman to explain her review letter. She described how the applicant had met with the HDDA on multiple occasions to work to understand the masterplan, and complimented Sheetz on their cooperation and creativity in crafting a plan that met the HDDA's objectives, as expressed in the Highland Station master plan and design guidelines. The HDDA is pleased with the materials of construction, the scale of the building and the fine details of the site such as the canopy columns and trusswork. One item that is still under consideration is the landscaping plan. The plan submitted by Sheetz meets ordinance guidelines, but also has the potential to wall off the development from the remainder of the district. The Supervisor is developing recommendations for some plant species that are currently prevalent in the district, and a layout that would open the site up and create a welcoming space to invite the public to explore Highland Station. The HDDA is still working with the applicant to provide a welcoming entrance detail at the site of the former "Ticket Station" on the corner. The Township is also considering replacing the existing digital sign with a larger sign to occupy the space dedicated to the Township on the Sheetz monument sign.

Mr. York questioned whether the Ruggles Road frontage had been overlooked. He had hoped to see a double fronted store, with parking on Ruggles and an inviting public face, with opportunities for pedestrians to access the store from the south. While the building is attractive, the south wall is sparse and

the drive-thru windows less appealing. He would like the site to be better integrated into the community with multiple accesses from all directions.

Mr. Charlick commented that the setbacks are established by the Planning Commission. Ms. Corwin noted that in the Highland Station District, the Planning Commission is charged with reviewing the proposal and considering its compatibility with its surroundings. She noted that this is a unique block within Highland Station, and that it would be up to the Planning Commission to judge the appropriateness since it could not be based on the model of any other block. Mr. York asked why the Ruggles Road frontage did not include a more public face and entrance.

Mr. Siwicki explained that the single sidewalk allows pedestrian access to the site at the southwest corner of the site. Mr. York noted that the main entrance to the store and the outdoor dining is on the northeast corner of the building, which is a considerable hike. He acknowledged the challenges of crossing the drive-through lane.

Mr. Siwicki noted that the design includes a significant landscape buffer between the south elevation of the building and Ruggles Road, since this is where the nearest residential neighbors lie. Supervisor Hamill has taken a keen interest in this site landscaping in his role on the HDDA Design Committee and is preparing detailed recommendations about species and placement of planting material. Ms. Corwin suggested that the Planning Commission should disregard the Carlisle-Wortman Associates (CWA) letter regarding the landscaping. CWA's report includes an analysis of how the proposed landscaping plan meets the letter of the ordinance. However, the Design Committee will likely recommend a significantly different plan with more perennial plantings and fewer trees that would thrive in our community and echo a residential character, especially on Ruggles Road. The detailed landscaping review can wait for site plan review with an acknowledgment that the applicants are working with the HDDA to comply with the Highland Station Design Guidelines.

Mr. York appreciates the 3-D perspective drawings of the site, especially given that they include the adjacent credit union. He thought this was a useful tool for visualizing the design.

Mr. Charlick commented that given the placement of the drive-through, he thought the dumpster placement, in conjunction with denser plantings, helps to buffer the adjacent residential from noise and sweep of headlights from the drive-through windows. The lights from the cars at the ordering station will shine into the credit union instead. Since there are four front yards, something must give, and he thinks the layout is thoughtfully considered.

Mr. Siwicki shared a concept for a "Welcome to Highland Station" monument sign they will offer the community in the northeast corner of the site.

Mr. Charlick agreed with Mr. York that the Ruggles Road frontage should be more inviting. He suggested that perhaps a half wall as a backdrop to plantings might open the site up compared to a dense wall of trees. Mr. Zeolla suggested something to break up the south façade, such as faux windows.

Mr. Siwicki agreed to add "blacked out" windows and thought it was an excellent idea to open up views into the site more. Their design was intended to shield the adjacent residents to the south.

Mr. York asked about the Carlisle-Wortman report, which includes significant comments on other areas of the site design. Ms. Corwin noted that there are other misinterpretations of the ordinance for such items such as signage and parking. The letter was released only a few days before the meeting. She directed the Planning Commissioners to the standards of review and approval of the Special Use, which is a valid analysis, and offered that she would address other issues as they arose in the site plan review agenda item.

Mr. Charlick asked about the hours of operation for both gas sales and the retail store/food service. Mr. Siwicki noted that all Sheetz stations are 24 hour/7 day a week/365 days a year operation. This is part of their business model, to serve the needs of the traveling public. Mr. Charlick noted that the Planning Commission had imposed limits on the hours of operation at Wardlow Road. Ms. Corwin replied that this was in the Local Commercial zoning district and Wardlow was not a state trunkline. Mr. O'Leary also noted the concerns of the residential neighborhood at Wardlow Road. Ms. Corwin could not recall whether any other gas stations in Highland Township are operating with restrictions on the hours of operation.

Mr. York noted the lack of the required two longer parking areas, which he considers as a use issue, not just a site plan specific. He noted that these spots are to accommodate trucks with trailers, busses, or other vehicles that might frequent the site. He asked how this traffic is accommodated at other Sheetz locations. Mr. Siwicki noted that given the constraints of the site, he saw no good area to designate the longer parking spots. Mr. Charlick noted that there are areas where one could park a trailer and run into the store for a brief stop and asked about on street parking on Ruggles Road. Mr. Siwicki noted that Ruggles Road is a county road, and they will not permit parking on the road. Mr. York asked if this could be appealed. Ms. Corwin noted that the HDDA and Township had gone to bat with the Road Commission for Oakland County for parking on Milford Road, but did not think this on-street parking for this site was worth pursuing.

Mr. O'Leary asked why the longer parking spots had not come up in recent discussions of other gas stations. Mr. York recalled that in the past discussions, it was acknowledged that some gas station attracts the landscaping trades because of easy access to and from the road. Given the orientation of the pumps and drive access to the secondary roads and not Highland Road, perhaps this site would not have the same appeal to landscapers. Ms. Corwin explained that the requirement for the longer spaces is tied to the drive-through windows and not the gas stations, but perhaps the Planning Commission might reconsider whether the requirement should also apply to gas stations as they revisit ordinances in the future.

Mr. Siwicki noted that Sheetz has very strict dimensional standards about their site circulation, such as the 65 foot separation between the building and the canopies. After building nearly 800 stores across the nation, they are confident they understand the needs of the customers and that trucks with trailers will be able to navigate the site safely and are welcome. Mr. Charlick asked about the mix of products and whether diesel was sold. Mr. Siwicki explained the variety of products offered, including ethanol mixes and auto diesel. Auto diesel is offered at every pump.

Mr. Charlick was satisfied that the standards of approval had been met. He referred to the CWA report. He offered the following findings:

- 1) The site has been designed, located, planned and will be operated so that the public health, safety and welfare will be protected. The Planning Commission has discussed and is satisfied that the placement of the drive-through and dumpster enclosure, along with appropriate landscaping will protect the neighboring residential properties.
- 2) The land use is consistent with the intent of the Highland Station Zoning District intent.
- 3) The land use is compatible with surrounding land uses and the Highland Downtown Development Authority Design Committee has offered an analysis and recommendations showing the plan complies with the Master Plan and Design Guidelines.
- 4) The site provides for safe and convenient traffic flows. The applicant has provided a traffic study, which will be reviewed in more detail under the site plan review, which finds the use will not impact traffic based on the existing and anticipated traffic volumes.
- 5) The site plan layout and the characteristics of the touch screen minimizes potential negative impacts to the residential neighbors. The touch screen system mitigates the potential impacts of the 24-hour operations by reducing the noise typically associated with drive-through window operations.

- 6) The site will not create an undue burden on public services. The applicant is extending water service to the school and has worked out an agreement with the school district to construct the septic system on the adjacent parcel.
- 7) There are no other special provisions in the ordinance to be considered.

He concluded that given the site's location on Highland Road and not the interior of the district, he believes the site satisfies the criteria for approval of the Special Land Use.

Mr. Smith agreed with the findings. Mr. Zeolla asked about left turns onto Milford Road. Ms. Corwin noted that the traffic study showed lengthy delays during peak hours where motorists will probably self-select to leave the Ruggles driveway. Ms. Corwin explained that the intersection of Milford Road and Highland Road is not impacted by the new traffic and that the assignment of trips to the driveways is merely assumptions. Motorists will choose whatever driveway seems most convenient at any given moment. These are typically just interruptions in a trip already present on the road network, and result in changes to turning movements. Mr. Siwicki concurred with that assessment. Generally, 75 percent or more of the trips into the gas station are already present on the network.

Mr. Charlick moved to recommend approval of the Special Use for a gas station with convenience store and drive-through for parcels 11-22-352-005, -006, -010, and -011, based on the facts and findings articulated earlier and the report by Carlisle-Wortman Associates dated December 18, 2024. These findings are further based on the preliminary site plan prepared by Kimley Horn of Michigan, dated December 18, 2024, and architectural plans by Sheetz Incorporated, updated December 19, 2024. Mr. York supported the motion. Roll call vote: O'Leary, yes; Zeolla, yes; York, yes; Charlick, yes; Heyn, yes; Smith, yes; Curtis, yes. Motion carried (7 yes votes, 0 no votes).

Work Session:

Agenda Item #3:

Parcel #	11-22-352-005, -006, -010, -011
Zoning:	HS, Highland Station Business District
Address:	Vacant W Highland Rd
File#:	URSA 24-06
Request:	Use Requiring Special Approval for gas station
Applicant:	Skilken/Gold
Owner:	Hannah & Hannah Investments, LLC

Chairman Curtis introduced the application for site plan review for a gas station and convenience store with drive-through for the Sheetz on the block bounded by Highland Road, Milford Road, Ruggles Road and North John.

Mr. Charlick asked if all the Sheetz facilities have a similar brick façade. Mr. Siwicki said all the Sheetz facilities have similar colors and materials.

Mr. Charlick asked about the trusses on the canopy. He asked if they were timber or painted to look like timber. Mr. Siwicki explained that they were steel, but a dark brown paint.

Mr. Charlick asked about the lighting, particularly for the canopy. He asked if the canopy was backlight, or if there were visible lighting fixtures, or if it glowed through the canopy, and asked about the color. Mr. Siwicki explained that the lighting fixtures were fully shielded and contained under the canopy and precisely aimed at the pumps. The canopy fascia is a narrow concave band and there is a narrow strip of

lighting hidden from sight that downwashes across the canopy. The photometric plan shows the reflection of that light. The lights are white and do not change color. There is a similar band under the parapet on the building on the north, east and west sides, but not on the south side facing the residential neighbors.

Mr. Charlick asked about the underground stormwater system. He asked if environmental and geotechnical studies had been done. The specific concern is whether the introduction of added stormwater through infiltration would impact migration of any free product that might be present now or in the future, especially given contamination on the site on the east side of Milford Road. Mr. Siwicki explained that studies have been completed and that any contamination detected on any of the Sheetz sites is mitigated prior to construction. He explained that there are strict controls to contain spills, and to protect groundwater. The stormwater system includes multiple stormwater quality components such as oil/water separators in the stormwater structures.

Mr. O'Leary complimented Mr. Siwicki on the thoroughness and quality of the submittal. He appreciates the mansard roof and how the mechanicals are hidden from view. He likes the shed roof over the canopy and the exposed truss work. He finds nothing to take exception with on the building.

Mr. O'Leary did ask about the loading zone, and potential conflicts with traffic for the trash enclosure. Mr. Siwicki explained that the traffic conflicts between those facilities can be managed through scheduling. The plans will be amended to show a striped area at the underground storage field where the semi-trucks will stop to fill the tanks.

Mr. Zeolla noted that he had visited a Sheetz facility with nearly an identical site layout in Cincinnati and found that the site was attractive and that the traffic flowed smoothly. He thought the use and layout was a good fit for Highland Township.

Ms. Corwin asked Mr. Siwicki about the flagpole height, which he stated would be 30 feet high. She noted that the CWA report stated that flood lights are not permitted, but the ordinance does allow for uplighting on a flagpole, provided they are specifically directed to the flag and the light does not spill over. Mr. Smith also pointed out the height of the flagpole dictates the setback, so that if the flagpole falls, no part of it would land in the right-of-way. Ms. Corwin noted the location was 35 feet south of the Highland Road right-of-way, so a 30-foot pole was appropriate. Mr. Siwicki acknowledged the lighting provisions and assured the Planning Commission that Sheetz is very sensitive to the issue and places the floodlight so that it safe from vehicle traffic that might knock it out of alignment. The height of the pole should be noted on the siteplan.

Mr. Heyn asked about the fieldstone on the wainscot on the building and columns and asked if it was like the fieldstone on the Township Hall. Mr. Siwicki was not exactly sure, but it will have a similar character. Mr. Smith asked where the field stone salvaged from the little existing house would be utilized. Mr. Siwicki noted that it would be used for the monument sign. He thought the color of the fieldstone planned for the building was accurately represented on the drawings submitted and offered to provide a sample if that was important to the Planning Commission. Mr. Heyn noted that the new Fire Station also has used fieldstone, and that it would provide a cohesiveness if all were similar. Mr. Charlick asked if all Sheetz used the same stone, since he could appreciate that it would be to their benefit to standardize colors and materials. Mr. Siwicki explained that Sheetz does all their own maintenance on their facilities, so standardization is important to them.

Mr. Charlick asked if Sheetz had a construction department too, and if they did their own project management. Mr. Siwicki reported that they do and will have daily onsite supervision from a Sheetz employee. They will provide contact information to the Township and to neighbors so that they can be very responsive in troubleshooting should issues arise.

Mr. Charlick asked about the status of the ticket station. Ms. Corwin explained that the ticket station project is independent of the Sheetz proposal, and that the property owner has retained a contractor to replicate the station at Veteran Park based on the original plans. Ms. Blaczyk explained that the ticket station will become a stage feature of the Veteran Park to transform it into a better event venue.

Mr. Charlick noted that once the ticket structure is gone, there will be an expanse of grass from where it once stood to the intersection. Ms. Corwin explained that much of that expanse of grass is an MDOT required clear vision triangle. Ms. Blaczyk commented that much of the improvements on the site had been salvaged by the Township as part of the land transfer, including brick pavers, lighting and signage off the building. These have been preserved to be reutilized elsewhere in the Township.

Mr. Charlick commented on the expanse of pavement, and asked how Sheetz will manage the snow. Mr. Siwicki noted that they typically remove the snow from the site and truck it elsewhere.

Ms. Corwin directed the conversation to signage. She explained that in analyzing the sign packet, the Planning Commission must consider both Article 14 signs and the Highland Station specific standards in Section 9.05.H. She cautioned that the CWA report interpreted the ordinance differently than staff has consistently applied the ordinance. For instance, CWA did not apply proper standards to the menu board stations. Since drive-throughs were not envisioned in the Highland Station District, the rules in Section 14 apply. She asked about the height of the order boards.

Mr. Siwicki explained that the height of the structure is due to the canopy that covers the order screen and provides some shelter for the customer. Ms. Corwin thought this could be considered an accessory structure, and that the signage requirements would apply only to the menu board and any signage attached to the structure, not to the canopy itself. She also noted that the clearance bar is a directional sign and is permitted by right, provided it is not internally lit. Mr. Siwicki explained that Sheetz removed the graphics from the canopies were possible so that they did not act as a sign.

Mr. York asked about the double lanes on the south side of the building. Mr. Siwicki explained that the southernmost lane is a bypass lane. Mr. York asked average wait time. Mr. Siwicki explained that in most stores, the drive through traffic is minimal. The peak hour at noon of their busiest location is only 8 orders. Most customers enter the store. Mr. York asked if Sheetz promotes online ordering. Mr. Siwicki said there was an app which allows the customer to skip the order station entirely. Ms. Corwin noted that the site plan should denote the 10 required queuing spaces. The applicant agreed.

Mr. Heyn asked how grease would be handled. He noted the connection to the septic system. Mr. Siwicki explained that the advanced filter is different than a grease trap. That is for grease that comes off dishwashing, not for the fryer grease. Mr. Siwicki explained that there are two underground tanks, one for used oil and one for new oil. These are serviced by a pump truck. Mr. Charlick asked if Sheetz has other stores on septic systems. Mr. Siwicki explained that they do.

Ms. Corwin noted that there are three building mounted signs, totaling 55 square feet. They are entitled for one square foot per lineal feet, which is about 110 feet. Even with the canopy signage included, the building mounted signage appears to comply with the ordinance. The free mounting signage must meet the C2 district standards. The monument sign could meet the signage restrictions, but they have voluntarily enlarged the sign to incorporate the Township's changeable message sign. Given that the sign is a de facto Township sign, the standards will not comply, provided the Planning Commission finds the size, character and placement to be consistent with the Highland Station Master Plan.

Mr. York asked about the signage on the pumps. Ms. Corwin believes that the signage on the pumps is not limited, unless it is so sized and directed to draw attention from the street. Mr. York asked if the pumps would have a video screen. Mr. Siwicki said they use a small screen that provides direction to the user and

shows some internal advertising. Mr. York asked how the volume was controlled and asked if they typically get complaints from neighbors. Mr. Siwicki said the screen volume is easily adjusted by management and that only one screen comes on at a time.

Mr. York asked why they chose 14 pumps. Mr. Siwicki explained it is a function of what they think they can sell from a site and site constraints.

Mr. Smith asked if provisions were made for electric charging stations. Mr. Siwicki explained that Sheetz “future plan” sites by providing electrical supply to possible future charging sites but are not deploying them now. They partner with several third-party vendors to provide chargers, which would be independent of the Sheetz fuel sales.

Mr. Charlick asked if Mr. Siwicki has knowledge about the lease terms with the school since this facility is fully dependent on the septic system. Mr. Siwicki understands the lease to be in perpetuity. Mr. York asked if the lease goes with the property, or with Sheetz. Mr. Hannah explained the lease runs with the property. Mr. Hannah said the lease is tied to the provision of public water to the school, which solves a different problem for the school.

Mr. York asked about paper signage on the inside of the windows. Mr. Siwicki said they would comply with ordinance requirements. He said that typically, the signs are limited to help wanted, or a specific sale, and typically. They do not pepper their windows with gaudy signage for beer and wine for instance.

Mr. York asked if beer, wine and liquor sales are anticipated. Mr. Siwicki said if Sheetz is able to secure a license, they will sell beer, wine and liquor. There will be no onsite consumption.

Mr. Charlick asked about the 8-inch watermain extension to the school. Ms. Corwin noted that there are still some details to work out, such as where tees and blind flanges, valves and hydrants are places. This layout should be considered conceptual.

Ms. Corwin noted that there are review letters from the Township Engineer, mostly pointing out what other permitting is required. The Fire Marshal also provided a letter, although Ms. Corwin is certain he understood the location of the hydrant.

Mr. Charlick asked about how site development will proceed, and whether Mr. Hannah is responsible for the demolition and clearing the site, or if Sheetz is taking on the whole project. Mr. Siwicki explained that Sheetz will project manage the entire site demolition and development. Typically, there will about a six-month period where permits are obtained and plans refined before they can break ground. It may take a little longer in this case because of permitting for the watermain and septic system.

Mr. York asked if the height of the canopy has been addressed. He noted that it is 14 feet to the top of the masonry and another 18 inches to the underside of the structure (trusses), then another 8-inch to the bottom of the soffit. Mr. Charlick explained that the ordinance had been drafted tightly to encourage creativity in design. Ms. Corwin referred to the ordinance, noting the maximum height is 18 feet unless the design incorporates design elements to complement the architecture of the main building and meets the character intent of the Master Plan. Mr. York noted that the height inches exceed the ordinance height by 3 feet 7 inches.

Mr. Siwicki explained that while Sheetz is not catering to semi-truck traffic, they require a minimum height of 15 feet 6 inches to accommodate their own delivery trucks.

Mr. O’Leary noted that he is satisfied that the shed roof and open truss design, and the masonry wrapped columns does satisfy the ordinance requirement. Mr. Charlick also noted that the slim red band of the

canopy is attractive and unusual. Mr. Curtis asked if accepting this height set a precedent for other properties. Ms. Corwin noted that there are only a few parcels this applies to, since this is for Highland Station only. The Planning Commission approved a height exception for the site at the southeast corner of Highland Road and Milford Road, although not quite as high.

Mr. Charlick asked if the high side of the canopy faces Highland Road or the store. Mr. Siwicki explained the trusses will be exposed more on the roadside. Mr. Heyn appreciates the design and asked if there are other stores that utilize this design. He asked Mr. Siwicki to forward some pictures to the Planning Department.

Mr. Smith commented on the landscaping. He thought the more intense landscaping proposed on the back side of the building facing Ruggles Road was a positive element to lessen car headlights from the drive through lanes onto the neighboring properties.. Mr. Charlick stated that there is merit to opening the site to the Highland Station district has merit as well. Mr. Curtis and Mr. Heyn noted that there are residential neighbors on the south that should be screened. Mr. Charlick noted that most of the Ruggles frontage is taken up by the Legacy Credit Union, which would not require much screening. Mr. Smith asked why the Planning Commission would ask for faux windows if they were not concerned with the view. Mr. Zeolla said faux windows would break up the expanse of the wall, regardless of how many plantings might screen the building. Mr. Siwicki said Sheetz could provide the windows and agreed to work with staff to work out the landscaping details.

Ms. Blaczyk explained the HDDA Design Committee's recommendations about the landscaping. Much of their concern was in the species of trees selected, some of which are very tall, and others that may not thrive in this environment. The HDDA concern is that the site would appear to be a welcoming entry into the district, drawing motorists in, rather than walling it off. The building is attractive, and the first impression of motorists, especially westbound, should be that of an active site, not just a stand of trees.

Ms. Corwin summarized the discussion as follows with some input from planning commissioners: 1) The planning commission is satisfied with the setbacks as proposed; 2) the loading/unloading zones and placement of the dumpster enclosure location in the southeast corner of the site is satisfactory since this site has four front yards and it must be placed somewhere; 3) the freestanding sign is compatible with the character of the district and is providing a public benefit by housing the Township's digital sign, negating the need to strictly conform with the size restrictions of the district due to its public use; 4) the lighting appears to comply with the ordinance; 5) the parking appears to comply with the ordinance; 6) the drive-through operation is satisfactory; 6) the canopy height is satisfactory since it complements the building architecture; 7) the traffic circulation is acceptable and supported by the traffic impact study; 8) the watermain provides added public benefit to the community; 9) there are findings of support in the reports of the Fire Marshal, Township Engineer and Planning Consultant. Ms. Corwin noted that the findings seem sufficient to support a motion of preliminary approval.

Mr. Siwicki also added that Sheetz would like clarification if the two longer spaces are required. Mr. York noted he still is concerned about parking trailers. He said unless parking is prohibited, he thought he would likely park a trailer against the curb running northwest/southeast or park on Ruggles Road and run into the store from the rear. Mr. Siwicki acknowledged that might happen, but did not want to encourage that parking by striping a space.

Mr. York offered the following motion: To grant preliminary approval for parcels 11-22-352-005, -006, -010 and -011, Highland Station Business District, SPR 24-11 based on findings previously summarized by Ms. Corwin regarding the adequacy of the parking, appropriateness of the height of canopy and architecture, lighting, signage, setbacks on all four streets, loading and unloading zones and dumpster location and acknowledging that the applicant can work out details with staff regarding a number of items discussed such as the height and location of the flagpole, landscaping, a welcoming appearance on the south

elevation that provides the security that is necessary and recognizing the public benefit arising from the install of the watermain and monument sign. Mr. Charlick supported the motion. Roll call vote: Charlick - yes; O’Leary – yes; Zeolla – yes; Heyn – yes; Curtis – yes; York - yes; Smith - yes.

Agenda Item #4: Master Plan Discussion. Review changes proposed from comment period and prepare for public hearing and adoption

Ms. Corwin explained that the comment period was noticed, opened and closed in accordance with the Planning Enabling Act. Response letters were received from the Road Commission for Oakland County and the Oakland County Planning Commission. Carlisle-Wortman made minor edits in accordance with the County recommendations, including refining the road classification definitions and incorporating references to existing partnerships such as participation in the invasive species elimination initiatives and household hazardous waste collection. The updated Master Plan is online.

The public hearing is scheduled for February 6, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. It is probable that the Planning Commission could adopt the Master Plan at that time. Ms. Corwin will prepare a resolution for ease of approval. The Planning Commissioners were encouraged to review the draft one more time prior to the meeting and forward comments to Ms. Corwin prior to the meeting.

The meeting will be followed immediately by a joint boards meeting with the Planning Commission, Township Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and Highland Downtown Development Authority. The tentative agenda includes updates from the HDDA on their master plan process and proposed projects for 2025 as well as the Planning Commission sharing status of ordinance amendments currently under consideration.

Agenda Item #5 Committee Updates

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

Committee updates and future agendas were discussed.

Agenda Item #6: Minutes: December 19, 2024

Mr. Charlick offered a motion to approve the minutes of December 5, 2024, as presented. Mr. Zeolla supported the motion which was approved by voice vote (all ayes, no nays)

Adjournment:

Mr. York moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 p.m. Mr. Charlick supported the motion, which was unanimously approved by voice vote. (all ayes, no nays)

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary
ARS/ejc

The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) has approved the watermain construction permit for the watermain in Ruggles Street and John Street, and the agreement is in place to provide public water supply to the Pinckney Elementary School in exchange for locating the sewage drainfield on the school property. The applicants have been working closely with the Oakland County Health Division to gain approval for the septic system. No building permits will be issued until the permit for the septic system is approved.

I also understand the permits are in hand for the fuel storage tank system.

There are agreements in concept for the HDDA Welcome Sign, and the HDDA has quotes from the sign installer. Sheetz will provide electric supply to the sign and a permanent easement for maintenance. There is also a conceptual plan for the changeable message sign for the community within Sheetz monument sign. The Township has requested that rather than include the logo as a fixed feature of the sign, that we be granted more square area for the message. If you can imagine the sign on Sheet A-106 with a 32 square foot changeable sign and no logo, that will be closer to what is being considered. If the Planning Commission finds that the concept is sound and the location is acceptable, staff can work out the details of the sign package with the applicant during permitting.

The south façade of the building was not changed from the original proposal. The landscaping plan calls out three maple trees (2 varieties) along that wall, plus a variety of winterberry, with ground phlox as a cover. This landscaping design is very much based on the existing plantings at the Highland Township library. There are also other maples and redbuds along that Ruggles Road frontage.

I may collect some additional correspondence and thoughts from the Fire Department, Engineer and HDDA before the Planning Commission meeting, but I believe that the plans are sufficiently well developed to allow the Planning Commission to have a meaningful discussion and with some guidance to staff, feel comfortable approving the site subject to final review and acceptance of staff and consultants.

Mrs. Lewis moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. Mr. Howe supported, and the motion carried with the following roll call vote: Hamill – yes, Flowers – yes, Frederick – yes, Charlick – yes, Howe – yes, Lewis – yes, and Salvia – yes.

Announcements and Information Inquiry:

- a) Thursday, February 6, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. Joint Board Meeting – Board of Trustees, Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and Highland Downtown Development Authority
- b) Township Offices will be closed Monday, February 17th, in observance of President’s Day
- c) 2024 Fire Fighter of the Year

It was with great pleasure Chief George recognized Fire Fighter/Paramedic Michael Moore as the 2024 Highland Township Fire Department’s Fire Fighter of the Year.

Public Comment:

Several comments were received regarding Special Approval of Land Use for both gas stations.

Pending Business:

- a) URSA 24-06 Special Approval of Land Use for gas station; Vacant W Highland Road (bounded by N. Milford, Ruggles and N. John) PIN 11-22-352-005, -006, -010, and -011; Applicant: Skilken/Gold; Property Owner: Hannah and Hannah Investments, LLC

Mr. Charlick reported that the Planning Commission found the project satisfies all required standards for special use approval as outlined in Zoning Ordinance Section 6.03H. The Board reviewed and discussed each of the required findings, as outlined in a Planning Department document summarizing the analyses of the Planning Consultant and Planning Commission. The Board also concluded that the standards of approval were satisfied. Mr. Hamill moved to approve URSA 24-06 Special Approval of Land Use for gas station; Vacant W Highland Road (bounded by N. Milford, Ruggles and N. John) PIN 11-22-352-005, -006, -010, and -011; Applicant: Skilken/Gold; Property Owner: Hannah and Hannah Investments, LLC. Ms. Frederick supported, and the motion carried with the following roll call vote: Hamill – yes, Flowers – yes, Frederick – yes, Charlick – yes, Howe – yes, Lewis - yes, and Salvia – yes.

- b) URSA 24-01 Special Approval of Land Use for gas station; vacant NE corner of N Milford/E Wardlow, PIN 11-15-326-017; Applicant Sarmed Raouf; Property Owner RIMA Properties, LLC

Mr. Charlick reported that the Planning Commission found the project satisfies all required standards for special use approval as outlined in Zoning Ordinance Section 6.03H. The Board reviewed and discussed each of the required findings, as outlined in a Planning Department document summarizing the analyses of the Planning Consultant and Planning Commission. The Board also concluded that the standards of approval were satisfied. Mr. Hamill moved to approve URSA 24-01 Special Approval of Land Use for gas station; vacant NE corner of N Milford/E Wardlow, PIN 11-15-326-017; Applicant Sarmed Raouf; Property Owner RIMA Properties, LLC. Mr. Howe supported, and the motion carried with the following roll call vote: Hamill – yes, Flowers – yes, Frederick – yes, Charlick – yes, Howe – yes, Lewis - yes, and Salvia – yes.