

**Highland Township Planning Commission  
Record of the 1395th Meeting  
February 2, 2023**

**Roll Call:**

Scott Green, (absent)  
Grant Charlick (acting chairman)  
Kevin Curtis  
Chris Heyn  
Beth Lewis  
Roscoe Smith (absent)  
Scott Temple  
Russ Tierney  
Guy York

Also Present:

Elizabeth J Corwin, Planning Director  
Doug Lewan, Carlisle-Wortman Associates

Visitors: 4

Acting Chairman Grant Charlick called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

*Work Session*

**Agenda Item #1:**

Parcel #	11-23-202-003
Zoning:	IM, Industrial and Manufacturing
Address:	1704 E. Highland Rd
File#:	SPR 23-01
Request:	Site Plan Amendment
Applicant:	Roman Magotta, Roman Custom Homes
Owner:	1704 Highland Properties, LLC

Ms. Corwin introduced agenda item #1. The project involves the property at 1704 E. Highland Road, which currently houses Rave Construction, formerly Hi-Mill Manufacturing (an EPA Superfund Site). The property was acquired by the current owners in a tax sale in 2014, at which time a site plan was presented to the Planning Commission for change of use from manufacturing to offices and warehousing for Rave. The applicant would like to improve the site by covering the truck loading/unloading area with a canopy.

Mr. Bob Sowles, owner of Raves Construction, was present to represent the applicant. The project is 9000 square feet canopy to cover 7 loading docks. Rave's primary client is Kroger, who runs a continual improvement project on their stores. Rave runs five box trucks that are on the road day and night, and keep their loading docks full. Their business model is to refurbish or salvage what they can, and they offer pallets for citizens to pick up for free, and fill dumpsters with what cannot be salvaged.

The project is on the northeast side of the site, in the area currently enclosed by fence with mesh screening. The applicant explained the constraints imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency. Rave cannot

add on to the building because of restrictions, but covering the loading/unloading area is acceptable and may help control runoff across the pavement.

Mr. Charlick asked if this covered area would be storage. Mr. Sowles said it should be thought of as a staging area, as there is often materials there as they are loaded and unloaded, but the inventory is constantly changing. At most, an item might be outside for two to three weeks as it is stripped and disposed or repurposed.

The Planning Commission discussed the site plan, and sight lines from Highland Road. Ms. Corwin expressed Mr. Smith's concern that there was a representation that trees would be planted to take up the contaminants and believed that obligation was not met. Mr. Sowles explained that many trees had been planted at the south side of the building, and that they had planted bushes along the right-of-way, which did not grow as tall as they had expected. Mr. Sowles noted the location of the overhead lines through the site, and explained that there were limits to what could be planted under the utilities. Mr. Curtis thought screening could be addressed by fencing since plantings were impractical.

Mr. Temple asked about the Fire Marshal's references to complaints about the site. Mr. Sowles was not clear about what was referred to. He noted that Mr. Bell had been to the site numerous time, and he thought the site was in compliance. Ms. Corwin noted that Mr. Bell has expressed a desire that a more substantial or appropriate screen fence should replace the fabric mesh. Mr. Sowles agreed that Rave's Construction would like to improve the appearance of the site, but could not enclose this area due to concerns about vapor intrusion. He agreed to install something more substantial, as long as it is still permeable. He would like to make the screen wall taller too—at least 8 feet.

Mr. Tierney also asked about how the Fire Marshal would come to comment on fencing. Ms. Corwin explained that although Mr. Bell's report is issued on Fire Department letterhead, Mr. Bell also functions as Code Enforcement officer. The fencing concern is based on the zoning ordinance requirements for fence construction. Mr. Tierney asked if it was customary for the Fire Marshall to do a walk through of a project before occupancy. Ms. Corwin explained yes, if there were interior improvements, he would complete a walk-through inspection.

Mr. York asked for clarification on why the loading/unloading area has no screen wall. He could not think of any circumstance where open storage would be allowed street side. Mr. York would prefer to see an architectural section, that would still allow for the required ventilation, He thinks that an opening at the base and top of the wall would suffice.

Mr. Grant suggested that if the canopy were ever converted to an enclosed space, that the wall must come before the Planning Commission.

Mr. York asked for a better explanation of how the space around the loading docks is used. He wanted to understand if the trucks enter the site backing perpendicular to the right-of-way, which is suggested by the location of one gate. Mr. Sowles explained that this is necessary when trucks are brought into the southern building for maintenance, typically trucks parallel the right-of-way to access the loading docks, but an aisle must be preserved for access to the maintenance building.

Mr. York asked about whether the existing gas tank is above ground. He thought there was a conflict between the proposed foundation and the location of the tank.

Mr. York asked about requirements for disposal of materials excavated. Mr. Sowles explained that the soils would be stored onsite while awaiting testing. If the soils are acceptable they will be placed on the site. If the tests indicate otherwise, they will be removed from the site and properly disposed. Mr. Sowles explained this procedure was used previously when they excavated a trench.

Mr. York asked if there would be some siding or flashing to hide the open truss. Mr. Sowles explained that they were still working on the plan, and that they would address this concern as the plans were finalized. Mr. Sowles explained that the plans have already been changed to a steel design rather than the wood truss design originally envisioned. This allows for a lower canopy height. Mr. York believes those revised details should be presented to the Planning Commission. He would like to see documentation from the EPA regarding what options would be allowable to provide a more substantial screen wall that is acceptable to them in light of vapor intrusion concerns.

Mr. Heyn asked if there would be a general program of improvement to the building, such as paint. He noted the significance of this location along the M-59 corridor, and expressed the community's interest in a more pleasing appearance. The area is surrounded by natural wooded areas and the Highland State Recreational Area.

Mr. York made a motion to tentatively approve site plan amendment SPR23-01 for the Rave's Construction facility at 1704 E. Highland Road, parcel 11-23-202-003, noting that the Planning Commission is generally in favor of the proposal and agrees with the applicant that the aesthetics of the property should be improved while working within the EPA restrictions. The Planning Commission agrees that an open canopy design is acceptable, and that no door is necessary unless required for security concerns. Final site plan approval is contingent upon resubmittal of the details for the screening wall/fence or other landscaping features, noting that an architectural wall section should be considered on the north, facing the highway. Mr. Curtis supported the motion. Roll Call Vote: Mr. Curtis – yes; Mr. Charlick – yes; Mr. Heyn – yes; Mr. York – yes; Mrs. Lewis – yes; Mr. Tierney – yes; Mr. Temple - yes. The motion was approved with seven yes votes.

**Agenda Item #2:** Master Plan Update and discussion of planned Public Input Session

Ms. Corwin explained that she had met with Mr. Lewan earlier, and that the next step is to set a date. Mr. Charlick asked if the summary document for the survey was complete. Ms. Corwin explained that there were enough issues with changes in questions and format that it was difficult to come up with anything meaningful in ways of a comparison.

Mr. Lewan explained that there were multiple ways to gain input, but since the general concession is that the plan will mainly be tweaked here and there, it would be best to consider a "traditional" visioning session where we invite people out to give input on some topics such a commercial, industrial and residential land uses, transportation and utilities. This should be a free flow of ideas, where less relevant ideas could be screened out through some voting process. The expectation is that the visioning session would not take the Planning Commission off in a new direction, but would rather be consistent with the survey results.

Some other ideas to draw comment would be some establishing some popup displays that would solicit similar feedback. There are some online options to do the same. Mr. Lewan's recommendation would be to go with the open house format.

Mr. Charlick summarized that there would be multiple tables with Planning Commissioners at each station, acting as facilitators. Mr. Lewan explained that he would give some facilitator training prior to the meeting, and that each group would select someone, perhaps the Planning Commissioner, would summarize the findings.

Mr. Heyn asked about rotation through the station. Mr. Lewan explained that attendees would be given an opportunity to visit each student.

Mr. York asked if there would be staff assigned to each group. Ms. Corwin said that Planning Staff would be present, and would be also circulating around to assist in the conversations. Mr. York asked if there would be subject experts that would be able to advocate for any particular policy position. Ms. Corwin explained that although the Board could be invited, and there have been successful joint meetings, it would probably be best to leave this more general. Mr. Lewan said if there is a specific interest we could follow up with a focus group meeting to that one topic—for instance sewer and water.

Ms. Corwin explained that there is no current pressure on any specific land use issue that would suggest a prime topic that would fill the room.

Mr. Charlick suggested that the topics might be infrastructure/utilities, residential, commercial/industrial, natural resources/open space.

Mr. Lewan will be prepared with a package on March 2 to outline the visioning session, with the open house tentatively planned for March 16.

The Planning Commission discussed whether there should be more than one visioning session—perhaps rotating about the new facilities in the Township. Mr. Charlick thought it was unlikely that we would have the interest to come out for more than one meeting. Mr. Curtis asked about email communications to the Homeowner’s Association. We also have access to the Highland Matters and Township facebook pages and the newspaper.

The public visioning session will be held March 16 and a pre-meeting discussion will be held March 2, 2023.

**Agenda Item #3:** Committee Updates  
Zoning Board of Appeals:  
Township Board:  
Highland Downtown Development Authority:  
Planning Director’s Update

Committee updates were discussed. The Planning Commission should be prepared for an election of officers on March 2 and selection of a Zoning Board of Appeals liaison.

**Agenda Item #4:** Minutes: December 1, 2022

Mr. Tierney moved to approve the minutes of December 1, 2022, as corrected. Mr. Curtis supported the motion. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

At 9:05 p.m., Mr. Tierney made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Curtis supported the motion. The motion was approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Roscoe Smith, Secretary  
ARS/ejc