

**Highland Township Planning Commission
Record of the 1385th Meeting
April 21, 2022**

Roll Call:

Scott Green, Chairperson (absent)
Eugene H. Beach, Jr. (absent)
Grant Charlick (acting chairman)
Kevin Curtis
Chris Heyn
Beth Lewis
Roscoe Smith
Scott Temple
Russ Tierney

Also Present:

Elizabeth J. Corwin, Planning Director
Kari Littlebear, Zoning Administrator
Douglas Lewan, Carlisle-Wortman, Inc.; Planning Consultant

Visitors: 1

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

Work Session

Agenda Item #1:

Parcel #	11-22-176-002
Zoning:	IM Industrial Manufacturing
Address:	1300 N Milford
File#:	SPR22-05
Request:	Site Plan Approval
Applicant:	Kevin Sullivan, Tool Time
Owner:	Katherine Mark

Mr. Charlick introduced the request to renew a site plan approval to allow Tool Time Rental to expand to the rear yard of an adjacent property with secured outdoor storage. The subject parcel is 1300 N. Milford Road, parcel 11-22-176-002 and is currently zoned IM, Industrial Manufacturing, although used as a single-family residence. The applicant has proposed a phased approach, whereas the fenced storage area would be constructed in Phase I, but the garage demolition and driveway extension would follow, after the home is vacated by the current property owner. The site plan was previously approved on July 20, 2017.

The applicant, Kevin Sullivan was present. He explained that the site plan implementation had been delayed by the current property owner as she sought an alternate residence, further

exacerbated by COVID restrictions. He is ready to move forward with Phase I of the site plan now, using the same plan as previously approved.

Mr. Smith objected to the incomplete sidewalk from a previous Tool Time project, as well as the poor housekeeping at the fenced storage area north of Tool Time, with many pieces of equipment stored outside of the fence. Ms. Corwin explained that the obligation for the sidewalk was with the J&K Development Co., who has retained ownership of the storage lot north of Tool Time. Mr. Sullivan explained that Mr. Kapilla is responsible for the sidewalk at 1320 N. Milford Road under the terms of their land contract for purchase of the parcel. Mr. Smith reiterated the requirements for extending the sidewalk and upgrading the landscape at the Milford Road ROW when the second phase is developed.

Mr. Tierney moved to approve the site plan for secured outdoor storage at 1300 N. Milford Road consistent with conditions of previous approval granted July 20, 2017. Mr. Curtis supported the motion. Vote: Curtis-yes; Heyn-yes; Temple-yes; Tierney-yes; Charlick-yes; Smith-yes; Lewis-yes. Motion passes (7 yes votes, 0 no votes.)

Agenda Item #2 General Discussion—Master Plan

Mr. Lewan explained that there were two tasks for the meeting. The first was to introduce the topic of transitional lands and set a framework for evaluation and implications for the future land use map. The second was to come to a final agreement on the form of the opinion survey and determine how to distribute it. His memorandum of April 14, 2022 outlines the key concepts. He has provided a series of maps for use in identifying and evaluating transitional lands.

Transitional lands are primarily vacant or underutilized lands which would be expected to be turned to a higher use. By considering potential uses, the Township can map the properties in a way to steer future developers to a use desired by the Township. The provided maps have been based on review of the Oakland County existing land use map, aerial photographs and the township zoning and future land use maps. These mapping tools can be used to identify areas where the mapping does not align with future hopes or expectations for development.

To illustrate how the maps should be used, Mr. Lewan pointed to the parcel immediately west of the Highland Hills Mobile Home Community. It is shown as a vacant parcel, zoned for Manufactured Housing, and designated as a Mobile Home Community on the Future Land Use map. A few years ago, this parcel might have been considered as a transitional land. Recently, the Planning Commission approved the preliminary plan for an expansion of the Manufactured Housing Community. Had the Planning Commission previously determined that it was unlikely that the mobile home use would be developed or that a different future land use was more appropriate, the Future Land Use Map and the Zoning Map might have been changed. Then, when the current property owners brought forward a proposal for a park expansion, they would have faced a different approval process.

Mr. Lewan pointed out that some communities take the approach of first changing the Future Land Use Map, and then moving the Zoning Districts into compliance with the future land use plan to facilitate redevelopment. Others take the position of waiting for property owners to seek specific rezoning approvals. Ms. Corwin pointed out that the Township has used both approaches, such as when the Township recently initiated rezoning of the parcels in West Highland for the C-3, Low Impact Commercial Zoning District.

Mr. Lewan suggested that the Planning Commissioners each take time between meetings to consider the maps, and to identify areas that should be reviewed in more detail with the possibility of modifying the future land use plan. The future land use plan does not carry the weight of ordinance; but it does signal to a developer the likelihood of approval of any given land use. The future land use map is the tool used to build the community as desired.

Ms. Corwin pointed out some parcels that have been already affected by policy decisions such as recent rezonings, past consent judgments, or park land acquisitions. She also noted that there may be parcels or groupings of parcels not identified as transitional lands, but that should be considered for map changes.

Mr. Lewan noted that while this exercise is largely framed as a parcel by parcel review, the Planning Commissioners should also consider “areas” within the Township such as key intersections or limited corridors that may need a little more attention. For instance, there may be target zones that are not developing in a manner desired. Mr. Charlick asked if these target zones would primarily be commercial and industrial zones. Mr. Lewan pointed to South Milford Road as an example, where the zoning and land uses jump from residential to commercial to office in a short space. This might be acceptable to the Township; but might also be indicative of an area that would benefit from a more flexible approach.

Such an area might be perfect for a category such as “South Milford Road Corridor” which would outline key discussion points that guide redevelopment of the area. It might result in an overlay ordinance, with regulations about access management, architectural standards, or other considerations.

Mr. Lewan suggested that such special study areas could include incentives to encourage a larger parcel to provide sewer and water services to adjacent properties. Mr. Charlick noted that this approach might be useful in promoting redevelopment of Highland Station. Ms. Corwin touched on some of the studies and guidance documents that had been drafted to guide this area. Mr. Charlick was interested in the types of incentives that might be offered. Mr. Lewan noted some communities have offered density bonuses, relaxed landscaping, and relief from strict setbacks.

Mr. Charlick noted that the lack of sanitary sewer and public water supply impacts what land uses are feasible in the Township. While many residents do not want to see significant development, the lack of sewer and water will limit us to storage units and automobile dealerships. It becomes nearly impossible to offer new restaurants or some services to the community. Eventually, the commercial properties become derelict since there is little incentive for reinvestment because of land use limitations due to utilities. Ms. Corwin noted that broadband is another utility that should be considered.

Mr. Smith noted his experience as a long-time member of the Planning Commission. There is a fine line between encouraging new development and disincentivizing reutilization of existing buildings. He noted that the original plan in Highland Township called for businesses on one side of Milford Road, but residential on the other. It did not take long before it became apparent that no one wanted to live opposite of the commercial uses, which spread to the other side. Balancing the land uses is not an easy task and must be approached with careful consideration of the impacts on existing uses. Mr. Smith noted ill considered decisions of other communities, such as loop

roads that diver traffic away from existing businesses, or easy development of greenfields that create an abandonment of existing downtowns.

Mr. Smith noted that he is proud that Highland Township, thanks to careful planning practices from the past, provides for all manners of housing choices, and has protected the rural atmosphere while supporting local businesses. Highland Township has unique problems, such as having only two major north/south corridors. It is important we continue to plan in a manner that does not lead to traffic systems that come to a complete standstill during peak hours. He noted that Highland Township is one of the only remaining green spaces in the region, because we have protected the green corridor along Highland Road.

He noted that is difficult to do the hard work of planning when you can hardly engage the interest of the public unless there is a crisis.

Mrs. Lewis asked if there were trends in land use that should be considered, given the impacts of COVID on the way we work. Mr. Lewan thought it was too soon to tell if there will be long term impacts on trends. He is still reviewing development plans for significant office developments.

Mr. Charlick noted planners must also be aware that building codes, County Standards and state laws are becoming more restrictive, and that we cannot expect to develop neighborhoods that are similar to those in the past. He also predicted that sanitary sewers may be forced on the Township in the future. Mr. Smith noted that today's lakefront homes were only designed as seasonal cottages. The Commissioners discussed issues about maintenance of septic systems and the costs and barriers to developing a community wide system.

Mr. Lewan shared the link for the land use survey, through SoGoSurvey, and encouraged the Planning Commissioners to take the survey. Mr. Temple suggested the map should be changed out, since it was difficult to read. Options for distributing the survey were discussed and it was agreed that a hard copy of the survey would be mailed out to 25 percent of the residents, including a link where the resident could go directly online and respond to the survey there.

Mr. Lewan suggested that in his experience, it is unlikely that anyone would "stuff" the ballot box and skew the survey. He thought mailing out the survey to 25 percent of the homeowners would be sufficient, even if others shared the links to the survey.

Agenda Item #3: Committee Updates

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

Committee updates were discussed.

Agenda Item #4: Minutes: April 7, 2022

Mr. Tierney moved to approve the minutes of March 17, 2022, as presented. Mr. Temple supported the motion which passed by voice vote.

Mr. Tierney moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. The motion was supported by Mr. Curtis and passed by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

A.Roscoe Smith, Secretary
ARS/ejc