

The Richland Township Zoning Hearing Board met on October 26, 2023 at 7:15 p.m. as per the request of Joel B. Freidhoff of 1581 Solomon Run Rd, Richland Township, Johnstown, 15904 who requested a use variance to operate a machine shop on an R-2 zoned parcel. This hearing was conducted in the Richland Township meeting room, 322 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904.

Present:

Bill Patrick, Chairman	Alex Svirsko, Solicitor
Pat Wess, Vice-chairman	Tiffany Shomo, Secretary
Rodney Kniss	
PJ McGowan	
Mark Rychak	

Attorney Svirsko began the hearing by listing exhibits. Board Exhibit #1 was the appeal application with attachments. Board Exhibit #2 was the Richland Township Zoning Ordinance, by reference, and Board Exhibit #3 was the posting of the municipal building, the property involved, advertising in the Tribune-Democrat and notification of this hearing to adjoining property owners.

The following were sworn in by court stenographer Lori Behe:

Joel Freidhoff, owner/applicant
Shannon Wingard, realtor
Ron Kapscocks, resident
Harry Gawinske, employee
Walt Freidhoff, father

Applicant Joel Friedhoff of 151 Freidhoff Ln Johnstown PA 15902

Mr. Friedhoff has been running a machine shop for 42 years at 151 Friedhoff Lane address. His business is increasing. He is looking to purchase and operate the business at the ABC building on Solomon Run Rd. Because it has been over 365 days since the business operated, the property reverts back to a residential use. He would like to put a machine shop in there. He is currently working out of 5000 square feet.

Mr. Friedhoff runs a job shop. Whatever project comes in is what he does. He makes precision components on computerized equipment. There are some automated jobs. He has almost all new equipment. He will have two (2) production lines. He currently has one (1) production line now. With solar farms, business has tripled in the last few years. There will be no outside changes to the building, only interior renovations. Inside, there are two (2) loading docks. He will put one (1) dock plate there.

When Mr. Friedhoff was younger, the property was used for Max's Tire Service. They installed, repaired, and recapped tires. If approved, they will be removing the tire shelves as they are not tall enough for the forklifts. There will be a break room for employees. There are three (3) bathrooms in the building. He needs to have a full-size bathroom. There is a ladies room. He wants to add two (2) commodes, a couple of urinals, and a wash station. He feels that will be a quick change. The electrical is plentiful and installed at the right voltage. They do not use a lot of water. They will get loads of steel delivered every day that will be put inside right away. He will have a vertical saw and a bending machine.

Mr. Friedhoff gave the following examples of what he does in his shop: a line of muzzle loader accessories and sights, control boxes for the Israeli military, electrical boxes for drones, and fabrication for solar panels.

There will be free space in the warehouse.

Changes he is proposing in future years would include removing the house and lower section to add a new set of offices in the front.

Mr. Friedhoff requested to amend his application from a variance to a special exception.

The working hours and shifts would be from 5 am – 4 pm on Mondays through Saturdays. In the past, he had a second shift but that never really worked out. Because he will have a second line instead of a singular, he may try one 3 pm – 11 pm shift. Because he is a small business owner, he will stay sometimes until 10 pm at night for programming.

Mr. Friedhoff currently has seven (7) employees and will immediately hire four (4) more if approved for the special exception.

There will be no raw or finished material outside. He will have a lot of space so everything will be inside. It is bothersome to get steel from outside. Mr. Friedhoff will be receiving daily shipments of raw steel via a 40' open semitruck generally from 8 am – 11 am, sometimes in the afternoon, but never at night. Ship out is scheduled around 5:30 am to go to Erie. If that time were moved an hour, it would not be an issue. He explained the trucker tries to get to Erie and back to get unloaded at a customer within a certain amount of time. He reminded the board that they will be picking up in the back of the building and coming inside so there would be no noise outside. The 6 am truck does not have a backup alarm but the 8 am -11 am truck does.

Mr. Friedhoff stated that as for noises, fumes, and lighting, there are not many windows in the building. The machines do create heat and they drill a lot through the day. He stated that the doors are generally closed but he will open them if the temperature is right. There will be lights on all machines so people could possibly see some lights. He feels that no one is located close enough that noise would be bothersome. They do use compressed air. He explained that his super charger screw machine is not loud. He feels it could be running and they would still be able to have the hearing. There will be eight (8) machines drilling holes in steel within a few seconds. They can drill through a mile of steel each week. The closest person is across the parking lot and is blocked trees.

As for parking, Mr. Friedhoff said they will utilize the end parking lot for parking vehicles. There are two (2) loading docks, but they will only need one (1). The employees will park in the rear where the loading dock is. Mr. Friedhoff will park inside.

There will be no retail and no walk-in business done.

Mr. Friedhoff said they will have five (5) tons per week in scrap from shavings. The shavings will be kept inside for recycling. There is no chance of scraps blowing onto neighboring properties.

The 40-pound propane tank will be kept outside in a locker because it is flammable, and Mr. Friedhoff does not want to store it inside. The forklift will be used to take it inside when it is needed.

Mr. Friedhoff stated that they will have limited trash and only have one dumpster. Everything else will be kept in barrels on the inside.

Mr. Friedhoff confirmed that there will be no smoke or toxic fumes. He does the welding and is the only person certified for welding and he does not like to weld anymore. He welds only once or twice a month for no more than five minutes. His machines use soluble oils that are 90% oil. He uses high speed American made machines and uses the factory service people to service the machines when needed.

Mr. Friedhoff stated that there will be signage and it will meet township regulations.

The building is roughly 21,000 square foot situated on 2.3 acres of land. The majority of the lot is building.

Mr. Friedhoff made a down payment on the building that is refundable if the board does not approve his proposal.

Mr. Friedhoff stated that he may rent out the house that is connected to offset taxes.

The board took a recess from 8:17 PM – 8: 26 PM.

Ron Kapsco - 594 Solomon Run Rd - Resident

Mr. Kapsco inquired about how the loading and unloading area will function because the previous occupant used Solomon Run Road with forklifts. Mr. Friedhoff said the semi-trucks will enter the parking lot and not be on Solomon Run Road unloading with forklifts or trucks. The items will be unloaded in the gravel parking area and then they will access them through the garage door when the semi leaves. Everything on pallets will go through the loading docks. Mr. Friedhoff explained that 99.99% of his ordered fit on 40 x 48 pallets. Incoming 20' sticks of steel will be taken inside via a forklift. They will pick up steel, back up, turn all tires and go directly sideways to go straight into the building. They receive 4-5 bundles a day. Mr. Kapsco said the driveway is at the bottom end of the building and there is a pretty good hump in the road. From the front of the parking lot, he can't see cars from the Lowes direction. Mr. Kapsco explained that people travel Solomon Run Road at speeds of 50-60 mph and accidents could happen if they are not aware of what is going on.

Mr. Friedhoff thanked the board for their time.

Mr. McGowan motioned to grant the special exception/use variance to Mr. Friedhoff to operate a machine shop at 1581 Solomon Run Road. Seconded by Mr. Rychak. All in favor.

Mr. Kniss motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 pm. Seconded by Mr. McGowan. All in favor.

Sincerely,

T. Shomo

Tiffany Shomo