

The Richland Township Zoning Hearing Board met April 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. to hear the Appeal or Application of the Applicant, Christopher C. Miller for property located along Erickson Dr., Richland Township, Cambria County, Pennsylvania, Tax Map No. 50-014-150.001 which is zoned R-3 Two Family Residential under the Richland Township Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant requested a variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-44A(1) and Section 240-32A(9)(g), to allow the use of the vacant land to park/store a camper, but not to be used as a dwelling. This hearing was conducted in the Richland Township meeting room, 322 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown PA 15904.

Present:

Bill Patrick, chair

PJ McGowan, vice-chair

Rodeny Kniss

Dave Strushensky

Eber Verhovsek

Eric D Hochfeld, Solicitor

Tiffany Shomo, Secretary

Mr. Patrick began the hearing at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Hochfeld 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 via certified mail.

Court stenographer Lori Behe swore in the following:

1. Christopher Miller

Mr. Miller, the owner of the property located off Erickson Drive, explained that he currently resides on Plainfield Avenue in Ferndale but does not have sufficient space there to store his recreational vehicles. As a result, he keeps a truck bed camper and a tag-along camper on his approximately 46-acre property. He emphasized that he does not intend to live on this parcel and uses it solely for parking his campers. Mr. Patrick clarified during the discussion that the campers are considered accessory structures under applicable regulations. Mr. Miller noted that although he had explored purchasing a different property with more space, financial limitations prevented him from doing so.

Mr. Miller described the visibility of the campers, stating that they are located roughly 500 square feet from the road and are generally obscured by trees when foliage is present, though

they become more visible during the winter months when leaves have fallen. He also indicated that there is a small 4-foot by 4-foot hunting blind on the property, which he uses during hunting activities. He reiterated that he does not receive mail at the property, does not reside there, and has no intention of living in either the campers or the hunting structure.

Regarding utilities, Mr. Miller stated that electric service and a water pump are present on the property, though there is no natural gas service connected; however, a gas line does run through the parcel. He further explained that he does not use the campers for storage but keeps them connected to electricity to provide heat and prevent damage such as cracking. Mr. Miller has owned the property for approximately six years and acknowledged that while he intended to present a survey map at the meeting, he was unable to do so.

Mr. Miller stated that he periodically removes the campers from the property when he goes camping but returns them afterward. He confirmed that he owns both units, does not lease the property, and has no intention of allowing others to store campers or rent the land. He reiterated that his long-term goal is to construct a residence on the property if financially feasible.

He explained that at the time of purchase, he believed his intended use of the property would be permitted, noting that he did not consult the township and relied on statements from his realtor indicating he could use the land as he wished. His original intent was to build a home; however, the cost of development, particularly the installation of utilities, proved prohibitive. He described the cost of extending a sewer line—estimated at approximately \$150 per foot for roughly 300 feet from the main line near Eisenhower—as unexpectedly high and a significant barrier to construction.

Mr. Miller indicated that the campers have been on the property for approximately three years and reiterated that he currently has no plans to add additional units. He also addressed a complaint received by the Township regarding alleged blasting and illegal mining activity, noting that Mr. Bryan Beppler investigated the site, observed the campers, and informed him that their presence was not permitted. Mr. Beppler subsequently advised him to file an appeal with the Zoning Hearing Board.

In closing, Mr. Miller reaffirmed that his primary objective remains the eventual construction of a home on the property, though financial challenges persist. He added that he regularly spends time on the land engaging in outdoor activities, including maintaining a garden and utilizing the wooded area, reflecting his interest as an avid outdoorsman.

There were no comments from the township.

Mr. Miller further stated that the nearest residence to his property is approximately 300 to 400 yards away. He explained that from the location where the campers are parked, the neighboring house is only faintly visible. He reiterated that the campers are situated approximately 500 feet from Erickson Drive along a straight stretch of roadway measuring about three-quarters of a mile in length.

Using his cell phone, Mr. Miller presented an overhead map to illustrate the campers' location. He indicated that, based on the "onX Maps" application, the campers are positioned roughly 400 feet from the intersection of Eisenhower Boulevard and Erickson Drive. Upon review of the map during the meeting, Mr. Miller confirmed that this measurement accurately reflects the campers' placement on the property.

Mr. Miller also clarified that he is not operating any type of business from the property. However, he acknowledged that he does occasionally deposit wood chips on the land for personal use.

The board took a recess from 7:39 pm until 7:58 pm.

Mr. Miller had no further comments.

Mr. Hochfeld explained that a site plan is required, especially because the Board still had questions about where the campers are located in relation to Eisenhower Boulevard and Erickson Drive. The Board said they would like to visit the property to see the layout in person. Because of this, the hearing would need to be continued. Mr. Miller said he was okay with that and requested a continuance so the Board could meet at the property at 5:00 p.m., then reconvene at the Richland Township Building at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. McGowan made a motion to continue the hearing on behalf of Mr. Miller to view the site on April 27, 2026 at 5:00 pm, followed by a continuance hearing at 6:00 pm. Seconded by Mr. Verhovsek.

Mr. Miller will have the gate unlocked. A letter will be sent to the applicant.

Respectfully submitted,

T. Shomo

Tiffany Shomo
Secretary