

The Richland Township Zoning Hearing Board met May 19, 2026, at 6:45 p.m. to hear the Appeal or Application of the Applicant, Precision Works Unlimited, LLC, by Larry Kestermont, for property located at 1727 Scalp Avenue, Richland Township, Cambria County, Pennsylvania, which is zoned C-2 General Commercial District under the Richland Township Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant requested:

1. An 11,373.7 square foot lot area variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.A to subdivide an existing lot into two lots, one of those lots, Lot No. 1, being 8,626,3 square feet in size.
2. An 11-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(a) for Lot No.1.
3. A 21.5-foot rear yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(c) for Lot No.1.
4. A 36.8-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(a) for the dwelling on the Residue Lot.
5. A 46.6-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(a) for the garage on the Residue Lot.
6. A 26.6-foot frontage variance from Richland Township Subdivision and Land Development Regulations of 1996 Section 215-23 for the Residue Lot.

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 6:45 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 Ashley Hamilton swore in the following:

1. Jason Mash
2. Larry Kestermont

Mr. Mash explained that the property is a nonconforming lot located in the C-2 Zoning District. It is a mixed-use property consisting of a former gas station in the front and a residence in the rear. He stated that Mr. Kestermont's goal is to improve the property by separating the residential and commercial uses onto individual lots.

Mr. Kestermont stated that he does not reside in the rear dwelling and intends to offer it for rent. The residence is not currently rented. He also plans to rent the garage separately from the dwelling. As part of the proposed subdivision, he wants to separate the parking areas for the residential and commercial properties. Once the property line is established, he is considering installing a split-rail fence to provide a visible division between the two uses. There is an existing curb cut extending across the entire frontage of the property.

Mr. Mash explained that the first variance request is necessary because the proposed subdivision would leave Lot 1 with approximately 8,626 square feet, which is below the required minimum lot size. Currently, Lot 1 and the residue are one parcel containing both the former gas station and the residence.

Mr. Kestermont stated that he is currently looking to rent both properties rather than sell them. He explained that he wants to divide the property so that future commercial tenants cannot block access to the residence in the rear. His intent is to ensure there will always be access to the dwelling.

Mr. Kestermont was asked what prevented him from simply installing a split-rail fence or recording an easement or deed restriction to preserve access to the residence. He responded that those options are possible but would not provide the same flexibility should he decide to sell the properties separately in the future.

Mr. Kestermont further stated that he has no plans to construct any new buildings or other improvements at this time.

Discussion followed regarding access to the property. It was noted that the access between the laundromat and the subject property is owned by Berwind. The access strip is privately owned and is approximately 13 to 14 feet wide. Mr. Mash presented the subdivision plan and identified the strip of land along the northern boundary of the subject property. He explained that access to the dwelling would continue through the existing property.

The subject property contains approximately 2.6 acres. Under the proposed subdivision, the residue parcel would contain approximately 2.4 acres, while Lot 1 would consist of approximately 8,626 square feet.

When asked why Lot 1 was being configured in its proposed shape, Mr. Mash explained that there was no practical way to divide the property while keeping the residence, garage, and former gas station

functional, maintaining access to Scalp Avenue, avoiding a landlocked parcel, and keeping the garage with the dwelling. He stated that the proposed layout represented the best solution. Currently, the entire site functions as one large parking area, with access to the residence provided through the former gas station parking lot. The goal of the subdivision is to place the residence and garage on one parcel, the commercial property on a separate parcel, and maintain legal access to the residence without creating a landlocked lot.

Mr. Kestermont was asked whether any improvements were proposed for the dwelling or garages. He stated that no significant improvements are planned, although the small garage located behind the larger garage is in need of a new roof.

The Board recessed from 7:14 p.m. until 7:39 p.m.

Following the recess, Mr. Patrick asked whether there were any hardships associated with the property that necessitated the requested relief. Mr. Kestermont responded that if the property were subdivided and he later found he could no longer afford to maintain it, he would have the option to sell it separately. Mr. Patrick also asked whether there were any unique physical characteristics of the property that created a hardship. Mr. Kestermont replied that there were none.

There were no members of the public present.

Mr. Strushensky made a motion to deny a 11,373.7 square foot lot area variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.A to subdivide an existing lot into two lots, one of those lots, Lot No. 1, being 8,626.3 square feet in size. Seconded by Mr. Verhovsek. All in favor.

Mr. Hochfeld stated that an 11-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(a) for Lot No.1. is not necessary due to the garage being existing.

Mr. Strushensky made a motion to deny the 21.5-foot rear yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(c) for Lot No.1. Seconded by Mr. Verhovsek. All in favor.

Mr. Strushensky made a motion to deny a 36.8-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(a) for the dwelling on the Residue Lot. Seconded by Mr. Verhovsek. All in favor.

Mr. Strushensky made a motion to deny a 46.6-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-63.C(1)(a) for the garage on the Residue Lot. Seconded by Mr. Verhovsek. All in favor.

Mr. Strushensky made a motion to deny a 26.6-foot frontage variance from Richland Township Subdivision and Land Development Regulations of 1996 Section 215-23 for the Residue Lot. Seconded by Mr. Verhovsek. All in favor.

Mr. Hochfeld stated that the Board would issue its Findings of Fact and written decision within 45 days of the date of the hearing. He further advised that any appeal of the Board's decision must be filed within 30 days.

There being no further business, Mr. Verhovsek made a motion to adjourn the hearing at 7:44 pm. Seconded by Mr. Kniss. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

T. Shomo

Tiffany Shomo