

The Richland Township Zoning Hearing Board met May 19, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. to hear the Appeal or Application of the Applicant, John and Linda Petro for property located at 1731 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. A special exception pursuant to Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-22B, to extend or enlarge the nonconforming use as a residence to construct a garage as an accessory use to the existing residence. 2. A 29-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance. Section 240-63.C(1)(a) to construct a garage. This hearing was conducted in the Richland Township meeting room, 322 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown PA 15904.

Present:

Bill Patrick, chair

PJ McGowan, vice-chair

Rodney Kniss

Dave Strushensky

Eber Verhovsek

Eric D Hochfeld, Solicitor

Tiffany Shomo, Secretary

Mr. Patrick began the hearing at 6:17 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. Randy Cortese
2. John Petro
3. Linda Petro

Mr. Cortese stated that the applicants own two lots on Scalp Avenue that were merged into a single parcel. He explained that the property is located within a strip of four homes that have existed since the 1960s and is zoned C-2 Commercial. The lot merger was approved on April 23, 2026.

Mr. Petro testified that a garage existed beneath the house when they purchased the property in 1984. Mr. Cortese explained that the existing garage is very small and is not practical for today's vehicle sizes or current standards. He stated that the residence has an estimated front yard setback of approximately 7 feet, while the proposed detached garage would have a front yard setback of 30 feet at its closest corner and 32 feet at its farthest corner, as the structure angles away from Scalp Avenue. The requested variance is for a 20-foot front yard setback, including the roof overhang.

Mr. Cortese testified that the proposed one-story garage will measure 24 feet by 27 feet, including the roof overhangs, for a total area just under the maximum permitted accessory structure size of 650 square feet. The subject property contains approximately 26,622 square feet. He further stated that the garage will be 14 feet in height with 10-foot walls and will serve as an accessory structure to the existing residence.

Mr. Cortese and Mr. Petro both testified that no utilities will be installed in the garage, including electric service. Mr. Petro explained that the existing driveway access was retained, the site was cleared for construction, and the replacement garage was designed to be larger than the previous one. The garage will be used solely for the storage of vehicles, lawn equipment, and other personal property and will not be rented or used for commercial purposes.

The applicants noted that the homes along this section of Scalp Avenue historically had steps leading to the roadway, where vehicles were parked. Mr. Petro further testified that the property had been used as a residence prior to their purchase in 1984.

There were no further questions from the Board and no comments from the Township. Although members of the public were present in the audience, none were in attendance regarding this application.

Mr. McGowan made a motion to approve a special exception pursuant to Richland Township Zoning Ordinance Section 240-22B, to extend or enlarge the nonconforming use as a residence to construct a garage as an accessory use to the existing residence. Seconded by Mr. Strushensky. All in favor.

The initial advertisement requested a 29' setback. The application has been amended to 20'.

Mr. McGowan made a motion to approve a 20-foot front yard setback variance from Richland Township Zoning Ordinance. Section 240-63.C(1)(a) to construct a garage. Seconded by Mr. Kniss. All in favor.

Mr. Verhovsek made a motion to adjourn the hearing at 6:32 pm. Seconded by Mr. Strushensky. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

*T. Shomo*

Tiffany Shomo, Secretary