

The Richland Township Zoning Hearing Board met July 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. to hear the Appeal or Application of the Applicant, Raimunda Madalena Do Nascimento Silva, for the subject property located at 119 Kiawa Street, Richland Township, Cambria County, Pennsylvania, which is zoned R-2 Two- Family Residential District under the Richland Township Zoning Ordinance. The Applicant requested a special exception to use the subject property as a short term rental property. This hearing was conducted in the Richland Township meeting room, 322 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown PA 15904.

Present:

Bill Patrick, chair

PJ McGowan, vice-chair

Dave Strushensky

Eber Verhovsek

Mark Kishlock

Eric D Hochfeld, Solicitor

Tiffany Shomo, Secretary

Mr. Patrick began the hearing at 6:03 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. Raimunda Madalena Do Nascimento Silva
2. Kathy Jones
3. Wendy Hilbrecht

Ms. Silva stated that she currently owns the property located at 119 Kiawa Street and lives at another property approximately five minutes away. She explained that she has a daughter with special needs and would like to generate some income from the property. Ms. Silva acknowledged that the neighborhood is primarily a family-oriented street but would like to operate the property as a short-term Airbnb rental for individuals visiting the Johnstown area. She stated that she does not want the property used for parties and intends to limit the number of occupants. The home has two bedrooms, and she indicated that the maximum occupancy would be two people. She emphasized that she wants to maintain a quiet property with limited guests and no parties.

Mr. McGowan expressed concern that it could be easy for more than two people to occupy the property and asked how the occupancy limit would be monitored or enforced. Ms. Silva stated that the permitted number of occupants would be clearly stated in the rental listing and that she would have cameras outside the property to monitor activity. Ms. Silva noted that she previously lived at the property for

approximately five or six years and did not have any problems with the neighbors. She stated that she wants to maintain the quiet nature of the street. Ms. Silva also stated that pets would not be permitted at the property.

Mr. Kishlock asked about property maintenance. Ms. Silva stated that she would clean the property between tenants and make sure the home is maintained and kept in good condition. She noted that she does not want the property damaged.

Mr. Verhovsek asked whether Ms. Silva currently works with or has previously operated an Airbnb. Ms. Silva stated that she has previously been responsible for Airbnbs.

Mr. Hochfeld asked how prospective renters would become aware that the property was available and whether rentals would be handled through Airbnb. Ms. Silva stated that the property would be listed through the Airbnb application. Mr. Hochfeld then asked how long a person could rent the property. Ms. Silva stated that guests could rent the property for as long as it remained available and they were able to pay for the rental. She explained that the property could be rented for a day, a few days, a week, or potentially several months if it remained available. Ms. Silva stated that she would be responsible for cleaning the property and preparing it for each guest.

Mr. McGowan asked whether guests would have to renew their rental each week or whether they could rent the property for an entire month. Ms. Silva stated that guests could rent the property for the period it was available. If the property were available for the entire month, a guest could rent it for the month. Ms. Silva stated that she does not intend to offer traditional yearly rentals outside of Airbnb, explaining that she does not know many people who would be interested in renting the property for that length of time.

Mr. Hochfeld asked whether Ms. Silva would be staying at the property while it was rented. Ms. Silva stated that she would not stay at the property while guests were occupying it but would be at the property between customers to clean and prepare it. She also stated that she would monitor the property using an exterior camera.

Ms. Silva stated that she would not provide meals to guests. Guests would be able to prepare their own meals in the home if they chose to do so.

Ms. Silva explained that she is working through Airbnb to rent the property. Mr. Strushensky asked whether Airbnb inspects the property. Ms. Silva stated that Airbnb reviews the photographs and documentation and that, when initially establishing the listing, Airbnb would check the required documentation and the city license. Ms. Silva stated that she has applied through Airbnb for the property at 119 Kiawa Street. After submitting the requested information, Airbnb asked her to provide documentation from the Township confirming that the proposed use is permitted.

Mr. Kishlock asked whether the home is fully furnished. Ms. Silva stated that she left everything in the home when she moved in November and that the property is fully furnished.

Mr. Hochfeld asked how close Ms. Silva lives to the property. Ms. Silva stated that she lives approximately five minutes away.

Ms. Hilbrecht, a resident of 115 Kiawa Street, asked Ms. Silva what she intended to do with the property if she was not permitted to operate an Airbnb. Ms. Silva stated that she would attempt to rent the property. Ms. Hilbrecht asked whether potential renters would be screened and whether there would be any way to prevent the property from being used as Section 8 housing. Ms. Silva stated that she could not control who would ultimately rent the property but would make every effort to manage the situation appropriately.

Ms. Hilbrecht expressed concern about Section 8 housing in the neighborhood and stated that she did not want to live next door to a Section 8 rental. She noted that other residents shared similar concerns but were unable to attend the hearing. Ms. Silva stated that she understood the concern and wanted to keep the neighbors happy. Ms. Hilbrecht suggested that a property manager could be used to obtain references from prospective renters. She clarified that she was not opposed to an Airbnb but wanted to understand what would happen with the property if the Airbnb proposal was not approved. She also expressed concern that an Airbnb could result in a continuous turnover of occupants.

Ms. Hilbrecht noted that the property above 119 Kiawa Street is also a rental and stated that the occupants have changed recently, from an elderly couple who had lived there for at least 20 years to a new couple with children. She stated that the rental had not caused problems. Ms. Hilbrecht added that she lives in her grandmother's house and has always lived in the neighborhood.

Ms. Kathy Jones, who stated that she has lived at 107 Kiawa Street for 23 years, asked about the proposed occupancy limit for the property. Ms. Jones referenced a property she had recently rented where an occupant load was posted and the number of people staying in the home had to be disclosed. Ms. Jones expressed concern about the property's large yard potentially being used for parties, including graduation parties or similar events. She stated that she wanted to know what controls would be in place to prevent such activity. Mr. Hochfeld explained that the restrictions and occupancy limitations would be based on how the property is presented and advertised on Airbnb.

Mr. Hochfeld stated that Section 8 housing is typically associated with long-term rentals rather than transient accommodations and that other licenses may be required by the state for such uses. He clarified that the request before the Board was specifically for short-term rental use. Ms. Silva reiterated that her intention is to operate the property as a short-term rental and not as a long-term rental.

There were no questions from the Township. There were no further questions from the Board.

The board took a recess from 6:31 pm – 7:02 pm.

Mr. McGowan made a motion to deny the request for a special exception to use the subject property, located at 119 Kiawa St., as a short term rental property. Seconded by Mr. Strushensky. All in favor. Motion carried.

Mr. Hochfeld stated that there will be written Findings of Facts and it will advise that Ms. Silva will have 30 days to appeal the decision. This is a requirement of PA law. Mr. Hochfeld stated that this appeal would have to be made to Court of Common Pleas in Cambria County.

Mr. Verhovsek made a motion to adjourn the hearing at 7:04 pm. Seconded by Mr. Kishlock. All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

*T. Shomo*

Tiffany Shomo, Secretary