

SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
REGULAR MEETING
November 14, 2018

Call to Order: Vice-Chairperson Whitley called the November 14, 2018 Zoning Board of Appeals meeting to order at 7:30 pm at the Springfield Township Civic Center, 12000 Davisburg Road, Davisburg, MI 48350.

In attendance: Bill Whitley
 Ginny Fischbach
 Denny Vallad
 Matt Underwood

Absent: Skip Wendt
 Dean Baker

AGENDA:

Board member Fischbach moved to approve the agenda as presented. Supported by Board member Underwood. Vote yes: Fischbach, Underwood, Vallad, Whitley. Vote no: None. Absent: Baker, Wendt. Motion approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Board member Underwood moved to approve the minutes of the October 17, 2018 meeting as presented. Supported by Board member Vallad. Vote yes: Fischbach, Underwood, Vallad, Whitley. Vote no: None. Absent: Baker, Wendt. Motion approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Request from Trista Baker/Allen Industries, 28054 Center Oaks Ct., Wixom, MI 48393 for a variance to install building signage in the amount of three hundred thirty-nine (339) square feet rather than the one-hundred (100) feet required per Springfield Township Code of Ordinances, Chapter 40, Section 40-751.

The property that is the subject of the request is located at 8665 Dixie Highway in Springfield Township and is zoned C-2 General Business. P.I.#07-24-101-005.

Ms. Trista Baker, Allen Industries, introduced herself and John Balice, General RV, to the Board members. She summarized the request. There is a special circumstance with General RV's property abutting I-75 and having only one identifying sign on their building. The approximate distance from the property line to the building is a little over 800 feet.

Mr. Balice stated that the viewing distance from the building to the expressway is approximately 1000 to 1200 feet. This is a unique circumstance because most businesses in Springfield do not have a need to communicate with an audience at this distance. It is crucial for them to facilitate the flow of traffic to their facility. Many of the customers will be traveling I-75 regularly and they associate themselves with I-75 as a location. They feel the addition of the sign will reduce confusion for the customers so they can navigate to their facility effectively.

Board member Fischbach asked if the proposed sign was on the roof or on the building.

Ms. Baker confirmed that the proposed sign is on the building itself, below the roof line.

Board member Whitley asked about the illumination plan the sign since they are lighted letters.

Ms. Baker replied that they will contain Sloan prism LED's. They are currently working on a photometric plan to show exactly the effect of this sign. They are standard white LED's with red letter face that will shine red at night. They can put the lights on a timer so if there is a designated illumination time period, they could observe that.

Board member Whitley asked what is going to be done for lighting cut off so that light does not go beyond the intended target.

Ms. Baker replied that the photometric plan will show this. If it is going to shine too far or too bright, they could use a dimmer. They can reduce it to a lighting level that is acceptable.

Board member Whitley suggested being able to add a border and making it a square light instead of a hemisphere. He asked if there was a plan to control the area beyond the building.

Ms. Baker replied that she is not sure.

Mr. Balice answered that this was not part of the plan. He added that the south of the church parking lot is parallel to the side of the building and the lighting is front lit, not side lit. The trees on the other side of the property between the condo area and the building would be the obstruction on this side.

Board member Whitley commented that if someone was using this sign to be guided, by the time they see it, they have missed the exit. He asked how they can reconcile that.

Mr. Balice replied that he doesn't think of it as a literal directional. They want awareness from everyone in the area as to where the building is. It doesn't work as a "right now" directional, and that isn't the way they are thinking of it.

Board member Underwood asked about the additional lettering below the sketch of the proposed sign.

Ms. Baker stated that this was used as a representation of the 60 inches proposed versus the 32-inch letters showing the 100 square feet allowed. It is a visual that they used to determine that 60 inches is the visibility that they need.

Board member Whitley summarized that it is comparing the legibility of what is compliant with the ordinance and what they are requesting.

Board member Fischbach asked if they had a picture of the 50-inch letters that they considered.

Ms. Baker replied that they did not include it. After they went through all the scenarios, the proposed is what was determined to have the visibility needed.

Board member Vallad asked for a brief description of how they came to this conclusion.

Mr. Balice stated that they have 42-inch letters on their building in Wixom, so they went across the expressway at the exact same distance that the proposed sign would be from the expressway and took photos to determine that those 42-inch letters were not enough. They went from that point and built out their request based on that perspective.

Board member Vallad asked if the Wixom sign was lit.

Mr. Balice replied yes. They looked at it when it was lit.

Board member Whitley asked how much signage is on the Dixie Highway side of the property.

Mr. Balice answered that there is no wall signage on Dixie Highway side.

Ms. Baker added that there is an approved double-sided monument sign on Dixie Highway side.

Supervisor Walls added that they are also allowed a certain amount of window signage but it would not be part of the allowed building signage.

Board member Fischbach stated that the applicant is suggesting that they are different, so they need the extra signage. But every other business facing Dixie Highway has 100 square feet and this applicant is allowed the same. She understands why they want to have a sign that you can see from I-75, but she is not sure it would meet the criteria that they are different from everyone else in the district.

Board member Whitley agrees with the perspective that there is nothing peculiar about the Dixie frontage. What is peculiar is that it does have visibility from I-75, it is an inverse peculiarity in that it does have visibility from I-75 whereas other businesses do not.

Mr. Balice replied that this was their feeling. They do have visibility and not many others do.

Board member Whitley stated that his opinion is actually 180 degrees from what Mr. Balice articulated. From a peculiarity that would warrant consideration of a variance, what is different that creates a hardship, and, in this case, the peculiarity is inverse of that because very few businesses would have that visibility from I-75.

Ms. Baker replied that they have the property abutting to I-75 and they want to utilize the building signage with the best visible area. The peculiarity is that there is such a great distance between their building and the end of the property line. The distance is what makes the difference here.

Board member Fischbach suggested that they could put a ground sign much closer to the highway. This is an option.

Board member Whitley confirmed that this is an alternative.

Board member Fischbach asked the applicant if they looked at this.

Mr. Balice replied no.

Board member Whitley replied that he is troubled by a variance request that is multiples of what is allowed by ordinance. He understands that this needs to go in front of the Planning Commission review because of the lighting. There is a sequence issue here.

Supervisor Walls clarified that the applicant is going to the Planning Commission because they did not show the signage on their site plan. The signage in its totality needs to go in front of the Commission.

Board member Vallad asked how tall the wall is.

Ms. Baker replied 24 feet tall.

Board member Fischbach asked if they looked to see if the top is high enough to avoid anything blocking the view. The picture shows a barn in between the expressway and the building; if the barn was bigger that could be a problem.

Mr. Balice replied that yes, that would be a problem.

Board member Fischbach replied that this is why the ground sign would be a better idea. She stated that she would have a hard time approving this request unless they have at least explored a ground sign to see if they could get it done with a lot less of a variance than this is asking for. If the sign is by the highway, the lighting is not such a big issue for the neighbors.

Board member Vallad asked if they had shared any of this with the church.

Mr. Balice replied no.

Board member Vallad asked if they had intent to turn off the sign if they had evening services, etc. at the church's request.

Mr. Balice replied they could. The back of the church's parking lot is directly aligned with that face of the building so he doesn't think it would impact them.

Board member Fischbach asked if the trees that protect Blue Water condos were deciduous trees or evergreens.

Mr. Balice replied that there is a mixture of both.

Board member Fischbach replied that the protection is not as great in the winter which is a longer time period that it is dark and the lights are on. She reiterated that she could not approve it as it stands today but she is willing to table it to allow the applicant to look at ground sign and a building sign facing Dixie Highway.

Board member Vallad asked if they considered 50-inch letters. He doesn't know what kind of difference that would make but it would reduce the variance request.

Mr. Balice asked if he wanted more information on these different sizes.

Board member Vallad replied that this is information he would like to see.

Board member Fischbach commented that she would like to see something in between 32 inch and 60 inch letters.

Board member Underwood agreed with tabling it for more information.

Board member Fischbach moved to table the request for larger signage from property at 8665 Dixie Highway, Parcel ID 07-24-101-005, for one month, or the next earliest meeting, in order to get more definition on letter sizes and visibility of letter sizes and other alternatives to signage on the building or on the ground. Supported by Board member Underwood. Vote yes: Fischbach, Underwood, Vallad, Whitley. Vote no: None. Absent: Baker, Wendt. Motion approved.

2. 2019 Meeting Dates and Election of Officers

Board member Whitley moved to postpone Election of Officers and 2019 Meeting Dates until the December 19, 2018 meeting. Supported by Board member Vallad. Vote yes: Fischbach, Underwood, Vallad, Whitley. Vote no: None. Absent: Baker, Wendt. Motion approved.

ADJOURNMENT:

Board member Fischbach moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm. Supported by Board member Vallad. Vote yes: Fischbach, Underwood, Vallad, Whitley. Vote no: None. Absent: Baker, Wendt. Motion approved.

Erin Mattice, Recording Secretary