

Board of Zoning Appeals

March 14, 2013

Members present: Doug Warren, Vice-Chairman; David Russell, Secretary; Sharon Rooney.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Mr. Warren. The members were introduced and the rules of the proceedings were explained.

Case # 50307-BA-13, 1700 E. Sandusky Street, was reviewed by Todd Richard, Zoning/Floodplain Administrator:

Filed by Hancock County Board Of Developmental Disabilities on behalf of the Hancock County Commissioners. The applicant is seeking a variance from sections 1161.12.13A5 and 1161.12.13A6 of the City of Findlay Zoning Ordinance. The applicant has proposed to replace the current sign face with an electronic message center. This sign type will be within 300 feet of a residential district, which is prohibited. This property is zoned R-1, single family residential and type of sign is prohibited.

Electronic message centers flash, blink, and can have animation. This type of sign is only permitted in the commercial and industrial zones for good reason. Since the code prescribes a 300 foot separation from a residential district, this should tell us they are not appropriate within a residential district.

The applicant is limited to replacing the face with the present type, or they could have an LED message board that is fixed and constant for at least two hours at a time. Several business have chosen the fixed message LED method to advertise their product.

A hardship in this case is not evident and granting the variance would set a precedent for other entities in residential districts to expect the same consideration.

Mr. Greg Wehr, business manager for the Hancock County Board of Developmental Disabilities at 1700 E. Sandusky Street, was sworn in to testify in favor of the request. Mr. Wehr said they want the sign to better educate the public about their students and how they can be recognized. They want to acknowledge the successes of the students and the businesses that employ them. The taxpayers deserve the right to know what the center does.

They have the ability to dim and turn off the sign at certain times of the day. Most of the property around the center is part of the campus.

Mr. Russell asked the applicant why a scrolling message center was necessary. Mr. Wehr replied that it is labor intensive to change the sign board every day. Mr. Russell's point was that a fixed message LED would achieve the same thing they have now, but the message would stay the same for a long period of time and no variance would be needed.

There was discussion regarding the ability of the motorists to view the whole message. Mrs. Rooney thinks these signs are a traffic hazard and having the message fixed would be more effective and safe since it is a busy area.

There was no other testimony or correspondence presented.

Mr. Warren did not see any special circumstances to grant this variance. He also did not believe this was in harmony with the locality. The new zoning code takes a lot of care in assuring there is no impact to neighboring residential areas. Finally, he believes there are alternatives. He is sensitive to the request, however, the conditions for the sign need to be met.

Mr. Russell added that a fixed message LED would be the most appropriate. The whole message could be viewed rather than part of it.

Mr. Warren made a motion to deny the request based of the three factors he stated earlier.

The motion was seconded by Mrs. Rooney.

A voice vote was taken and the motion to deny the request was approved 3-0.

The minutes from the February 14, 2013 meeting were reviewed. Mrs. Rooney made a motion to approve those minutes and Mr. Russell seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the February 14, 2013 minutes were approved 3-0.

Mr. Russell made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mrs. Rooney. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:35 p.m.



Acting Chairman



Secretary