

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
CITY OF WIXOM
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2009 – 7:30 PM**

Chairman Day called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

The Pledge to the Flag was given.

PRESENT:

William Day, Chairman
Kurt Gottschall
Jim Crowley
Nick Kennedy
Cory Lupinacci

CITY STAFF:

John R. Lipchik, Building Official

RECORDING SECRETARY:

Jennifer Garrett

ABSENT:

Phillip Carter (excused)
James Maher (unexcused)
Guy York (unexcused)
William Henning (excused)

There being a quorum, the meeting was declared in session.

CHANGES OR ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:

There were no changes or additions made to tonight's agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Planning Commission Meeting – October 5, 2009

MOTION and second by Mr. Lupinacci and Mr. Gottschall to accept the October 5, 2009 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes as submitted.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Chairman Day asked if there was anyone from the public that would like to address the commission at this time. There being no comments from the public, the Call to the Public was closed at 7:36 pm.

CONSENT AGENDA:

There were no items listed under the Consent Agenda for this meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

WAIVER REQUEST #09-006: MARVIN POOTA, 31331 WIXOM ROAD, WIXOM, MI

48393: The applicant has received Zoning Board of Appeals approval to construct a ground sign. The approval was conditioned upon Planning Commission review and approval of the proposed sign design. The property is located at 49342-438 Pontiac Trail and zoned VCA, Village Center Area. The tax parcel number is 17-31-478-006.

Richard Walters, The Sign People, 50204 Dennis Court, Wixom, MI 48393 was present.

Chairman Day told him we have your submission and asked if he had anything to add to what has been submitted here.

Mr. Walters stated that he didn't think so and thinks we have it covered. The one question we had not settled on was the exact placement setback-wise, but it will be in compliance with the ordinance.

Chairman Day stated with regard to the size of the sign he was trying to figure out what the dimensions are of the actual sign itself.

Mr. Walters advised it is a 4'x10' which is 40 square feet.

Chairman Day asked if that includes the portion up at the top, and Mr. Walters replied that it does not include the little part on top. He thinks that portion is 18 x 72 and is a triangle

Chairman Day commented that really would not be in compliance with the ZBA approval from his reading of it because it advertises.

Mr. Walters stated it is naming the mall.

Chairman Day said right and so that to him is part of the advertisement part of the ground sign and would not meet with the ZBA approval. He told Mr. Walters he sees that he has materials (powder-coated aluminum cabinet) and then asked how the letters are going to be done.

Mr. Walters answered that it is plastic and vinyl graphics.

Chairman Day then asked how the vinyl graphic is applied, and Mr. Walters stated it is adhesive.

Chairman Day stated that to him this is totally out of character with what we are trying to accomplish in the VCA. Powder-coated aluminum as a material he doesn't think is consistent with the design characteristics that we are trying to achieve in the VCA nor is this type of lettering. That is his opinion and he would like to hear what the other commissioners feel.

Mr. Lupinacci asked Mr. Walters if he could please tell us the total height of this sign.

Mr. Walters replied that he did not bring a drawing with him but he believes we were limited to six foot in height on the sign, and that is where we are at.

Mr. Lupinacci remarked that according to the drawing that came attached to our meeting notes it exceeds that.

Mr. Walters told him no the sign is at six feet.

Mr. Gottschall asked where he was seeing that, and Mr. Lupinacci replied right here. Six feet is to here.

Mr. Gottschall stated it does show 90 inches, and Mr. Kennedy added that it is the additional 18 inches of the triangle on top.

Mr. Walters then said okay.

Mr. Lupinacci commented so that does appear to be 90 inches rather than 72 inches. He said he had another question and was not sure if it was for Mr. Lipchik or for Mr. Walters. According to the City sign ordinance, the requirement is that "signs shall be designed so that the supporting frame work is contained within or behind the face of the sign or within the building to which it is attached so it is totally screened from view" whereas the design we are looking at has brick pillars that appear to serve as the supporting frame work. He was wondering if this is then consistent with that ordinance element which is Section 18.16.040.

Mr. Lipchik stated as you may or may not recall at our last meeting Mr. Avantini said if the element looked like an improvement in the VCA which does have brick pillars etc. that between that and the overall size you have the right to grant waivers. If you like what you see and if you think it is fitting in the VCA then you have the opportunity to go ahead and approve that. He believes that a portion of the sign ordinance in the VCA also does speak to metal and that metal can be used as a sign. It doesn't exactly say powder-coated aluminum however, but it does say metal.

Chairman Day stated if they wanted to make a wrought iron sign with wrought iron lettering he would think that would be fine and would fit with the character of the VCA, but to him this just is not. He likes the pillars himself and has no problem with them. He doesn't like the powder-coated aluminum sign and doesn't think it is in character, and he doesn't like the light bars that he doesn't think are in character or attractive. He noticed they are suspiciously absent from the photo shop.

Mr. Lupinacci thought that was actually done to respond to a suggestion from Mr. Avantini.

Chairman Day stated Mr. Avantini suggested that lighting come from the ground rather than from the top of the pillars, which he agrees with, but he thinks, that could be accomplished with some freestanding spotlights.

Mr. Walters said oh no, no, no; and Chairman Day replied that he disagreed with him.

Mr. Walters stated you can disagree with me all you want but you are not an expert in this field. He said all you are giving me is your unfounded opinion, which is all well and good because that is what you are here for.

Chairman Day tried to speak, but Mr. Walters interrupted saying don't argue with me because you are not going to like it.

Chairman Day told him he was not going to argue with him and that he is not here to argue. He said he was offering his opinion.

Mr. Walters stated you are not offering anything and at this point Mr. Kennedy asked if the police should be called.

Mr. Walters stated you are offering unfounded unsubstantiated opinions without even asking, to say okay let's see why we are using a light bar.

Chairman Day asked why he wants to use the light bar.

Mr. Walters replied the reason you want to use a light bar is because you want to have consistent lighting addressing the entire sign. If we use spot lighting it gives you hot spots. Look at many of the buildings you have done there like where the phone place is there) with the gooseneck lighting which does not do a darn good job at all in lighting up that sign. Why is this? Because they don't design gooseneck lighting properly to light up signs because they don't pay attention to the principals of lighting. Now, a light bar will light up that sign a lot better so that people can read it; so it will be readable at night; so it will be safe; so people can make decisions with regards to driving their vehicles and being able to read and identify something and make the appropriate moves in the appropriate amount of time.

When Chairman Day stated he was not here to discuss the principals of lighting Mr. Walters replied yes you are.

Chairman Day advised that we are looking at the character of the VCA and what fits within the character of the VCA.

Mr. Walters stated you have no idea what the character of the VCA is. You have nothing along this block that is consistent with anything that is character.

Mr. Kennedy remarked that he didn't even know why we are discussing it since it doesn't fit within the ZBA's approval of 40 square feet. It is more than 40 square feet.

MOTION by Mr. Kennedy to table Waiver Request #09-006 until a resubmission by the applicant which meets the ZBA approval standards.

Mr. Walters stated what did I tell you guys last time. You are never going to be able to settle this.

Mr. Gottschall wanted to offer a suggestion and said, with the realization that the tenant went to the ZBA for an exception to something we never intended to be in that place, let's have that cognizance to begin with. That is what we are dealing with here. We keep going round and round in circles, and the first iteration that we got looked like hell.

Mr. Walters stated that begs one question.

Chairman Day interrupted saying to please let Mr. Gottschall finish, and Mr. Walters stated it looked nice.

Chairman Day told him we are done hearing from you, Mr. Walters.

Mr. Gottschall stated it did not look nice. This we are refining. We are getting to a point where frankly he likes the pillars. He likes the look of the sign, and now we are talking about the materials and talking about the size. There are very specific metrics that were approved by the ZBA that have been exceeded, unacceptable. So number one, we have to come to that perimeter which is the basic table spacer; and then from there we need to give Mr. Walters some direction as to the type of materials on that sign that are acceptable so that the next time he designs this and goes to the owner and the owner says "Yes, I can afford to pay for that" and he comes to us and it has the lettering that we want, the lighting that we want, then it is good to go. He thinks it is going to be a give and take here. We expect certain things, but we have to give direction as well. Now, if not powder-coated aluminum then what is it? What are the thoughts on that?

Chairman Day stated if it is going to get my vote it is going to be out of wood and is going to have routed lettering.

Mr. Gottschall said he agrees. If you go ride through Northville downtown that is what we envision, and he is sorry. You like it or not, you want to get this through. That is what it is going to take.

Mr. Walters stated that he was in Northville just the other night by the way, and if you go recently you will see that signage in Northville has degenerated to really not effective and not beneficial to anyone especially customers. Sandblasted or routed wood signs to be honest he gave them up years ago. He has been doing this for a long time. A sandblasted sign situation is not going to give the customer a functional sign, a flexible sign; and when a customer is looking at trying to attract tenants and give them something that is going to say "Hey, look. Come join these other folks that are here and look at how we are effectively assisting you in being successful in your business." Wood signs just don't succeed. A wood sign is okay for your

subdivision or industrial park. We are talking about commercial development here, and when he came here and talked to the commissioners when they were putting that VCA stuff together he tried to give some indications as to where they were failing in some of their thoughts in putting together the VCA sign package. He tried to indicate you are missing the whole boat on what a sign is supposed to accomplish.

Mr. Gottschall told him we are past that.

Mr. Walters stated well that is why the ZBA gave the variance.

Chairman Day told him he can talk until he is blue in the face (and he knows he is capable of it), he is not going to change anyone's mind. We didn't follow his advice on the VCA because he is looking at this from the perspective of signage and not from the perspective of developing a Village Center.

Mr. Walters stated now you are incorrect because my background is unique.

Chairman Day commented that he thought we had a motion to table.

MOTION by and second Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Lupinacci to table Waiver Request #09-006 until a resubmission by the applicant, which meets the ZBA approval standards.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS:

2010 Planning Commission Meeting Schedules

Mr. Lupinacci said he only had one observation that he would like to share. On the schedule of regular meetings there is a meeting scheduled for Monday, July 5, 2010 and he believes that is going to be handled as a federal holiday.

Chairman Day believed he was correct and said so we can move that meeting to Wednesday, July 7th, with which the Commission agreed.

MOTION and second by Mr. Gottschall and Mr. Kennedy to accept the 2010 Planning Commission Meeting Schedules as submitted and amended to change the July 5, 2010 meeting to July 7, 2010.

VOTE:

MOTION CARRIED

CALL TO THE PUBLIC;

There was no public present for public comment.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Mr. Lipchik commented that during our previous presentation he heard a couple of suggestions to possibly ask the police to join us. He explained that how we have handled this in the past (just so everyone is on board and aware) is the chairman would make that call to say please ask the police to join us. He just wanted to make that clear.

Mr. Kennedy stated he had that well in hand. He just thought this guy was going to get up, but he took care of it correctly and contained the situation.

Mr. Lipchik said especially for you newer guys, you have heard nothing yet. Seriously we have had motorcycle clubs, people out of the neighborhoods that were just totally against things. You have heard nothing yet. It is always referred. The chair is always watching his back, and it is always referred to me. If he ever feels like he is in a tight spot, he looks at me and I know exactly what he is thinking.

COMMISSION COMMENTS:

Mr. Gottschall asked if we could please not let this come back to us until you know in your heart that this is where it needs to be. That would certainly solve a lot of grief, and he doesn't care if Mr. Poota (or whoever putting the pressure on). We are not going to pass this thing until it is what we want and it is not there yet and you know what we want.

Mr. Lipchik stated he could speak to that also because at the last meeting there was discussion about pillars. There was discussion about maybe the sign being bigger or if you do take a look at the sign ordinance for the VCA there are exceptions where certain parts of the logo can be bigger, where certain materials can be used. Metal is one of them, maybe not aluminum like he said. He thought it was 100% improved.

Chairman Day replied it was but is still not VCA, not with that kind of lettering. The pillars looked great.

Mr. Crowley stated a couple people said the routered, and that is pretty much where he stands with it as well.

Mr. Lupinacci stated ever since our last discussion on the subject he has been looking at various signs in various communities, and he has found that there are a lot of monument signs that can be attractive; but the most attractive ones tend to be those that don't have logos per se but rather they have plain text and keep it simple and conservative. When he saw the mock up here with logos and multi colors, that all of the sudden didn't appeal to him as much as some of the suggestions Mr. Avantini had at the last meeting.

Chairman Day indicated the colors don't bother him if the routered letters were colored. Like Jets Pizza, he understands why they want theirs red. Sticking adhesive lettering on an aluminum sign just is not classy. It doesn't fit with what we are trying to do in the VCA. He understands

from his point of view as someone who looks at the sign, but that is not what our job is. If it were up to him we wouldn't have a ground sign, but the ZBA approved it. We will go with it.

Mr. Lupinacci asked if we have yet addressed or if it has been addressed what the setback will be for the sign relative to the public right-of-way.

Mr. Lipchik told him actually that is directly in the sign ordinance and that cannot vary.

Mr. Lupinacci remarked except he thought that said there is an exception within the VCA. He looked at that, and it did have specifications; but it said this does not apply to the VCA.

Mr. Lipchik said well it is much as you could have a sign on a building because once again ground signs were not meant for the VCA. So if you have a building with a zero lot line clearance and you put a sign on it. Mr. Lupinacci replied it is clear to him.

ADJOURNMENT:

This meeting of the Wixom Planning Commission was adjourned on motion and second by Mr. Lupinacci and Mr. Gottschall at 7:58 pm.

Jennifer Garrett
Recording Secretary
November 6, 2009