

**MINUTES
CITY OF DARIEN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
February 5, 2020**

PRESENT: Lou Mallers-Chairperson, Michael Desmond, Robert Erickson, Steve Hiatt, Julie Kasprowicz, Brian Gay, Hilda Gonzalez, Brian Liedtke, Ralph Stompanato

ABSENT: None

OTHERS: Joseph Hennerfeind-City Planner, Mayor Joseph Marchese

Chairperson Lou Mallers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the City Hall – City Council Chambers, Darien, Illinois and declared a quorum present and swore in the audience members wishing to present public testimony.

REGULAR MEETING:

A. Public Hearing PZC 2020-01 Case: PZC 2020-01 7532 South Cass Avenue (Sign Variations) Petitioner City of Darien requests approval to permit the construction of 2 (two) electronic message board signs adjacent Cass Avenue and Plainfield Road, located within the B-2 Community Shopping Center Business District.

Chairperson Lou Mallers reported that correspondence was received from a resident to an Alderman that they are not in favor of an electronic message board or electronic sign. He further reported that another resident spoke with Mr. Dan Gombac, Director and that he had concerns but after speaking with Dan was less concerned.

Mr. Joe Hennerfeind, City Planner reported that the subject property is located on the west side of Cass Avenue, north of Plainfield Road. He reported that this site is considered a gateway property and that staff has worked with the property owner to secure easement rights at the corner for ground signage.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that staff envisions the area as a high-quality entry feature with the desire for an electronic message board sign. He reported that the proposal will be similar to the signs that the billboard company has in Bolingbrook at the corner of Boughton Road/87th Street and Janes Avenue. Mr. Hennerfeind reported that Chicago Billboards is the signage company who will build, finance and maintain the sign in return for local advertising rights.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the site itself is limited in space, with setback variations that were granted for the construction of the commercial building. He reported that in an effort to make the signage viewable to multiple perspectives, two separate signs are needed in lieu of one sign with two sides with sign "A", the smaller of the two signs, viewable when heading south on Cass Avenue and sign "B" facing the corner of Cass and Plainfield, allowing visibility to those heading southwest on Plainfield and north on

Cass. He further reported that neither sign can be seen when heading northeast on Plainfield.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the proposed signs would be constructed on brick bases similar and compatible to the brick used on the adjacent commercial building. He reported that landscaping and further design features would be coordinated by the City, including a planned water feature integrated into the base to match the water feature across the street.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the height variation for the sign has been increased to 14', where elevations currently show 12' and that the base of each sign would be adjusted as needed to ensure proper visibility. He reported that a draft of the lease agreement was included in the staff agenda memo illustrating the general parameters for advertising. He further reported that images and messages would be not less than 10 seconds per image which is a standard that needs to be followed per the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and that each sign would rotate 8 images, repeating the images every 80 seconds.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the City will be entitled to one 10 second position for community engagement messages and that the two businesses located on the property and Brookhaven Marketplace will be entitled to one 10 second position to share. He reported that there is also an opportunity for reduced advertising rates for other tenants at Brookhaven Plaza and any nonprofits.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the City is interested in providing a community digital network as a new communication tool for events, public meetings, and alerts throughout the year. He reported that staff also feels that placing this at a prominent corner will create additional civic engagement as is has proven for other local communities.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported on the variations and stated that the variations represent permissions to both code prohibitions, and size, setback and height parameters. He reported that the electronic message board is not a permitted sign within Darien, although past variations have been approved, most recently, variations granted for a 23'-4" sign at 6710 Route 83 and Chuck's at 8025 South Cass Avenue. He further reported that with this type of signage, which has electronic changeable copy, an additional variation is needed to the illumination's standards.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that while images would change every 10 seconds, the requested approval would abide by conditions placed on other approved signs, such as prohibitions to motion and animation, and general requirements to meet code illumination standards and that the sign will be equipped to dim in the evening and low-light conditions. He reported that while two signs are permitted on a corner property, they both exceed the 12' maximum height, and the 60 square foot maximum size and that the request is to ensure that the signs can be read from a distance and that vehicles do not block the images. He further reported that staff believes that the two marquee signs do not contain tenant panels for the proposed businesses on the property, although they will have rights to advertise through the electronic message board.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that directional signage advertising the businesses could be permitted if under four square feet, and on the existing ground signs for Brookhaven Plaza. He reported that a future variation may be requested for a ground sign closer to the entry from Cass Avenue if signage is determined inadequate. He reported that a setback requirement of 4' from the property line cannot be met, and that the signage would not conflict with sight triangles required at an intersection. He further reported that the proposed landscape and water feature would soften the overall bulk, which would also serve as a screen to the adjacent drive-through on the property. Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the water feature may be a shared expense with the City and the vendor.

Chairperson Mallers opened the meeting to anyone wishing to present public comment.

Mr. Ron Price, Darien stated that his home is close to the corner. He stated that listening to the discussion is a cause for pause and requires 6 variances with potential for other variances. Mr. Price stated that he is concerned with traffic and the signs being visually disruptive. He stated that a digital advertising sign is not needed for that corner.

Mr. Chris Thomas, Darien stated that he was the person who sent in his concerns and appreciated staff responding. He stated that he still has concerns with the area being so dense and questioned what value the City is receiving to grant the variances. He questioned the financial benefits to Chicago Billboards and that there needs to be a little more give and take.

Mr. Bill Przbyski, BRT Outdoor LLC (Chicago Billboards) stated that they operate over 30 signs throughout the western suburbs. He stated that they have not received a single complaint regarding traffic accidents due to looking at the sign. Mr. Przbyski stated that they follow the IDOT guidelines and monitor the signs 24 hours a day and store parts at their facility for quick repairs.

Mr. Przbyski stated that all agreements are standard and that they offer the space or \$6,000 per year and that there are no negotiations for pricing. He stated that 90% of the municipalities take the slot.

Commissioner Desmond questioned if advertising will be different.

Mr. Przbyski stated that the signs will be different, and that one sign will not be viewable from the other location.

Commissioner Desmond questioned if the proposal was contingent upon having two signs.

Mr. Przbyski stated that staff looked at having three sides and that it was not possible because of the property size. He stated that they worked together to have two faces for the site.

Commissioner Kasprovicz questioned the \$6,000 and if advertising will be done outside of Darien.

Mr. Przybylski stated that the cost is \$6,000 or one advertising slot. He stated that advertising pricing is based on the size and can be \$700 to \$900 per slot for one month. He further stated that there is a lot of potential for advertising in Darien and that he does not feel that going outside of Darien will be necessary.

Commissioner Liedtke asked for an estimate of cost to construct.

Mr. Przybylski stated that the cost to construct is \$100,000 - \$150,000.

Commissioner Liedtke stated that the cost to construct is paid off in one year. He questioned the benefits to the City and if there were shared revenue discussions.

Commissioner Kasprowicz questioned if the sign could be synced with the red and green lights.

Mr. Przybylski stated that he was not sure if syncing with the traffic lights is possible. He stated that most lights are programmed with 60-80 second spans.

Commissioner Kasprowicz asked how long BRT has been in business. She asked what happens to the sign should the company fold.

Mr. Przybylski stated that there are three partners and that they have been in business for 7 years. He stated that he hoped the company will not fold but should that happen that there is language in the lease indicating that BRT would remove everything and leave the area the way it was.

Commissioner Gonzalez stated that a 25-year lease was a long time. She questioned if it could be less.

Mr. Przybylski stated that all the leases are 20 years or longer. He stated that refacing has to be done after 10 years.

Commissioner Kasprowicz questioned why the two signs were different in size. She asked if it's possible to build without a need for the height variation.

Mr. Przybylski stated that the size and orientation will be the same height. He stated that the water feature is included in the dimensions.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that there is a sewer line that is an issue and the reason why there is separation.

Commissioner Hiatt questioned how the size was determined. He stated that the size is big.

Mr. Przybylski stated that they had the site surveyed and that they spent a lot of time on the site looking at the traffic lights, size and orientation and presented live photos to the City.

Commissioner Hiatt asked for comment from the landowner at Brookhaven.

Mr. John Manos, Brookhaven Plaza stated that he loved the idea of the water feature and that the signage would be a complement of what is across the street. He stated that the signs may be too big and that 12 feet would be more uniform.

Mr. Hennerfeind reported that the signs were designed around the sewer line and they will serve as a screen for the Dunkin Donuts drive-thru headlights.

Commissioner Liedtke stated that this is an advertising sign and he still has the same concerns for that corner.

Mr. Price stated that this is an advertising billboard and that a nice gateway sign is preferred. He stated that the Committee should Google message boards and that there are many mixed messages.

There was more discussion regarding the size of the signs and if there should be one sign or two.

Commissioner Gonzalez asked why the large sign that is at Brookhaven can't be used.

Mayor Joseph Marchese stated that the City staff has worked many hours looking at this location as the element of Darien entryway. He stated that the two corners need to complement one another and that the goal is to create something different. Mayor Marchese stated that the City staff is pushing this and that this will be a communication source for residents who do not have a cell phone or computer. He stated that this is also a way for the non-profit organizations to advertise.

Chairperson Mallers asked if the Old Lace School location would be a potential site for a sign.

Mayor Marchese stated that he cannot answer about the future of Old Lace School but that he discussed the signage with the Park District Executive Director, and they are very interested.

Commissioner Desmond stated that he is struggling with the two signs and the safety issue. He stated that one sign will fit better and can accomplish the same.

Mr. Hennerfeind stated that staff initially thought that a 3-sided sign would work, but site constraints resulted in the two-sign design, and that there was never any internal discussion for one sign.

Commissioner Hiatt stated that two signs will look silly and it is just too tight.

Commissioner Gay stated that he was not in favor and that there is confusion between a gateway sign and an advertising sign. He stated that there is more value having the signs at a different site.

Commissioner Liedtke and Commissioner Stompanato agreed with Commission Gay.

Commissioner Liedtke suggested a motion to reject the application for the 6 variances and propose a new design front center single sign.

There was some discussion regarding the timing of building the site and if a continuation of the sign proposal would delay construction followed by more discussion on one sign versus two signs and other locations within Darien.

Commissioner Hiatt suggested getting rid of the sign southbound and move the other one a little north.

Commissioner Erickson suggested that the petitioner's engineer look at the sewer line again.

Mr. Przbyski stated that most of the gateway signs in Darien are not near businesses and the signs are regulated by IDOT which limits certain locations.

There was no one else wishing to present public comment.

Commissioner Desmond made a motion and is was seconded by Commissioner Liedtke to continue Public Hearing PZC 2020-01 Case: PZC 2020-01 7532 South Cass Avenue to the next meeting date to give the City opportunity to redesign the proposed sign from 2 signs to 1 sign with two variances for consideration.

Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED 8-1. Commissioner Erickson voted Nay.

Commissioner Gay stated that he would like to see a gateway sign that does not have a LED component.

Commissioner Liedtke stated that this is not about a gateway sign but about an advertising sign.

CORRESPONDENCE

None

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Erickson made a motion and is was seconded by Commissioner Hiatt to approve the December 18, 2019 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED 9-0.

NEXT MEETING

Chairperson Mallers announced that the next meeting is scheduled for February 19, 2020.


PUBLIC COMMENTS (On any topic related to planning and zoning)

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

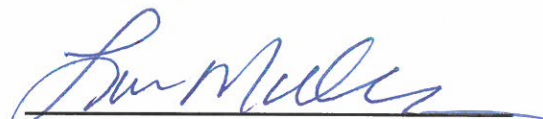
With no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Kasprowitz made a motion and it was seconded by Commissioner Stompanato. Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:



Elizabeth Lahey
Secretary

APPROVED:



Lou Mallers
Chairperson