



**CITY OF WALLED LAKE  
ZONING BOARD APPEALS  
MONDAY, JULY 31, 2017**

The Meeting was called to order at 7:37 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Ackley, Easter, Hecht, Rundell

**ABSENT:** DeCourcy, Gunther

**OTHERS PRESENT:** City Attorney Vanerian, Recording Secretary Joyce

The applicant was informed that there was a quorum but not a full board. There would have to be three affirmative approvals for the variance requests to be granted. Or the applicant can come back when there is a full board. The applicant agreed to move forward with the meeting.

**REQUESTS FOR AGENDA CHANGES:**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**ZBA 07-01-17 APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2016, ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING MINUTES**

Motion by Ackley, seconded Easter, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To approve the December 19, 2016, Zoning Board of Appeals meeting minutes.

**COMMUNICATION:**

A letter from Bob and Linda Christenson who reside at 1904 S. Commerce Road was read into record. They are opposing the variance request for the electronic sign at St. Matthews Church, 1970 S. Commerce Road.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Public Hearing**

Open Public Hearing 7:42 p.m.

1. Case # 2017-1  
Applicant: Michael Stephens (St. Matthew Lutheran Church)

Location: 1970 S. Commerce  
Walled Lake, MI 48390  
Request: Non-Use Variance

This matter relates to property located at 1970 S. Commerce. The applicant is requesting a variance from Article 20 of the Walled Lake Zoning Ordinance to allow for LED monument sign that exceeds the allowable height and total square footage.

Michael Stephens of Signarama, contractor for St. Matthew Lutheran Church. They would like to propose an illuminated ground sign 74 inches in height with digital reader board and a fixed portion reading the church's name. This is to replace the current 21 square foot illuminated sign that is currently there.

The Board reviewed the signage of other churches in the community; none of which has LED signage within residential areas. This is done within the software. It could even be turned off if so desired.

Mr. Stephens stated that the brightness of the sign is adjusted and it can be turned down at night. It doesn't have to be at full power.

Mr. Stephens said he tried to keep the LED display of the sign within the 15% of the overall sign size. Timing of the change in the display is also programable.

It was noted that this church has several signs; and it seems to be a bit overkill.

The proposed sign is 11 square feet over the allowable square footage. It is 72 inches to the top of the sign.

The setback for the existing sign is 11 feet. This is from the sidewalk and property line.

Mr. Stephens stated that the LED display of the sign is 25 inches by 50 inches.

The applicant had stated on the application, number 3, that a lesser variance would not allow them to use the property as desired.

ZBA Member Ackley interpreted this to mean that they were not willing to compromise on the size to bring it in compliance. Mr. Stephens said he is here to try and make everyone in agreement. ZBA Member Ackley stated that she has a problem with the size and changeable read within a residential area. She is also concerned about the brightness of the sign.

ZBA Member Rundell felt that there is enough traffic on this portion of the road where the sign will not make any difference in the regards to distraction. There is so much signage at this location that another sign wouldn't be any more of a distraction other than the scrolling of different messages along the sign.

Mr. Stephens stated that the sign doesn't have to have a transition message. It can stay there and then within a second of time it will change to the next message.

#### **AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:**

Jeff Rondeau - 1159 Wabasso - stated that on one side of South Commerce Road it is Walled Lake residents and on the other side it is Wolverine Lake residents. He feels if this meeting had been advertised to the residents in Wolverine Lake there would be a much larger audience – an audience he feels would oppose this variance request. He has nothing against the church but where is the hardship. He doesn't feel that the church needs to have a lighted sign in a residential zone. He feels a church is a guest within a residential district.

Bob Christenson – 1904 S. Commerce Rd. - lives next door to St. Matthews property and said he would be the most affected by this signage.

Mr. Rondeau would like to see the sign replaced with something of the same type that is already there on site.

Brian Davis - building operations at St. Matthews - stated that they would like to target their audience at various times of the day. He stated that if they are allowed this sign it will alleviate the need and cost of them displaying banners. They would like certain messages up at different times of the day. There was still concern about the brightness of the sign.

Mr. Rondeau asked where the hardship was.

Mr. Stephens explained to the ZBA Board that the new sign is to modernize the church and the existing sign is in poor condition. The sign is in an R-1 district which is not allowed.

It was noted that the flag area of the drawings submitted would not depict a flag but would be wordage with messages.

JoAnne Rondeau - 1159 Wabasso – said she believes that members of their school and church can be notified via email in regard to upcoming events and changes to schedules. She does not want to see flashing signs in her residential neighborhood.

Mr. Davis said that a lot of times the messages are an outreach for other community residents and non-members of their church.

ZBA Member Ackley stated that she could not see getting the sign approved as requested. She felt they should go back to the drawing board and see if they could come up with something a little bit smaller and not a changeable sign.

Mr. Stephens asked if they could have a 10-minute recess to discuss what is at hand and see if they can come up with something to appease the board.

Chairman Jason Easter declared a 10-minute recess.

Meeting Recessed – 8:18 p.m.

Meeting Resumed – 8:30 p.m.

Mr. Stephens stated that the three things that seem to be at issue are the height, overall size and that it is an LED. The height restriction is 4-foot. If the 42” x 84” reader board panel was removed equating at 13 sq. feet this would help in the overall size. This would give them 2 square feet to play with. They would still want to have the LED display. From grade, they would be 52” in height. They could come down 4” on the base to comply with the height. These two items they could alter but they would like to have the LED option.

It was felt that they would like to table this case and they could look at different options.

It was asked if the bottom panel was necessary.

It was explained that the church would like to post their hours of service and special services. Does it have to be lit? This was the part of the sign that they had talked about removing.

**ZBA 07-02-17            MOTION TO TABLE CASE 2017-01 TO THE SEPTEMBER MEETING SO THE APPLICANT CAN HAVE FURTHER DISCUSSION AND REVIEW DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW PROPOSALS IN REFERENCE TO SIGN ILLUMINATION FOR THE BOARD.**

Motion by Hecht, seconded by Ackley, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To table Case 2017-01 to the September meeting so the applicant can have further discussion and review different opportunities for new proposals in reference to sign illumination for the board.

*Close Public Hearing 8:40 p.m.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**ZBA 07-03-17            ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Rundell, seconded by Ackely, CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY: To adjourn the meeting at 8:42 p.m.

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Janell Joyce  
Recording Secretary

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Jason Easter  
Chairman