

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING

November 4, 2024, at 6:45pm

Present: Board Members, Sangster, Horntvedt, Kwiatkowski, O'Brien, and Chorey

Absent: N/A

Also Present: Alexandria Martin, Executive Assistant to the City Manager and Daniel Sabolsky, City Manager/Zoning Administrator (Via Zoom call).

Review and Approval of the Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes of August 12, 2024:

Motion by Chorey and seconded by O'Brien to approve the Zoning Board of Appeals Minutes of August 12, 2024. Motion carried. (5-0)

New Business:

Dimensional Variance Request – 616 W Lincoln Ave

Chairperson Sangster asked Sabolsky to present the request. Sabolsky explained that both the applicant's property and Bishop Baraga School are zoned residential, though they both have larger signs, suggesting these properties may be rezoned in future updates to the zoning code.

Commissioner Kwiatkowski inquired if the variance should be approved, and Sabolsky raised concerns about the sign's housing potentially obstructing traffic, suggesting it be lowered for safety. Horntvedt recalled a similar issue with a church on Palmyra Street where the sign was moved closer to the building, asking if a similar approach might work here. Sabolsky noted that the applicant, Pastor Terry preferred the current location.

Commissioners discussed the purpose of the sign expansion, noting potential issues with larger signs in residential zones. Horntvedt and Chorey suggested the Planning Commission address sign size regulations in future zoning updates, with consensus that updating the ordinance could help clarify standards.

Pastor Terry spoke on behalf of the church, stating the current sign can't be repaired under the existing code. The church wants a similar-size sign with minimal information that would improve the area's appearance. O'Brien asked if the church could wait for zoning updates, and Pastor Terry agreed, indicating they'd consider installing the sign in the spring.

After discussion, it was agreed to table the variance.

Motion by Kwiatkowski, seconded by O'Brien, to table the variance. Roll call vote: Ayes from Kwiatkowski, Chorey, Horntvedt, O'Brien, and Sangster. **Motion carried.**

Use Variance Request – 521 Stempky St

Chairperson Sangster requested Sabolsky explain the variance request. Sabolsky noted that the zoning code currently contains multiple definitions for AFC Homes, with some already allowed as special uses in commercial districts. He proposed permitting Small Group AFC Homes as special uses in B-1 Districts.

Sangster remarked that similar uses already exist in the surrounding area. Sabolsky clarified that if this variance is approved, the request will proceed to the Planning Commission to approve a specific AFC Home at 521 Stempky St. Sangster invited comments from the applicants, Kelsey and Lynn Kennedy, who explained that they have operated AFC Homes in the area since 2017. Due to the closure of a rented facility in Carp Lake, they need to relocate residents. Horntvedt asked about their plans for the building, and Kelsey confirmed they would use two-thirds of the building for the AFC Home, while the remaining third would continue to house Straits Regional Ride. Sangster emphasized the critical need for housing, noting that six residents could otherwise be displaced.

Motion by Horntvedt, seconded by O'Brien, to allow Small Group AFC Homes as special uses in B-1 Districts. Roll Call Vote: Ayes from Kwiatkowski, Chorey, Horntvedt, O'Brien, and Sangster.

Motion carried.

Commissioner Comments:

O'Brien and Sangster discussed the importance of researching and developing future guidelines for signage.

Kwiatkowski noted that, as the liaison for the Zoning Board of Appeals, he will need to be replaced since he is not seeking re-election to City Council. The commissioners thanked him and commended his many years of dedicated service as treasurer, clerk, and council member.

Staff Report:

Sabolsky noted that the master plan update is underway, and the zoning code update will begin this winter, with plans to present initial drafts to the Planning Commission in the spring.

Public Comments:

None

Adjourn:

Meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.

Minutes prepared by Alexandria Martin