

Minutes
Regular Meeting of the Florence County Board of Zoning Appeals
Tuesday, March 20, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.
County Complex, Council Chambers, Room 803
180 N. Irby St., Florence, South Carolina 29501

The Florence County Planning Department staff posted the agenda for the meeting on the information boards at the main entrance and the back entrance of the County Complex and on the information board in the lobby of the Planning and Building Inspection Department building.

The agenda was also mailed to the media.

I. Call to Order

Acting Chairman Daniel Jackson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Attendance:

Board Members Present: Daniel Jackson, Acting Chairman
Craig Floyd
Brenda Deas
Brian Casey
Kenneth E. McAllister

Board Members Absent: Toney Moore, Chairman
Bryant Hollowell, Vice-Chairman
James Cooper, Jr.

Staff Present: Mr. J. Shawn Brashear, Planning Director
Derrick Singletary, Senior Planner
Lisa M. Becoat, Secretary

Public Attendance: See sign-in sheet on file at the Florence County Planning Department.

Mr. J. Shawn Brashear, Planning Director indicated that due to the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman the members present should appoint an Acting Chairman for the Meeting.

Mr. Brian Casey made a motion that Mr. Daniel Jackson be the Acting Chairman for the Meeting.
/ Second – Mr. Kenneth McAllister / Unanimously approved 5 to 0.

III. Review and motion of the minutes:

- Meeting of December 12, 2017

Acting Chairman Mr. Daniel Jackson requested if there were any objections or comments to the meeting minutes of December 12, 2017. There were no objections or comments and the minutes were accepted and adopted by a Unanimous consent of 5 to 0.

IV. Public Hearings:

BZA#2018-01 A variance request by Matt Flintrop from requirements of Sec. 30-202 Signs on Private Property, Table VIII Number, Dimension, and Location of Permitted Signs, by Zoning District (G) and (H) of the Florence County Code of Ordinances for property located at 2691 Alex Lee Blvd., Florence, shown on Florence County Tax Map Number 00236, Block 01, Parcel 032.

Mr. J. Shawn Brashear presented the staff report to the Board. (Copy of the staff report available at the Florence County Planning Department) Mr. Brashear additionally informed the board that there had not been any telephone calls and/or inquiries regarding the variance request.

There were questions and discussion by the Board. The overpass does appear to prevent the sign from being seen if it is only 40 feet tall. The applicant or representative presenting today does have a presentation that will provide some samplings of what the signage would look like at 40 feet and the requested 70 feet with the variance. To our knowledge the size of the sign is dictated by Harley Davidson but the height of the sign is negotiable per the applicant. All options to assist the applicant prior to coming to this board have been exhausted. The Pilot sign is a legal non-conforming sign as it was in place prior to the County ordinance. There is an elevation change in the property so we are not sure if the overpass was not in place, if the applicant would need a sign of this capacity. As it is now, the overpass is a barrier to potential customers seeing the sign and making the exit in time to visit the establishment.

Acting Chairman Daniel Jackson inquired if there was any public who desired to speak in favor of the requested variance request.

Mr. Eddie Lane a member of Black Jack Harley Davidson was present and spoke in favor of the requested variance. He stated that Mr. Matt Flintrop is one of the owners of Black Jack Harley Davidson. He presented a presentation and provided hard copies of the presentation to each board member. (Copy of the presentation is available at the Florence County Planning Department)

Harley Davidson has been a part of the Florence Community for more than 40 years. Before Black Jack Harley Davidson it was known as Doug's Harley Davidson. In August of 2013, the dealership was purchased from Mr. Doug Guynn. At that time, there were six employees and the business was on the verge of closing. We purchased the business and currently have 34 employees and anticipate doubling that number to at least 70 employees. We anticipate moving into our new building on April 15th and are working with Jerry Fields of Gilbert and Fields Construction. They have indicated that our building is the most unique project to which they have worked and that it has a lot of character. (The presentation and hard copies showed some renderings of the inside and outside of the constructed Harley Davidson business) At our current location, there is seating for approximately 4 to 6 people in the lobby waiting area. At the new location, there will be seating for approximately 40 people. Harley Davidson is not just a motorcycle shop, when people stop by to see us, they will also patronize other establishments such as buying gas and going to restaurants. Sometimes customers will come to order parts and have to wait overnight for those parts. So they will rent hotel rooms and the likes. Almost all of our tee shirts advertise Florence, SC, so as people are traveling around to different states, we are helping to put the Florence Community out there by putting Florence, SC on our shirts. Our service department started with

one person and will now triple in size with all the state of the art equipment. Presently all of the doors, windows and bricks are up in anticipation of an April 15th move in. When construction began on our building, we requested that Mr. Fields utilize as many local contractors and businesses as possible. Presently the cabinets that are being built and placed in the structure are from a business on Cashua, in Florence. We have also provided a list of other local businesses that were used during this construction; as, we are committed to our Florence Community and have been in town for over 40 years and host and support local events also. Some of those events are Camp Pee Dee Pride and for over 30 years we have sponsored the Toys for Tots Parade that raises needed money for toys for needy children during the holidays. Our current facility is just over 20,000 square feet and our new building will be a little over 35,000 square feet with I-95 at the bottom and highway 327 to the right hand side. The proposed sign is to be placed to the left of the front row of parking spaces and we have received a letter from Jeff Singletary the Vice-President of Marketing for the Pee Dee Commerce Park, which approved and gave us permission to exceed the Park's requirements for the sign. This letter was given and requested prior to our knowledge of a County Ordinance governing signs, which is why we are at the meeting today.

We have provided an image of the Harley Davidson sign at 40 feet and as you can see, you can barely see the top of the sign heading in the northbound lane. Our request would be to have a 70 foot sign which would give you a much clearer view of the sign. (both images are a part of the presentation). We also want to make sure that we don't impede on any other businesses. It would be a permanent sign that will only advertise Harley Davidson. It will not change and/or be rented out. Foot traffic is important to retail stores to draw people to the store, which brings in revenue and could increase the need for additional employees. The 70 feet sign is total height it is a 55 foot pole with an additional 15 feet with the sign. We also have a fun picture of a sign that is made up of reclaimed wood from an old tobacco barn that will be out front of the establishment that was made by one of our employees. Lastly, our request is for a variance to put up a 70 feet sign and 300 square feet in sign area. Presently, we are in at about a 5 million dollar investment, and 34 families are depending on our success and we are hoping to increase that to about 70 families.

There were questions and discussion by the Board. It's a smart business decision to be close to the interstate, as many people use the interstate and it makes it easier to find locations, but Harley Davidson is not requiring that businesses move closer to a major interstate. What we understand from studies that our current location on TV Road, across the street from QVC approximately 4,000 cars go past a day; with our new location at highway 327 and Interstate 95 those numbers will be about 80,000. We could have purchased property down from our current location, an old salvage shop, but when this property became available it was clearly a better business decision with highway 327 being a cut through to Myrtle Beach. We have been on TV Road since 2000 and prior to that we were on Pamplico Highway for a number of years.

There was no public in appearance to speak in opposition of the requested variance.

Discussions by the Board: Initially there were concerns with the excessive differences in square footage, but considering the obstacle of the overpass, it is an extraordinary condition. We understand the restrictions of changing logos and signs, but don't know if the sign has to be the square footage and height being requested.

Mr. Shawn Brashear indicated that staff has looked at all options and considered many things for this case prior to referring the applicant to the Board for this appeal. The establishment and business does offer other things to the community than just a motorcycle shop. It supports lots of things and is a growing business that has the potential to provide even more to the community. Staff does not object to the change, it is an Industrial Park and not a business district. We have considered all safety and hazard conditions pertaining to this sign and once the application is submitted, we will request all engineering

specifications, wind, seismic, and snow requirements for the sign. The issue of the sign came up later in the construction phase when the applicant came into the office with a sign package.

Mr. Eddie Lane indicated the sign issue arose much later in the construction process when it was time to order the sign. When contacting companies about the sign one company suggested that we check with our county as many counties had ordinances regulating size and signs. No one until that point had brought the information up to us, not the realtor or anyone except Jeff Singletary from the Industrial Park and we thought that it was just an industrial park restriction and that is why the letter was provided to us. It was after that we found out about the county ordinance regulating signs. It came very late in the process and we had anticipated having the sign up already as our intention is to move in on the 15th of April. So it came late in the process and then we missed the deadline for submission of items to BZA for February so we had to wait until now. Currently there is a rented billboard down by Otis Elevator that says Harley Davidson 2 miles or something like that. Most vehicles now have navigation systems but unfortunately, motorcycles do not, so when a person sees a sign, they begin to head in that direction to get to it. So it is important for them to see a sign and then they can start working their way over to where the sign says. Something like the golden arches of McDonalds, you see them and you are trying to get to that location.

The recommendations and four findings of fact by the Board were as follows:

- a. There are extraordinary and exceptional conditions pertaining to the particular piece of property:

Finding: The applicant is limited to having a 40 foot sign and cannot change it to a billboard classification due to the proximity of a neighbor's sign which is plus 100 feet tall. Without the variance, traffic would not be able to see the sign over the overpass when going north, so they won't be able to make the exit. The only sign approved by Harley Davidson and produced by the vendor which is approximately scaled to their pole requirements is 300 square feet.

- b. These conditions do not generally apply to the other property in the vicinity:

Finding: Their neighbor, the Pilot station has a sign that is well in excess of 100 feet that makes them more visible.

- c. Because of these conditions, the application of the ordinance to the particular piece of property would effectively prohibit or unreasonably restrict the utilization of the property:

Finding: The business is highly dependent on high levels of traffic, especially tourist. In their industry it's a proven fact that limiting tourist traffic will reduce their ability to do business and will suppress interest in the surrounding businesses.

- d. The authorization of a variance will not be of substantial detriment to adjacent property or to the public good, and the character of the district will not be harmed by the granting of the variance.

Finding: The applicant provided a copy of a letter from Jeff Singletary who is responsible for the Business Park for Pee Dee Electric. The letter allows the applicant to exceed the restrictive covenants limit of 50 feet so as not to restrict their ability to draw customers.

Motion to approve - Mr. Brian Casey made a motion to approve the variance request based on the Boards discussion, findings, recommendations and information and presentations provided by the applicant and Planning Staff. / Mrs. Brenda Deas seconded the motion. The motion was Unanimously approved with a vote of 5 to 0.

V. Other Business:

None

VI. Adjournment

Acting Chairman Daniel Jackson inquired of the Board and Planning Staff if there was any other business, there being none, Acting Chairman adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Lisa M. Becoat, Secretary

Approved by:

J. Shawn Brashear, Planning Director

*These minutes reflect only actions taken and do not represent a true verbatim transcript of the meeting.