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**MINUTES OF SYMMES TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**DECEMBER 18, 2019**  
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The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Members of the Commission present were: Ms. Bucco, Mr. Etter, Mr. Flynn and Mr. Kessler.

Also present: Bryan Snyder - Hamilton County Rural Zoning and Jana Grant - Zoning Secretary.

GEORGE FLYNN made a motion to approve the Agenda. GREG KESSLER seconded the motion and the roll call was as follows: Ms. Bucco - ‘yes’; Mr. Etter - ‘yes’; Mr. Flynn - ‘yes’; and Mr. Kessler - ‘yes’.

Mr. Flynn made a motion to approve the June 19, 2019 minutes. Mr. Kessler seconded the motion and the roll call was as follows: Ms. Bucco - ‘yes’; Mr. Etter - ‘yes’; Mr. Flynn - ‘yes’ and Mr. Kessler - ‘yes’.

Mr. Flynn made a motion to approve the October 16, 2019 minutes. Mr. Kessler seconded the motion and the roll call vote was as follows: Ms. Bucco - ‘abstain’; Mr. Etter - ‘yes’; Mr. Flynn - ‘yes’ and Mr. Kessler - ‘yes’.

**FINAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN MODIFICATION:**

**TODD ETTER** called to order the public hearing for **SYMMES 87-8 Governor’s Hill Partners – Freestanding Signs** to consider approval of a modification to the Final Development Plan to allow replacement of two (2) existing freestanding monument signs that comply with the Zoning Resolution with two (2) new freestanding signs with more height and area than permitted. The subject property is located at 8805 and 8845 Governors Hill Drive, on the south side of Governors Hill Drive, west of Mason Road and north of Chapelsquare Drive.

BRYAN SNYDER stated that the site was originally approved for a 150,000 sq. ft. retail development as part of two (2) zone amendment cases in the 1970’s that resulted in the subject site and surrounding restaurant and office complex being zoned “EE” Planned Retail. The surrounding areas were ultimately constructed in accordance with case Symmes 3-79 with the exception of the subject site. The site was never developed for commercial use despite the retail zoning of the property.

Mr. Snyder stated that in 1987, the subject site was rezoned from “EE” Planned Retail to “OO” Planned Office as part of Symmes 87-8 to allow construction of a 250,000 net sq. ft. four story office building with an 1,124-space parking lot. The Final Development Plan for this case was approved in 1988 and construction occurred shortly thereafter. The development included entrances off of Governor’s Hill Drive and Chapelsquare Drive, a large water feature and green space area along Mason Road, and a small picnic area and green space at the intersection of Governor’s Hill and Chapelsquare. The parking lot included several large landscape islands and had long landscape beds between rows of parking. The approved landscape plan included trees and shrubs throughout the parking area and along three-street frontages.

Mr. Snyder advised that in 2007, a Modification to a Final Development Plan was approved to permit The Art Institute of Ohio to install a 200 sq. ft. wall sign on the top of the northwestern façade of the northern office building facing Interstate 71. This sign was constructed in accordance with the plan.

Mr. Snyder stated that the approved parking lot plan was altered as part of an FDP Modification approved by the Symmes Township Zoning Commission in 2008 to replace a water feature, green space and landscape islands with 167 new parking spaces. This modification also included addition of two entry signs at the entrances to the development. The parking lot was again altered as part of an FDP Modification approved by the Zoning Commission in May 2014 to remove additional landscape islands for an additional 210 parking spaces, bringing to total parking on the site to

1,429 spaces for 250,000 sq. ft. of office. The two entry signs were approved to be located one each at the two main entrances with height and area that complied with the Zoning Resolution. These signs were constructed in accordance with the approved plan.

Mr. Snyder stated that in September of 2014 an FDP Modification was approved to allow an additional wall sign on the southwestern façade of the southern office building. The wall sign was approved with a maximum size of 67.1 square feet. This sign has also been installed in accordance with the approved plan.

Mr. Snyder stated that the applicant is proposing to replace the two existing freestanding monument signs with two new larger freestanding signs. The two proposed signs would be identical with a height of approximately 18 feet and an area of approximately 106 square feet per side. The new signs would be located in the exact location of the existing freestanding signs and the applicant indicates that the existing landscaping around the base of the signs would be preserved. The applicant states that the new larger signs are needed to provide more tenant space on the signs to aid in marketing the property.

Mr. Snyder advised that the Board of County Commissioners placed five conditions on the zone amendment, of which only one condition directly applies to signage. Condition 4 states that a plan indicating the lighting, landscaping, and signage be submitted as part of the Final Development Plan review and approval process. The 1988 FDP approval did not show a specific sign plan, locations of signs or specific identification signs. However, the FDP included a set of guidelines which outlined the restriction and covenants for signage in the Governor's Hill office complex. The only guidelines for building and tenant identification were that each building was permitted one freestanding single face identification sign not to exceed 22.5 square feet in size.

Mr. Snyder stated that in 1991, a comprehensive sign plan was adopted by the Rural Zoning Commission to replace the sign guidelines adopted by the Regional Planning Commission for the original FDP in 1984 for case Symmes 3-79; Towne Properties, which included the subject site and the entire development of the Governor's Hill complex. The modified sign plan identified all buildings located in both the "EE" and "OO" Planned Districts and placed guidelines on wall signs, monument signs, directional signs, and high-rise signs. The adopted sign plan for the subject building shows no building sign other than an exempt address (street number) sign. This plan has been allowed to expand by the FDP Modification approvals related to case Symmes 87-8.

Mr. Snyder stated that in 2007 a Modification to a Final Development Plan was approved to permit the Art Institute of Ohio to install a 200 sq. ft. wall sign on the northern office building facing I-71. This building sign was not indicated on the 1991 comprehensive sign plan and was the first expansion of signage for the site permitted through the FDP Modification process.

Mr. Snyder stated that in January of 2008 as part of the parking lot modifications, an overall sign plan was submitted indicating two new freestanding signs installed at the main entrances to the office park in addition to a third existing freestanding sign permitted. In September of 2014 a 67.1 square-foot Powernet wall sign was approved for the southern building. Since the original resolution of approval did not contain any conditions limiting the size or number of freestanding or building signs on the property, the Zoning Commission had the authority to approve the signs and has the authority to consider the current request without violation of any conditions of approval.

Mr. Snyder stated that staff has reviewed this request for compliance with the Zoning Resolution sign standards for freestanding signs in "OO" district. Section 320.1 - Freestanding Signs, this section states that the site is permitted two freestanding monument signs with a maximum height of 10 feet and a maximum area of 50 square feet. As indicated on plans submitted by the applicant, the existing monument signs on the property area approximately 5 feet in height and 50 square feet in area in compliance with this section of the Zoning Resolution. The applicant is proposing to replace these compliant signs with two new signs that would exceed both the height and area requirements of this section. Specifically, the two new signs would be almost 18 feet in height and 106 square feet in area. This is a significant departure from the 10-foot and 50 square-foot requirements of this section, being more than double both dimensional restrictions. This additional height and area are somewhat mitigated by the fact that the two signs are the only freestanding

signs specifically for the larger office development that is surrounded on all four sides by public streets. Additionally, the existing street trees and landscaping that would be retained around the base of the new signs would further mitigate the additional size of the signs.

Mr. Snyder stated however, two issues exist with the proposed signage. First, the signs appear to include a portion near the bottom of the structure where poles would be exposed between the sign base and the sign itself. Exposed poles as part of a sign structure would make these sign pole signs rather than monument signs. This section allows only monument signs in the office zoning districts. Second, the significant amount of increase above the maximum height and area restrictions of the Zoning Resolution raises the concern that this could set a negative precedent for other office sign requests in the remainder of the Governor's Hill development and elsewhere in the township. The existing freestanding signs along Governor's Hill Drive and Chapelsquare Drive for all other developments within the office and retail center appear to meet height and area requirements of the Zoning Resolution. No Similar variances for freestanding signage appear to have been granted in the vicinity of the property. The commission should consider the appropriateness of this request in context with surrounding and nearby office developments.

MEGHAN MEYER, ABC Signs 2336 Iowa Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio 45206 stated that they are the contractor that would be installing the signs and removed the old ones. The owners want to make the signs larger so they are able to market better to the tenants to take up the space in these buildings. These are large buildings so if you want to correlate the building with the monument signs, you do a larger monument sign as well. The owner's main reason for doing this is to update the property as a whole because they just took ownership of it about six months ago. They are trying to make the space more appealing for new tenants to take up space in the building and the larger monument sign would also allow for more tenant panels. A larger sign would be easier to identify where the entrances are and specifically what is in each building.

CYNTHIA BUCCO asked if the owner was local.

Ms. Meyer stated that he is not local. They were hoping to be at the November meeting but they did not get their plans in on time for that meeting. The owner is out of the country and could not change his travel plans to be at the December meeting.

Mr. Flynn stated that he would like to have seen the owner at this meeting to explain the reason for requesting a larger sign. The sign itself, he has issues with, the skirt does not cover the entire sign, he does not like the height of 17 ft, he would like to see it shifted from vertical to more horizontal, which is similar to what is there.

Ms. Bucco agreed with Mr. Flynn and stated that the owner is not here to give any justification for needing it so large. She is concerned about setting a precedent and she is not sure if it is illuminated now. The signs are not on Mason Montgomery Road but they are going to be big beckons of light. She would like to hear a justification as to why they should issue a variance of this significance and they would be setting a precedent. She thinks that the tenants name on the signs is more for marketing than being able to find them.

GREG KESSLER stated he agrees and he does not want a snowball effect. Other people in the area and other businesses request doubling of the Zoning Resolution. Doubling is an unusual request in his opinion.

Ms. Meyer asked if they could have a continuance?

MR. FLYNN moved to approve a continuance until next month for case Symmes 87-8; Governor's Hill Signs – Modification of a Final Development Plan.

MR. KESSLER seconded the motion and the roll call was as follows: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'no'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes' and Mr. Kessler - 'yes'.

Minutes of REGULAR

Held Township Admin. Bldg.

December 18, 2019

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Next meeting will be January 15, 2020 at 7 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MR. FLYNN made motion to adjourn at 7:32 p.m. MS. BUCCO seconded the motion and the roll call vote was as follows: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'yes'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes' and Mr. Kessler - 'yes'.

Approved:

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Chairperson

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Zoning Secretary