
MINUTES OF SYMMES TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 15, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Members of the Commission present were: Ms. Bucco, Mr. Etter, Mr. Flynn, Mr. Kessler and Mr. Reichman.

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

GEORGE FLYNN made a motion to elect Greg Kessler as Chairperson. CYNTHIA BUCCO seconded the motion and the roll call was as follows: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'yes'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes'; Mr. Kessler - 'yes'; and Mr. Reichman - "yes".

MR. FLYNN made a motion to elect Cynthia Bucco as Vice-Chairperson. GREG KESSLER seconded that motion and the roll call was as follow: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'yes'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes'; Mr. Kessler - 'yes'; and Mr. Reichman - "yes".

Mr. Flynn made a motion to approve the Agenda. MS. BUCCO seconded the motion and the roll call was as follows: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'yes'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes'; Mr. Kessler - 'yes'; and Mr. Reichman - "yes".

Ms. Bucco made a motion to approve the December 18, 2019 minutes. Mr. Flynn seconded the motion and the roll call was as follows: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'yes'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes'; Mr. Kessler - 'yes'; and Mr. Reichman - "abstain".

FINAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN MODIFICATION:

GREG KESSLER called to order the public hearing for **SYMMES 87-8 Governor's Hill Partners – Freestanding Signs** a continuance from the December meeting 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 he did not prepare a new staff report. The Board should still have the staff report from last month. It has all the details of the case with previous instructions and modifications to the site. Just to recap there are two existing freestanding signs, one at each entrance to the development. Both of those signs are compliant to the zoning resolution requirements. The maximum height allowed by the zoning resolution for freestanding signs is ten feet, maximum area is fifty square feet and both the existing signs comply with these requirements.

Mr. Snyder stated that what was presented last month was a sign that had 106 square feet of area and 17 feet 7 inches in height for each entrance to replace existing signs at the exact locations. The Board discussed this and the meeting was continued. Revised plan was submitted and the Board was copies of the plan. The applicant reduced area of the signs by 31 sq. ft. from a 106 sq. ft. to 75 sq. ft. and reduce the height 17.7 ft to 14.6 ft. which is approximately three feet shorter.

Mr. Flynn asked if the sign would be similar to what is currently there or greatly different?

Mr. Snyder stated that all of the signs that are in this office park both retail and office development comply with the height and area requirements of the zoning resolution. There have not been any variances granted in this office park.

CHRISTOPHER MOTTER, 212 Dunmore Lane, Williston, Vermont, stated that he wanted to thank the Board for letting them have the opportunity for a continuance. He apologized to the

Board for not being able to attend the previous meeting. He had the opportunity to reviewed the video minutes from the last meeting.

TODD ETTER asked what is the logic of going from horizontal to vertical?

Mr. Motter stated that their sign has always been vertical and that it is the one they have used in their company for the past fifteen years. It is the one they use on all of their buildings they have either acquired or constructed in the United States in the last twelve years. It has kind of been their trademark, logo and signature colors. The height and dimension of it was created by an architect of theirs. They go vertical to increase the visibility as well as to increase the aesthetic of the entire surrounding commercial zone. The area that they are talking about, the two buildings and the other buildings that were constructed by Duke all look the same. All the buildings were constructed around the same time period and are built by the same builder and as a result a lot of the signs are naturally going to be the same because they were done by the same contractor. The office park has been suffering with a large amount of vacancies and one of the things new tenants ask for is signage. They feel that they have to start doing higher class finishes to the area to bring in higher class tenants and higher-class tenants want to have signage. They are hoping to provide that to them in order to increase the overall occupancy of those buildings.

Mr. Etter stated that one of the things he is struggling with in Mr. Motter's statements is the concept that the original developer, Duke, is that they all look the same and yet instead of making a change to the building, they are making a change just to the sign. If you would have come to him and said here is our total development plan and this is what we are going to do with the buildings and this is how the signs fits into our new look, he would have looked at this a little differently than just a sign. He finds it very difficult to understand how a sign is going to change 55% occupancy. Changing the look of the building, changing the tenants finishes inside, the lobby, those are the things he sees that makes a difference.

Mr. Motter stated that Mr. Etter was right. A total package with a large disbursement of funds would probably be the big solution. First, of all he doesn't have a giant package of changes they are making. They have been doing it gradually since they have purchased the building. The main reason for that is at 55% the building is basically treading water; it does not have any additional cash. They have recently brought in a new tenant, World Pay, that is the only plus over 8,000 sq. ft. new lease that has taken place in the sub market they are currently in.

Ms. Bucco asked how long have they owned the buildings.

Mr. Motter stated that they have owned the building since April of last year.

Mr. Etter asked him if he was at 55% occupancy then?

Mr. Motter stated yes and now they are currently about 70% with World Pay.

Mr. Etter stated that if they approve the sign tonight can he tell them in six months they would have 90% occupancy?

Mr. Motter stated that he could tell him that but he would be lying. What he can tell him that he is right about the big package would be a good thing. He would like to do that, but he has partners he has to speak to. One of the things he has to do unfortunately is move it in a very consecutive fashion. The signs are the first part and it is kind of the easiest thing to set up that a tenant likes. In fixing the lobbies, he has done several improvements there, televisions, new paintings, interior direction signage, bringing the elevators up to code and change the lighting over to LED. Secondly, going thru the DRV, once they realized this would require a process of getting a variance, they wanted to see if there was anything like landscaping in the area that they could bring forth as part of their discussion.

Mr. Kessler asked when they were at 55% occupancy how many tenants did they have?

Mr. Motter stated that they had about 11 tenants.

Ms. Bucco stated that it is her understanding that in total there is two hundred and fifty thousand square feet.

Mr. Motter stated that is correct.

Mr. Flynn asked if they could live with 10 feet and 50 total square feet for the signage?

Mr. Motter stated that he could certainly live with that but the reason he came for the variance is to ask for something larger.

Mr. Flynn stated that he understands that but what the argument comes to is, what are they trying to do. Is it coming up with a new sign that looks better than what they have? He does not see any landscaping but he will just assume that they are going to landscape it in a very nice manner. So, it is entirely different then what they have now but it might fit in the requirements that the Township currently has. Maybe the other signs aren't 10 feet, maybe they are 8 feet but a lot of them are horizontal they are not vertical. So, if you are starting out vertical you are setting themselves a part but if you could also set your self apart with certain design characteristics. If they can do all that and still stay in the top of the frame work of no greater than 10 feet, no greater than 50 total square feet do they still come up with the same concept of what they are trying to accomplish and that is create a certain sense of excitement.

Mr. Motter stated that they do not feel with 50 square feet they could build that same course of excitement and that will not differentiate enough. Despite what Mr. Flynn said they are going vertical opposed to horizontal. The design looks different and it sets themselves apart to have a larger sign.

MS. CYNTHIA BUCCO moved to approve Final Development Modification to Symmes 87-8 Governor's Hill Partners – Freestanding Signs to allow replacement of two existing freestanding monument signs that comply with the Zoning Resolution with two new freestanding signs with more height an area than permitted.

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

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

None

ADJOURNMENT

MR. ETTER made motion to adjourn at 7:35 p.m. MR. REICHMAN seconded the motion and the roll call vote was as follows: Ms. Bucco - 'yes'; Mr. Etter - 'yes'; Mr. Flynn - 'yes'; Mr. Kessler - 'yes'; and Mr. Reichman - "yes".

Approved:

Chairperson

Zoning Secretary