

**SOUTH STRABANE TOWNSHIP
ZONING HEARING BOARD REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

August 9, 2021

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

1. ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

On Monday, August 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., after due advertisement according to law, a public meeting of the Zoning Hearing Board (“ZHB”) was held at the South Strabane Township Municipal Building (550 Washington Road, Washington, PA 15301) and the following were present:

Art Sullivan, Chairperson
James Stewart, Vice-Chair
Andy Rembert, Member

Also Present

Brandon Stanick, Township Manager
Jim Sutter, Assistant to the Township Manager
Michael Cruny, ZHB Solicitor
Sheila Rozanc, Stenographer

2. Approval of the Zoning Hearing Board Meeting Minutes – July 12, 2021

Mr. Rembert moved to approve the July 12, 2021 Meeting Minutes as presented. Chair Stewart seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Chair Sullivan moved to take Agenda Item #4 first and then return to the regular order of the agenda. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. Hearing no objection from the other Applicants, the motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

Ms. Rozanc administered the oath to those in attendance.

3. Public Hearing: Consideration of an application by Frances A. Shrontz seeking the following for the vacant property located at Parcel ID: 600-006-03-01-008-00, on Lot #3 of the S.R. Haney Plan of Lots on Pierce Avenue, in the C-2 Zoning District: i) a variance from Section 245-63 regarding authorized uses in the C-2 Zoning District to allow the construction of a single-family dwelling.

Rick Shrontz, son of Frances A. Shrontz (“Applicant”) and representing the Applicant, gave an overview of the request. He noted several parties have inquired about purchasing the property located at Parcel ID: 600-006-03-01-008-00 (“Property”) to construct a single-family dwelling. However, because the property is zoned C-2 Commercial, this is not possible without obtaining a variance. Additionally, given the residential character of the neighborhood despite the current

zoning, there is little commercial development occurring in the vicinity with the exception of Armen's Barrels next door. Because of this, it has been difficult to find interested buyers for a commercial use.

Mr. Rembert stated if the variance is granted, the Property will still need to comply with all other zoning requirements. He asked if the Applicant currently owns the Property. Mr. Shrontz confirmed this is the case. Chair Sullivan asked if there were any parties interested in purchasing the Property to construct a building. Mr. Shrontz stated they have had several inquiries in the past. He clarified they wished to sell the Property to someone that wants to build a single-family home. He stated given the character of the area, he would prefer a business not go on the Property and potentially disturb an otherwise quiet neighborhood.

Mr. Rembert inquired about the age of the other houses on the street. Mr. Shrontz expressed his belief the other homes were built in the 1960's. Mr. Rembert asked if they were built before the current zoning was instituted. Mr. Shrontz stated he was unsure. A discussion ensued on the zoning history of the neighborhood. Chair Sullivan stated it was likely the area was zoned commercial after the Applicant had already come into possession of the Property. Township Manager Stanick stated it is safe to presume the houses on the street are existing nonconforming structures. Chair Sullivan stated that its clear the acquisition happened before the area was zoned Commercial based on looking at the Washington County Parcel Viewer.

Solicitor Cruny asked the Applicant if they would characterize the neighborhood as generally residential despite the presence of a couple of properties with commercial uses. Mr. Shrontz confirmed this is the case. Mr. Cruny asked the Applicant if it is their testimony a house would fit the characteristic of the neighborhood better than a business. Mr. Shrontz confirmed this is the case.

Mr. Rembert inquired about what the perceived hardship for the Applicant's request. Mr. Shrontz stated because it is a dead-end road only a small number of businesses would purchase the property and it is also not a very good location for a commercial use. Additionally, the Property has no value with commercial zoning, but they are still responsible for maintenance and taxes. He added, there is no way to receive value from the land based on how it is currently zoned. A discussion ensued on the adjacent winery and the characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood.

Mr. Cruny asked the Applicant if they are also concerned over the parking requirements to which a commercial buyer would have to adhere, given the relatively small size of the parcel. Mr. Shrontz confirmed this is the case. Mr. Stewart asked if the Applicant has any prospective buyers. Ms. Shrontz stated there are no buyers at this time. Ms. Shrontz stated she did not want to sell the Property given the difficulties with the current zoning.

Mr. Cruny read the following exhibits into the record:

Exhibit A – Application for Variance dated July 25, 2021 with paid fee plus pictures showing a flat vacant lot consisting of grass;

Exhibit B – Proof of advertisement of the Public Hearing in the July 26 and August 2, 2021 editions of the Observer-Reporter;

Exhibit C – Letter sent to neighboring property owners dated July 26, 2021 and email from Assistant to the Township Manager Sutter confirming a notice was posted on the Property;
Exhibit D – Tax Parcel confirmation;
Exhibit E – Relevant portions of the Township Zoning Code;
Exhibit F – Additional pictures; and
Exhibit G – Email from Nancy Gray, resident on Lyman Avenue, expressing support for the proposed application.

A discussion ensued regarding the R-1 Residential District standards as a comparable zoning district for the existing character of the neighborhood. In response to a question from Mr. Rembert, Mr. Stanick advised a request from the neighborhood to rezone the area was received, a recommendation from the Planning Commission to rezone the Property was forwarded to the Board of Supervisors and the rezoning was not approved.

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the request for a Variance from Section 245-63 of the Code regarding authorized uses in the C-2 Zoning District to allow the construction of a single-family dwelling with the condition the Applicant adheres to all standards for the R-1 Residential Zoning District. Mr. Stewart seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

- 4. Public Hearing: Consideration of an application by Custom Signs, Inc. submitted on behalf of Washington Mall JCP Assoc., LTD seeking the following for the new Huntington Bank facility located at 10 Trinity Place in the C-2 Zoning District: i) a variance from Section 245-188D(1) regarding the maximum number of wall signs on lots with multiple street frontage to allow wall signs on elevations without street frontage; ii) a variance from Section 245-191C(1)(c) regarding the maximum allowable aggregate surface area for all wall signs; and iii) a variance from Section 245-191D(1) regarding the maximum allowable surface area for on-premise directional signs.**

Cheryl Fallos of Philadelphia Sign Company, representing Huntington Bank (“Applicant”) via Zoom, reviewed the request to add two wall signs on the west and south elevations of the facility located at 10 Trinity Place (“Property”). Wall signs are already on the north and east elevations of the building and satisfy the requirements of the Code. Ms. Fallos stated a wall sign is necessary on the south elevation because it faces Trinity Place and provides notice to people approaching from the Trinity Point Shopping Center. She stated a wall sign is necessary on the west elevation because it provides notice to people traveling northbound on Route 19.

Mr. Rembert asked for clarification on where the Property is located. A discussion on the location of the bank followed.

Cindy Krizinsky of Custom Signs, Inc., representing the Applicant via Zoom, presented the site plan with the entire package of signage for the facility. Mr. Rembert asked for specifics on what signage the previous tenants had installed. Ms. Krizinsky stated she is not aware of the specifics, but they were of a substantial size. Chair Sullivan asked if there is any documentation of previous zoning relief granted to the previous tenants in the Township’s records. Mr. Stanick stated that staff could not find any additional information, and the old signage had already been removed when the permit applications for the new signage arrived. He stated the proposed wall signs appear

comparable to the former signage. Ms. Krizinsky stated the Applicant is using the same size sign band area.

Mr. Rembert inquired of the Applicant's rationale for requesting signage on the south elevation. Ms. Krizinsky stated signage on the south elevation accommodates the positioning of the site and the sloped road serving the shopping center. She also stated the motivation is to let drivers know the bank is approaching with ample notice prior to the turn on to the Property.

Ms. Krizinsky reviewed the new signage installed to date on the Property and a discussion ensued regarding the directional signs. Chair Sullivan noted the signage on Route 19 is becoming more intense. He questioned if a true hardship exists. He expressed his desire to adhere as close to the Zoning Code as possible. Ms. Krizinsky stated the hardship is based on physical and visual hardships associated with the location of the building.

Following a consensus of the ZHB, the ZHB adjourned into Executive Session to discuss potential litigation at 6:59 p.m. The ZHB returned from Executive Session at 7:06 p.m.

Chair Sullivan asked if any employees of the Huntington Bank location were involved in the process. Ms. Krizinsky stated they were not. Chair Sullivan asked about the locations of the bank's customers. Ms. Krizinsky expressed her belief customers would primarily be local. Chair Sullivan asked from which direction will most customers arrive at the bank. Mr. Stanick stated any traffic study will reveal the Route 19 Corridor is where most of the customers will come from, especially compared with the alternative from the Trinity Point Shopping Center. Chair Sullivan asked Ms. Krizinsky if she agreed with this characterization. She stated she did, though she could not say so for certain because she is not from the area. She then stated it certainly seems as if Route 19 would be the most heavily traveled way of accessing the bank.

Chair Sullivan asked Ms. Krizinsky if she had the authority to modify the request in the event there is a compromise. She stated she would let Huntington Bank make that decision. Chair Sullivan asked specifically if they would agree to only three wall signs instead of the four requested. Ms. Krizinsky stated they will accept whatever the ZHB approves and that receiving approval for one additional wall sign would be preferable to not receiving approval for any additional wall signs.

Mr. Cruny read the following exhibits into the record:

Exhibit A – Application for Variance dated June 14, 2021;
Exhibit B – Proof of advertisement of the Public Hearing in the July 26 and August 2, 2021 editions of the Observer-Reporter;
Exhibit C – Letter sent to neighboring property owners dated July 26, 2021 and email from Mr. Sutter confirming a notice was posted on the Property;
Exhibit D – Copy of Washington County Tax Assessment confirming ownership;
Exhibit E – Relevant portions of the Township Zoning Code; and
Exhibit F – Note this matter was advertised in the June 30 edition of the Observer-Reporter but no action was taken at the July 12, 2021 ZHB meeting.

Chair Sullivan moved to approve the request for i) a variance from Section 245-188D(1) regarding the maximum number of wall signs on lots with multiple street frontage to allow a wall sign on the west elevation without street frontage; and ii) a variance from Section 245-191C(1)(c) regarding the maximum allowable aggregate surface area for all wall signs allowing 88.41 square feet in aggregate surface area; and iii) a variance from Section 245-191D(1) regarding the maximum allowable surface area for on-premise directional signs to allow a surface area of 4.5 square feet. Mr. Rembert seconded the motion. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The ZHB allocates a period of time during this item for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the ZHB on any matter. Each person addressing the ZHB is asked to limit their comments to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

There were no comments from the public.

6. ADJOURNMENT

As there was no further business to come before the ZHB, Mr Rembert moved to adjourn. Chair Sullivan seconded the motion and the meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandon J. Stanick
Township Manager / Zoning Officer