



**ADA TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 3, 2024, REGULAR MEETING**

A regular meeting of the Ada Township Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at 4:30 p.m., at the Ada Township Hall Assembly Room, 7330 Thornapple River Dr. SE, Ada, Michigan

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair McNamara called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Courtade, Ellixson-Andrews, McNamara, Nuttall

Members Absent: 0

Staff Present: Bajdek, Buckley, Said

Others Present: 6 members of the public

Chair McNamara made note to the applicants that there are only three ZBA members in attendance at the time, which is enough for quorum, however, they would need unanimous consent from all three ZBA members for your requests to be either approved or denied. The Applicants agreed to proceed.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Moved by Nuttall, supported by Ellixson-Andrews, to approve the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 1, 2024, REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Nuttall, supported by Ellixson-Andrews, to approve the October 1, 2024, meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried.

V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS - none

VI. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Request for a variance, side yard setback, to allow for an addition on the west side of the existing building in the I Industrial zoning district, 6540 E. Fulton Street, Parcel No. 41-15-28-324-005, Makuski Builders Inc.**

Bill Makuski, owner of 6540 E. Fulton Street, said he was requesting a variance for a side yard setback from 35 ft. to 9 ft. He explained there are three tenants in the building and one tenant needs additional space, so he is proposing an addition to his building. He said that due to the age of many of the buildings in the area, many of them are placed on or near the lot line and not

meeting the 35 ft. requirement and that he thinks the current 35 ft. requirement was implemented after the buildings were built. He feels he complies with all the criteria because of the narrowness of the lot.

Courtade arrived meeting at 4:37 p.m.

Planning Director Said summarized the Staff Report and stated the proposed addition is less intrusive than the existing building. Said noted that this addition will also need to go before the Planning Commission for site plan approval due to the size of the project.

Said explained that the subject property is considered an undersized lot, along with many other existing industrially zoned properties along the E. Fulton Street corridor. The granting of this request would be in-line with similar side yard setbacks that already exist and that have granted in the past by the Zoning Board for such properties, including most recently in January for Ada Valley Meats, while allowing for the growth expansion of an existing and viable industrial business operation within the Township.

McNamara opened public hearing at 4:38 p.m. There was no public comment and the public hearing was closed.

Courtade said the request clearly falls within the #1 criteria, 'where it is found that, by reason of the exceptional narrowness, shallowness or shape of a specific parcel of property.'

Moved by Courtade, supported by Nuttall, to approve the variance request, subject to site plan approval by the Planning Commission for the proposed addition and associated site improvements.

Motion carried.

2. Request for an aggregate area signage variance, 6477 Ada Drive SE, Parcel No. 41-15-33-101-027, James J. Rabaut on behalf of Roman Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids (St. Robert of Newminster Parish)

Jim Rabaut, Warner Norcross & Judd, council for the Diocese of Grand Rapids, said he is joined with Liz Peters, Principal of St. Roberts, Mark Winters, AMDG Architects, and Brendan Hayes, an associate.

Mr. Rabaut said they are requesting 2 variances; one variance for the number of signs allowed (from two to three signs) and a variance for the overall sign area. He explained the reason for the third sign is that they feel they need it to direct people more efficiently and more safely to the site of the new parish activity center. The proposed sign is not illuminated and would be placed over the entry door.

The other request for the total square footage of all signs combined, they are requesting 75 sq. ft total, vs. the 50 sq. ft. requirement. There is already a monument sign on Ada Drive and adding the new sign would increase their total combined of all signage to 75 sq. ft. Mr. Rabaut said that looking at the standards for review he acknowledges a variance is a higher bar of approval, but he said the depth of the lot merits the idea they want to direct people appropriately to the improvements on site.

Mark Winters, Landscape Architect with AMDG Architects, went over the drawings included in the packet and spoke about the existing signs associated with the church, and 2 signs associated with the parish. One monument sign out at Ada Drive and one canopy mounted sign that directs people to parish offices. There are also two existing signs associated with school use (one ground mounted and one canopy mounted). Mr. Winters further explained the details of the proposed sign and its location for the use of the Parish Activity Center.

Said made note that the legal notice contained a typographical error in that it only included the aggregate sign area reference and not the number of signs variance. However, in Staff's view this is a minor matter because notification did go out to all the property owners in the area and did include reference to the overall proposed signage, and as such the matter can proceed for Zoning Board of Appeals review.

Said summarized the Staff Report and explained that the Zoning Ordinance allows a church or a school to have two signs. The applicant proposes to install one additional 20 sq. ft. wall sign at the Parish Activity Center. The variance request is to allow for three signs and a for the overall sign area of 75 sq. ft., which exceeds the maximum allowed of 50 sq. ft.

Said explained that the request may not meet the strictest letter of all three of the standards (referenced in the Staff Report), but the details merit further consideration due to it being a very large site with many church and school activities. The proposed sign is a relatively small sign, as such, if the Zoning Board of Appeals determines that the standard have been satisfied, Staff has no objections to approval of the requested variances.

McNamara opened the public hearing at 4:48 p.m. There was no public comment and the public hearing was closed.

McNamara moved to board discussion.

Courtade disclosed that he is an acting Catholic but not a parishioner at St. Roberts and has attended mass there occasionally. He said that does not bias his opinion or objectivity in any way, but it does inform of his personal decision because he is familiar with the property. With that being said, he feels the request would satisfy all three of the criteria; unique shape and large size of the property.

Ellixson-Andrews asked what the intent is in the restriction for the number of signs. Said explained that he believes the ordinance is meant to minimize visual clutter/distraction.

Moved by Nuttall, supported by Courtade, to approve the additional signage allowing three signs and an increase in overall square footage from 50 sq. ft. to 75 sq. ft. for the Parish Activity Center. Motion carried.

VII. CORRESPONDENCE

Said made note that among the duties and powers of the Zoning Board of Appeals is to decide any question involving interpretation of the zoning ordinance. Said explained that Staff has been approached with a request from an office building at Ripley Drive and Fulton Street to do a couple of additions to the building, a total of 468 sq. ft., the total building square footage is approximately 19,000 sq. ft. The zoning ordinance has a threshold where it explains this request (buildings under 40,000 sq. ft.) can be approved administratively. Said stated that staff believes the intent

of the ordinance is still met if we can approve this administratively to allow it without having send it to the Planning Commission. Staff believes that the spirit of the ordinance is to allow for small additions (for smaller buildings) to be able to be handled administratively. Said stated he is seeking Zoning Board concurrence with that interpretation.

There was ZBA discussion regarding the current language of the ordinance, and when it is appropriate to review a project/plan administratively. Courtade noted with the minimal changes, it seems more efficient and equitable if the Zoning Board of Appeals adopt the interpretation suggested by Staff. The ZBA members verbally concurred with Staff's interpretation.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT - none

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Nuttall, supported by Courtade, to adjourn the meeting at 5:07 p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo DeMarco, Ada Township Clerk

rs:eb