

Altoona Board of Adjustment Hearing – September 5, 2013 – 6:30 PM

Members Present – Dale Sikes, John Rullman, Doug Teuber, Robert Hall, Lea Morris

Members absent – None

Staff Present – John Shaw, Chad Quick, Susi Hoots

Others Present – Mike Harmeyer, David Cupp

Chairman Rullman called hearing to order.

Sikes moved to amend the agenda by adding Item 2 to consider a request for variances from Family Care Physicians for their property at 753 8th Street SW that was tabled at the August 6, 2013 hearing. Seconded by Morris. Vote: Yes – Sikes, Morris, Teuber, Rullman, Hall. No – None.

#1. Continue public hearing regarding a request for variances from Guido’s Building Company for the property at 320 8th Street SE, Altoona, Iowa, to allow a freestanding sign to set one foot from the north and one foot from the west property lines, variances of nine feet each. The property is zoned C-2 (General Commercial). Freestanding signs are subject to the requirements of the Sign Code, Chapter 159.

Shaw addressed the Board to update the status of this request. Staff has examined the utility locations in the right-of-way at front of the subject property and determined eight (8) feet of the right-of-way could be vacated without effecting utilities. The City Council has scheduled a public hearing for September 16, 2013 on the vacation and disposition of that portion of the right-of-way. The variance request remains for a nine-foot variance as if the vacation and disposition of the right-of-way is granted and the sign located north of the existing parking lot, the sign would still be only one foot from the north property line.

Mike Harmeyer, 1111 11th Avenue SE, Altoona, Iowa, of Guido’s Building Company, LLC, addressed the Board to say that if the vacation of the right-of-way is passed, it will make it possible for him to locate the proposed sign away from the sidewalk and alleviate concerns that were expressed by the Board at the August hearing. Rullman agreed that the new location would improve visibility and the sign would not be as close to the sidewalk.

Sikes asked Mr. Harmeyer to explain the hardship that affects this property exclusively. Harmeyer said there is no place to put a monument sign, customers are unable to find his office, the post office building blocks the view of his building. The building was not originally constructed for a retail establishment. Sikes and Rullman agreed many properties along 8th Street have the same issues.

Sikes moved to approve a nine (9) foot variance from the north property line for a sign location. Seconded by Morris. Vote: Yes – Sikes, Morris, Rullman, Teuber, Hall. No – None.

#2 Consider a request for variances from Family Care Physicians for their property at 753 8th Street SW, Altoona, Iowa, to allow a freestanding sign to set 4’6” north of the south property line. The property is zoned R-3 (Multi-family Residential) and the use of the property as a medical clinic is non-conforming. The sign, at present, does not meet the setback requirements of the R-3 district: it is larger in sign area and taller than the R-3 district allows. Three variances are

sought – setback, sign area, and height. Freestanding signs are subject to the requirements of the Sign Code, Chapter 159.

David Cupp, 604 Caulder Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa, addressed the Board on behalf of Family Care Physicians. Mr. Cupp said the clinic building was remodeled 5 or 6 years ago and there was discussion about replacing the sign, but no where to place a sign that would meet code. Subsequently the existing sign rotted. The sign was originally installed maybe 25 years ago and constructed of six-inch square red steel posts cemented into the ground. When the sign rotted, he re-wrapped the steel posts and installed a new sign face. While the original sign face was between the posts, the new face extends beyond the posts. They will be happy to install stone around the sign base to match the stone on the clinic building.

Rullman and Hall mentioned the brush grown up around and obstructing the sign.

Cupp said the grounds maintenance person was to remove the bushes etc and would be so directed again.

Sikes asked how far the existing sign is from the south property line and the distance from the bottom of the sign to the ground. Cupp said the sign is about six inches from the property line and about four and one-half feet from the ground. There is a six-inch gap between the bottom of the sign face and where a stone base could be. Quick said the sign face was measured at 28.33 square feet and is 7 ft 9 inches tall.

Teuber asked if the bushes will be dug out so they don't return. Cupp responded yes.

Morris asked at what point the property may be re-zoned. Shaw said that the City Comprehensive Land Use Plan is going to be up-dated soon. There are several properties along 8th Street that are not zoned properly. The City Council may initiate re-zoning.

Sikes asked what the sign requirements would be if this property were zoned C-2. Shaw said the sign as is would comply with the C-2 size requirements. Shaw further stated it is highly likely the property will be zoned C-2 through Council's actions or the property-owner's voluntary application for re-zoning.

Morris moved to approve the setback, sign area, and sign height variances as requested, allowing the sign to remain in its current location, provided that before January 1, 2014 a stone sign base is installed to meet the sign code definition of a monument sign and match the stone on the building. Seconded by Teuber. Vote: Yes – Morris, Teuber, Hall, Sikes, Rullman. No – None.

#3. Approve minutes of the August 6, 2013 hearing.

Hall moved to approve the minutes as presented. Seconded by Teuber. Vote: Yes – Hall, Teuber, Sikes, Rullman. Pass – Morris. No – None.

Next hearing scheduled for Tuesday, October 1, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

Hearing Adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susi Hoots

Community Services Administrative Assistant