

Altoona Board of Adjustment Hearing – December 3, 2013 – 6:30 PM

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

Members absent – None

Staff Present – John Shaw and Chad Quick

Others Present – Brian Siddall, Tim West, Steve Stimmel, Kevin and Barbara Bartemes, Andy McReynolds, Randy Cokerham, and Justin Washburn.

Chairman Rullman called hearing to order.

#1. Consider a request from AutoZone for the property they are purchasing at 3325 8th Street SW, Altoona, Iowa, to allow them to install an Interstate High Rise sign for AutoZone. They are seeking variances to install the sign face at an angle other than perpendicular to the Interstate, to construct the sign at a 10-foot setback from the south property line where 50 feet is required, and to exceed the 1,000 foot separation distance from the Interstate right-of-way.

Brian Siddall, AutoZone Sign Manage, 123 S. Front Street, Memphis, TN, presented the request. He said their site sits below the Interstate and is outside of the maximum distance requirement of 1,000 feet. He believes it will provide better visibility from the Interstate. He had trouble locating the CarX property. Sikes asked how much lower is the site versus B-Bops. Siddall was not sure. Sikes then asked about impulse buying that Siddall said they needed the sign for. Sikes questioned the “essential repair services” and impulse buying for changing batteries, wipers, light bulbs, etc. Siddall said he feels he’s about twice the maximum distance. Rullman said CarX has never approached the Board about a variance. Sikes believes AutoZone is looking for a competitive advantage – Siddall said every business is looking for that. Sikes also said there is an existing easement for ingress/egress. Morris noted the Board has not dealt with this issue before, i.e. distance from Interstate. Hall questioned the orientation – request is for perpendicular to 8th Street, not Interstate.

Justin Washburn, Vista Real Estate, 2400 86th Street, Urbandale, IA 50323, said they own the property to the north and are in favor of the request. Glad the site is being redeveloped. They are working with AutoZone to move the ingress/egress easement and on other access issues. They are seeking a curb cut in the NW portion of the AutoZone lot. Andy McReynolds, 3131 8th St SW and 654 31st Ave SW, Altoona, is in support of the area being redeveloped, but the City changed the sign code to eliminate pole signs and only allow monument signs, which he installed when he built Claxon’s. He believes that at about 2,000 feet from the Interstate, AutoZone is trying to get a competitive advantage. Believes granting the variance would be a slippery slope. Hopes a pole sign is not a deal breaker because he does want the property redeveloper. Kevin Bartemes, 638 31st Ave SW, thinks the business is a good fit for the area; they close pretty early, but are concerned about lighting and setting a precedent.

Hall asked why in the proposed location? Siddall answered they won’t put a sign north of the building, but perhaps would move it west of the building on a large island. Rullman said his concern is precedent, feels it would give them an advantage, and concerned about light and the residential neighbors to the north.

Sikes moved to deny the variance to exceed the 1,000 foot separation distance. Seconded by Morris. Vote: Yes – Sikes, Morris, Hall, Teuber, Rullman. No – None.

#2. Consider a request from Prairie Meadows Racetrack and Casino for their property at 1 Prairie Meadows Drive, Altoona, Iowa. They are seeking a variance of 131.5 feet to reduce the front yard setback along an arterial street (Adventureland Drive) from 150 feet to 18.5 feet, on the north side of the lot. The property is zoned C-6 (Commercial Entertainment/Recreation). They are proposing to construct a 1,860 square foot bullpen maintenance building in this area.

Tim West, Snyder & Associates, and Steve Stimmel, 2014 44th St Des Moines, explained the project. Prairie Meadows would like to construct a bullpen maintenance building 18.5 feet from the north property line along Adventureland Drive. The location is generally NW of the racetrack itself. They use this area now to maintain equipment. The reasoning for the request is 1) to use the existing asphalt pad to store material for the track; 2) to utilize the existing gate and fencing; 3) staff is now located in the facilities area and they can't monitor track conditions; and 4) other locations are not as conducive because of topography and/or storm water. They believe the fence screening and landscaping will help screen the building from Adventureland Drive. The colors are earth tones like the storage building, and broken up into smaller elements. Base of the building is about four feet lower than the base of the fence. The trash enclosure is outside of the fence.

Sikes asked about a hardship. West said they've looked at other sites and they have access and slope issues. They can set this building below the fence. Sikes questioned why the building now after so many years without one. West said access to the track and this is the best location.

Sikes wondered why the building could not be south, West said because the material storage stock pile is in that area. Sikes said even further south of that pile. Stimmel said they can see the track operations and starting position better from the proposed location. Rullman asked and John Shaw and West both noted the calibration takes place in the parking lot to the west currently. Shaw said that he has concerns about the calibration taking place across the drive. He believes the proposed location is best for the public benefit. West said this is the lesser of evils so to speak. Discussion ensued about the location and orientation of the building and why it had to be in this location.

Rullman asked why it wasn't done with the last storage building east of the track. Sikes keep coming back to a "what is the hardship?" Stimmel said staffing and efficiency and visibility are reasons for the location. Shaw said if the option is this building or the material stockpile, he would think the building would be the better option where he would be concerned about wind erosion and dirt blowing onto Adventureland Drive. West said moving the building south is also about proximity to the track. Sikes wondered how close the quarter horse starting area to the proposed building than if the building were move south. West asked to table the request so that they could come back with more information for the Board at the next meeting.

Sikes moved to table the request to the next meeting. Seconded by Morris. Vote: Yes – Sikes, Morris, Hall, Rullman, Teuber. No – None.

#3. Approve minutes of the November 7, 2013 hearing.

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

Next hearing scheduled for Tuesday, January 7, 2014 at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall

Meeting Adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Chad Quick
Planner