

## **Altoona Board of Adjustment Hearing – September 13, 2016 – 6:30 PM Altoona City Hall**

Members Present – Dale Sikes, John Rullman, Mary Simon, Robert Hall

Members Absent – Lea Morris

Staff Present – John Shaw, Chad Quick, Susi Hoots

Others Present – Denis Franzen, Keith Olson, Susan Smith, Scott Heaney, Randy J. Sowell, Darrin Miedema, Kaitlin Miller, unidentified others.

Chairman Rullman called hearing to order at 6:30 p.m.

**#1 Public hearing to consider a request from Walnut Creek Church for the property at 107 6<sup>th</sup> Street SW, Altoona, Iowa. They are seeking a variance to add an addition to the southwest corner of the church building. The addition is within 6’11” of the west property line and 11’11” from the south property line. The variance request is to expand a non-conforming structure as per Chapter 166.04. The typical setback for a church use in the R-2 (One and Two-family Residential) zoning district is 50-feet as per Chapter 168.03.**

Darrin Miedema, 1246 Bentwood Court, Altoona, Iowa, presented the request for variance. Miedema explained the building was constructed around 1920 and does not currently meet the fifty-foot setback requirement. Working with OPN Architects, the plan is to remove and re-build the existing ramp and eliminate the interior staircase. There are three levels and they want to make the building handicap accessible by adding an addition to the southwest corner of the building that will include a lift. The current entrances will be re-worked to be more functional. The exterior of the building will be re-sided. The addition will not extend any further west than the current structure and not as far south as the current concrete steps. The hardship is that the property is unique, the current building does not meet setbacks and to be used as a church it is required to meet ADA requirements; no church could fit on the lot and comply with the currently-required 50-foot setback.

Kaitlin Miller, 506 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue SW, Altoona, addressed the Board to express her support of the plan and to encourage the granting of the variance.

No other public input has been received.

**Hall moved to approve the variance request as presented. Seconded by Simon. Votes: Yes – Hall, Simon, Rullman, Sikes. No – None. Variance request approved.**

**#2. Public hearing to consider multiple sign variances from Franzen I80 Partnership and the Carpenters Union Training Center for property at 1555 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North which the Carpenters Union is proposing to purchase and construct upon. The lot is currently a vacant lot North of Casey’s on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue North. The variances sought include exceeding the overall sign area limit, exceeding the sign area of a monument sign, and using a banner flag as a permanent sign. The sign Ordinance is Chapter 159 of the City Code.**

Randy Sowell, United Brotherhood of Carpenters, 533 S. Fremont, Los Angeles, California, presented the request for variance by explaining that the name and brand of their organization is quite long and cannot be shortened without deviating from the brand that is used through the USA and Canada. The location of the building was selected due to the proximity to I-80 and it is

important that the signage is evident and consistent with the branding used at the organization's other locations. This is the "face" of the organization: quality, clarity, precision. The proposed signage is proportional to the building.

Rullman asked the applicant to state the hardship.

Sowell responded that the branding and face of the organization are very important as well as the lettering to be consistent with the more than 200 locations throughout the country. Visibility is an objective to growing the organization and presence in the community. The building is going to be good addition to the community and bring lots of benefits to the community.

Sikes asked about the training that will be taking place in the building.

Sowell explained 10 to 30 participants will be in each class, depending on the type of class. The participants will come from Minneapolis and Omaha areas for daily, weekly, or monthly programs.

Rullman asked about the current local/metro facility.

Sowell said there is current local representation in a facility on Delaware Avenue. People from here currently travel to other cities for training.

Rullman asked about the training facilities that will be in the proposed new building.

Sowell said that approximately 40% of the new building will be administrative space. The backside of the building is warehouse style with a 32-foot clear height ceiling for interior scaffolding, etc. type training. The training is necessary for apprentices and journeymen to meet educational requirements to advance to higher wage rates and improve their expertise.

Rullman asked about traffic. Sowell responded that classes are held during the day and evenings and there will be some traffic.

Sikes reiterated that there is difficulty identifying a hardship as is required by law and Iowa Supreme Court for this Board to grant a variance: an inability to use the property the way it is designed. The Board is restricted as to what it can do.

Discussion ensued regarding the amount of signage requested versus the amount of signage allowed by code and the method of measuring signage.

Denis Franzen, 9186 NE 46<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Altoona, addressed the Board by saying the subject property is a premier piece of real estate. Initially, they had envisioned a hotel at this location but are very happy to have the carpenter union. The proposed building will be beautiful and will bring tax revenue to the city. As owner of Iowa Cold Storage he would be willing to reduce its signage if it would mean the union could increase their allowance.

All Board Members agreed that the building is attractive and would provide value to the community. Discussion ensued among Board Members and Staff as to whether this issue could be better addressed by City Council and timeframes if the variance request were tabled.

Scott Heaney, Schemmer Architects, 1044 North 115<sup>th</sup> Street, Omaha, Nebraska, mentioned that the signage on the Papillion, Nebraska building was measured/determined differently than the measurement his company supplied for this building. For the Nebraska building, each letter of the wall signage was measured separately and the dead space between letters was not included. Using that method the square footage is dramatically reduced.

Staff commented that the way staff calculates signage area would be a lesser square footage than the amount submitted by the applicant.

Shaw pointed out to the Board that they do have the authority to grant something less than the full variance requests.

More discussion took place on various scenarios for signage.

**Simon moved to approve the variance requests as follows: No flag (banner sign), removal of the words “Training Center” from the east-facing wall sign, removal of the union shield logo sign from the southeast-facing wall, and the maximum monument-type signage to be 40 square feet.**

**Seconded by Hall. Vote: Yes – Rullman, Sikes, Simon, Hall. No – None. Variance request approved as amended.**

**#4 Minutes of the June 6, 2016 meeting. Sikes moved to approve the minutes.**

**Seconded by Simon. Vote: Yes – Sikes, Simon, Rullman, Hall. No – None.**

**#5. Next meeting/hearing will be Tuesday, October 4th, 2016 at 6:30 p.m.**

Hearing Adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susi Hoots

Community Development Administrative Coordinator