

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
GREAT FALLS BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT/APPEALS
December 20, 2018

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting of the Great Falls Board of Adjustment/Appeals was called to order by Chair Jule Stuver at 3:00 p.m. in the Gibson Room of the Civic Center.

ROLL CALL & ATTENDANCE

Great Falls Board of Adjustment/Appeals members present:

Mr. Jule Stuver, Chair
Mr. Joe McMillen
Ms. Aspen Northerner
Mr. Kyle Palagi
Ms. Krista Smith

Great Falls Board of Adjustment/Appeals members absent:

None

Planning Staff members present:

Erin Borland, Planner II
Alex Dachs, Planner II
Brad Eatherly, Planner I
Ms. Connie Tryon, Sr. Administrative Assistant

Others present:

Ms. Sara Sexe, City Attorney

Ms. Borland affirmed a quorum of the Board was present.

MINUTES

Chair Stuver asked if there was a motion to approve the meeting minutes as stated for November 1, 2018. Seeing none, Ms. Smith moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Palagi. All in favor, the minutes were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Variations from Signage Requirements for Love's Travel Plaza and County Stores

Brad Eatherly, Planner I, said the applicants, Great Falls International Airport and Love's Travel Stop and Country Stores, have initiated the variance requests that deal with property located in City limits, as well as a portion located in County jurisdiction. The portion of the property located in City limits is zoned AI Airport Industrial and is 5.125 acres in size. The portion outside of City limits is 2.125 acres in size. The variance requests are being brought forward in advance of annexation of the county parcel because the applicants' decision to move forward with the development is entirely based on whether the sign variances are approved or not.

Mr. Eatherly reviewed the site plan of the proposed development, and pointed out where the six signs for the property are being proposed. The three variance requests from code deal with the maximum 300 square feet allowed for freestanding signs per premise, the height limit of 25 feet for freestanding signs, and the allowance of on premise directional signs being no more than 4 square feet. The applicant is requesting a "Mini Hi-Rise" freestanding sign coming to 395.83 square feet, with a total square footage of all freestanding signs coming to 509.33 square feet. The requested height for the "Mini Hi-Rise" sign is 40 feet. Finally, the proposal for the four directional signs comes to 18 square feet a piece. Mr. Eatherly said staff supports all three variance requests, and reviewed the findings for the Basis of Decision as listed in the staff report. He said given the property's location on the interstate, a literal enforcement of the code would create a hardship for the applicants.

Mr. Eatherly said the variances are contingent upon successful annexation of the parcel that currently lies outside of the city limits of Great Falls. Failure to annex the property shall void the applicants' sign proposal. The applicants shall also submit the required sign permit application to the City of Great Falls for review and approval.

PETITIONER'S PRESENTATION

Steve Walters, Oklahoma City, OK, Real Estate Project Manager for Love's Travel Stop, reviewed the location of the signs on the site plan, and emphasized the importance of the height and size of the signs to ensure vehicle and pedestrian safety, especially for trucks traveling at a high rate of speed coming off the freeway and allowing them enough time to slow down, make the decision to stop at the Plaza, make the necessary lane changes and exit the freeway. He stated they have already achieved FAA approval for the height of the sign.

OPPORTUNITY FOR BOARD MEMBERS TO ASK QUESTIONS

Ms. Northerner asked if there was a plan to place billboards for advertising. Mr. Walters said they would like to have billboards.

PROponents OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK

John Faulkner, Airport Director, said this proposed project creates a development from a difficult site, and signage coming up to the airport can be difficult to see. He also said Love's is planning

to have food options, and the Air National Guard has about 500 employees daily that would like access to those options. He expressed his support for the variances.

Shane Etzwiler, Great Falls Chamber of Commerce, expressed his support for the variances. He said Love's did a good job in compromising with their requests.

Teresa Schreiner, Great Falls Development Authority, expressed her support for the variances. She said this is a huge opportunity for Great Falls.

OPPONENTS OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK

There were no opponents.

BOARD DISCUSSION AND ACTION

MOTION: That the Board of Adjustment, based on the Findings for the Basis of Decision, approve the application of Great Falls International Airport/Love's Travel Stop and County Stores for the requested variances from City Code Title 17, Chapter 60, Sign Code, subject to the condition of approval.

Made by: Ms. Smith
Second: Mr. Palagi

VOTE: All in favor, the motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Borland said there would be a Board meeting scheduled for January 10, 2019, with the election of 2019 officers on the agenda, as well as code changes to re-designate them as the Board of Appeals.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair Stuver adjourned the meeting at 3:31 p.m.