

**PRAIRIE TOWNSHIP ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF OCTOBER 28, 2008 MEETING**

Members Present: Howard Balzer, Christopher Finn, Glen Hymer, Hulda Moffitt, and Judy Stalter

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Connie Swisher, Zoning Inspector; Dana Scott, Zoning Clerk; and Pam Williams, Township Resident

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Howard Balzer, Chairman, at 3:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes:

Mr. Balzer asked for a motion to approve or correct the September 23, 2008 Prairie Township Zoning Commission Meeting Minutes.

As there were no corrections, Ms. Stalter moved to approve the September 23, 2008 Zoning Commission Minutes as written. Mr. Finn seconded the motion.

Roll call as follows:

1. Glen Hymer Aye
2. Christopher Finn Aye
3. Hulda Moffitt Aye
4. Judy Stalter Aye
5. Howard Balzer Aye

The motion was approved unanimously.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Electronic Billboards

Ms. Swisher informed the Zoning Commission that it should anticipate having to amend Article 12, *Signs*, of the Township Zoning Resolution in order to accommodate new display technologies used for off-premises billboards. A rapidly emerging direction in outdoor advertising is to replace static billboards with electronic boards. Electronic billboards use computer controlled digital displays that transmit light through the use of LED (light emitting diode) technology. An electronic board displays multiple advertising messages that change every five to ten seconds. Some boards change messages with a fade-in and fade-out, others change right away from one message to another.

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Ed Hunt, Lamar Outdoor Advertising recently submitted an application to the Board of Zoning Appeals requesting a variance from the provisions of Section 1202, #1 and #2, to allow the firm to place an electronic message center on the eastbound face of an existing billboard located at 4601 West Broad Street (between Budget Car Rental and Jade Kirin Restaurant).

Mr. Hunt spoke for the variance at the October 14, 2008, meeting of the Prairie Township Board of Zoning Appeals. He provided a brief history of outdoor message board signs and explained that the request is for the eastbound face only because the Federal government controls west of I-270, which is designated a scenic area with no new signs to be erected. The proposed board will change messages every seven seconds with no fade.

Mr. Hunt said that the sign company will be open to placing messages of community-wide interest on the electronic billboard.

The BZA decided to table the variance request until the November 11th meeting so that the members could obtain more information about the pros and cons and safety issues for drivers, if any, related to electronic billboards. They wanted to make an informed decision on the variance request. In addition, they were interested in knowing what the Trustees¹ thought about them.

The idea to place electronic bulletin boards in the Township was taken before the Trustees. Ms. Schlosser is in favor of them; Mr. Stormont is in favor but advocates regulation of the number permitted; Mr. Kennedy does not favor them.

Ms. Swisher said, in particular, the point made by Mr. Hunt that electronic billboards look better and do not deteriorate over time caused her to have a more favorable opinion of them.

At this time the outcome on electronic billboards is unknown. However, the BZA plans to vote on the application at its next meeting, and approval appears to be favorable.

For anyone who might want to see an electronic billboard, Ms. Swisher said that there is one at Renner and Hilliard Rome Roads. Ms. Moffitt said that there is another one further north at Roberts Road.

Ms. Swisher said that additional information about electronic billboards, and possibly some suggested regulation code, will be sent to Zoning Commission members as it becomes available.

In her recent discussion with Mark O'Loughlin, chairman of the BZA, about the time frame to switch from approval of electronic billboards by variance to approval by permit, Ms. Swisher stated that they concurred it would be prudent to continue requiring a variance until we see exactly how these boards work in the community. The Township needs to have some experience with the new display technology so that the amendment the Commission writes is all-inclusive and does not have to be changed in the short run.

Doctors Hospital Expansion

¹ Nicole Schlosser, Trustee Chairwoman; Doug Stormont, Trustee Vice Chairman; Steve Kennedy, Trustee

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Ms. Swisher pointed out the drawings of the Doctors Hospital planned expansion, which includes a new emergency room. The expansion is to take place in three phases. The first phase has been submitted to the building department.

At the October meeting, the BZA acted upon a variance application from Doctors Hospital. The board passed a motion unanimously to permit a principal structure with less front setback and to allow smaller and fewer parking spaces than required by Sections 930, Table 2 (Dimensional Requirements); 1110 (Off Street Parking Space Design Standards); and 1120 (Parking Space Requirements). Specifically, the number of parking spaces will be reduced from 133 to 129.

Next Meeting:

Mr. Balzer informed Commission members that the fourth Tuesday of November falls on the 25th—Thanksgiving week. Therefore, he asked if they wanted to reschedule the meeting. By consent the Zoning Commission decided to change the meeting to November 18th—the third Tuesday.

Mr. Balzer announced that the next meeting of the Prairie Township Zoning Commission would be Tuesday, November 18, 2008, at 3:00 p.m. at the Township Hall, 23 Maple Drive.

There being no further business, Mr. Balzer adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hulda Moffitt, Secretary
Prairie Township Zoning Commission

