



City of Tucker, GA

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

July 18, 2017

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

7:00 PM

MINUTES

City Hall Annex

4228 1st Ave, Suite 2-4

Tucker GA, 30084

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Keith Easterling called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

The following were in attendance:

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Neal Stubblefield	Vice Chairman	Present	
Keith Easterling	Chairman	Present	
Charles Abbott		Present	
Chris Hartley		Present	
Pat Soltys		Present	

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Zoning Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes

Approved with the removal of Charles Abbott from the vote on the withdrawal of V-17-004 as he was absent.

RESULT:	ADOPTED AS AMENDED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Neal Stubblefield, Vice Chairman
SECONDER:	Keith Easterling, Chairman
AYES:	Stubblefield, Easterling, Abbott, Hartley, Soltys

OLD BUSINESS

(None)

NEW BUSINESS

VARIANCE: V-17-005

PETITIONER: First United Methodist Church of Tucker c/o Douglas Burger

LOCATION: 5095 Lavista Road

CURRENT ZONING: R-75 (Residential Medium Lot – 75)

PROPOSED ZONING: R-75 (Residential Medium Lot – 75)

VARIANCE REQUEST: Variance to signage requirements of the Downtown Tucker Compatible Use Overlay District.

Chair Keith Easterling read the public hearing procedures into the record.

Katherine Francesconi, intern at the City of Tucker, gave an overview and the staff analysis of the requested variance to the signage requirements for an electronic sign. She stated that the electronic sign does not follow the design guidelines for the Downtown Tucker Compatible Use Overlay District and she discussed the existing electronic signs at Tucker High School and Tucker Baptist. Zoning Board of Appeals member Neal Stubblefield asked to clarify that this would be a sign with two faces, and requested that staff explain more about the signs at Tucker High School and at the Baptist church. Deputy Community Development Director Courtney Lankford gave more background about the signs and explained that the overlay guidelines were in place for DeKalb at the time that they granted the sign for the Baptist church, which is why staff believes it was issued in error. Tucker High School was exempt from the requirements as they are part of DeKalb County Schools. Chair Keith Easterling asked if the sign frame would remain the same, to which staff confirmed that it will. Additionally, if the requested variance is approved, staff requests the following conditions:

1. Approval of the electronic sign is based on the submitted sign graphics received by the City of Tucker on June 14th, 2017.
2. Only one electronic sign may be allowed on the property.
3. The ground sign may be internally illuminated or illuminated with ground-mounted floodlights.
4. Obtain sign permit from the City of Tucker prior to installation.

Douglas Burger, applicant for V-17-005, presented on the requested variance and explained why they are requesting an electronic sign. Douglas Burger stated that the sign type has been heavily vetted by the church's own committees and that this particular sign will automatically dim and brighten itself, reducing the worry of brightness disrupting neighbors. He also stated that having an electronic sign will improve their property and highlight their services for the community, as well as reduce the need for seasonal banners and thus reduce clutter and blend in more with the environment. Furthermore, the traffic studies they have show that there will be little impact on traffic with the addition of an electronic sign.

Chair Keith Easterling opened the floor to public comment.

Becky Burns, 2570 Lake Erin Dr, stated that this will help them reach more people in the community, and advertise directly to the public for any needs they or their network might have, such as asking for help with or donations for Toys for Tots, blood drives, and Habitat for Humanity, among others. They can also advertise directly to the public for various community programs that are open to the public, such as trunk-or-treat, free music lessons, and concerts, among others.

Lola Jones, 2561 Pine Lake Rd, also spoke in favor of the application and requested to hear from the manufacturer. Chair Keith Easterling stated that there was no more time available for the manufacturer to speak.

No one spoke in opposition.

Zoning Board of Appeals member Neal Stubblefield asked Deputy Community Development Director Courtney Lankford to discuss the sign ordinance and overlay design guidelines going forward. Courtney explained that staff and the boards recognize that there are issues with both the sign ordinance and the overlay districts and their design guidelines. There are lot of inconsistencies with the overlay and the overlay design guidelines, and that the sign code is old and lacks details, so staff has asked the City Council to update the sign ordinance and overlay districts. Both of those projects have been approved and will happen in the fiscal year. Chair Keith Easterling asked about any recent decisions that have been made in terms of lighting and signage, that could help to better understand the tone of the changes to the sign ordinance and overlay design guidelines going forward. Courtney Lankford explained that City Council voted on a text amendment on June 28th, 2017, about prohibiting linear lighting to outline storefronts, rooflines, building facades to the Northlake Overlay and the Downtown Tucker Overlay. It is currently already prohibited in the Mountain Industrial Overlay and they are looking to bring it forward city-wide in a text amendment in the next few months. Zoning Board of Appeals member Pat Soltys asked about the inconsistencies and how to make them more consistent. Courtney described that staff interprets the decisions that will be the fairest and the most consistent. Pat Soltys wanted to get clarification that once a decision is made, it is approved no matter what, regardless of time. Courtney explained that once something is approved it is approved no matter what, however there are certain non-conforming situations, where if a code changes the sign will be grandfathered until future alterations trigger compliance, such as sign replacement or an update to the technology or design of said sign.

Board comments included, but were not limited to discussion of deferring this application to the next month so that the board can get a better idea of how to handle this sort of request. Issues raised included there being no hardship, if the request goes beyond the minimum necessary to afford relief, brightness of the sign,

current codes that deal with electronic signs, precedence, etc. Board member Chris Hartley asked the sign manufacturer representative for Watchfire Signs, Mark Campfield, about how bright the sign will be at night. Mark Campfield explained that their signs are specifically made to be code compliant with where they are installed, and that sign brightness for both day and night, as well as graphics, speed of said graphics, and restriction of animation are controlled at the plant.

MOTION TO DENY V-17-005.

By: Keith Easterling
No second

Motion to deny V-17-005 fails.

The board discussed that if they approve this now, this is a blanket approval for everyone. The applicant was willing to defer the hearing until the August 15, 2017 ZBA meeting so that he could work on additional conditions that would further restrict the electronic sign.

RESULT:	TABLED [3 TO 2]	Next: 8/15/2017 7:00 PM
MOVER:	Neal Stubblefield, Vice Chairman	
SECONDER:	Pat Soltys, Board Member	
AYES:	Neal Stubblefield, Charles Abbott, Pat Soltys	
NAYS:	Keith Easterling, Chris Hartley	

CITY BUSINESS ITEMS

(None)

COMMENTS BY STAFF AND ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEMBERS

ADJOURNMENT – 8:10 PM

Approved,

Attest:





Olivia Wilson, Administrative Assistant



(Seal)

APPROVED

8/15/17