



Town of North Reading
Massachusetts

Board of Appeals

MINUTES
Zoning Board of Appeals
April 14, 2022
Teleconference/Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Jennifer Platt, Bob Breen, and Maria Lockhart

Also present: Kathy Morgan, Secretary, Gerry Noel, Building Commissioner

Attendees noted: Phil Healy from Cable TV, AJ Loprete, Lisa Neukuckatz, Mike Connelly, Robin Beck-Miller, Chris Covino, Chris Friedrich, Andrew Campagna, Christine Leber, Alex Guarino, Amanda Johnson and Emily (Guest) Bill Sharkey, Joann Hoxha, 1978-360-1687

Ms. Platt, Chair, opened the meeting at 7:05 pm

Public Hearings

189 Park Street – Variance to replace the existing sign and allow an illuminated sign

A.J. Loprete, Principal at the North Reading High School, advised members that the new sign was purchased with funds contributed from the classes of 2011, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2000, 2020 & 2022. Mr. Loprete said the new sign will be illuminated, as is the existing sign. The new contemporary look of the new sign will give them a way to message that can change wirelessly. Mr. Loprete advised members that the new sign will be the same size and sit on the same pad, in the same location, as the existing sign. Ms. Platt asked at what rate the screen will refresh and will it scroll. Mr. Loprete said it will rotate once a day or they could present a new message each day or 2 messages a day; it can be programed easily. Chair read letters of support from the Hillview, Officer King of the police department, Community Planning. Michael Connelly, Director of Finance and Operations at the schools is onboard and supports the signage and the Hillview Commission, who actually governs the area that the sign will be located on, submitted a letter of support. The Community Planning Commission raised concerns of how many hours of illumination there would be and the brightness affecting the abutters. Ms. Platt warned that the bylaws don't allow for moving or flashing signage. Mr. Breen asked who would maintain

the device during the summer. Mr. Loprete said he would have access and could allow a few others, but over the summer they could put Town announcements or school news; and tech support is included. Mr. Breen noted that, unlike 271 Main St, this is more community news or public service rather than advertising. Mr. Loprete said the sign would face the street. No abutters to the school made themselves known.

Mr. Breen moved to close the Public Hearing; seconded by Ms. Lockhart, and voted 3-0.

Discussion: Mr. Breen liked the fact that Mr. Loprete would oversee access if there was an issue, he could adjust. He suggested that there be a policy for use/access. Mr. Loprete said he would collaborate with Officer King the safety officer. He also suggested that the sign could be turned off at night when football games get over.

Mr. Breen moved to grant a variance and allow the replacement of the existing sign with an illuminated sign. Ms. Lockhart seconded the motion; and it was voted Mr. Breen – yes, Ms. Lockhart – yes, and Ms. Platt – yes.

37 Southwick Rd – Special Permit for a Home Occupation

Chair read the notice and opened the public hearing. Robin Beck-Miller was present and explained some history of her business. She is currently working remotely for a practice in Medford as a mental health counselor. She has worked seeing clients remotely ever since the pandemic. She wants to open a small practice of her own with maybe 4 clients and eventually build up to more clients in a few years. She does all her work virtually, all adults, with mostly depression or anxiety issues. She said she won't have any clients to her home or signage out on the street. She uses a system called doxey, a medical platform that allows her to speak to clients virtually. Chair went over the standard conditions for home occupations. Mr. Breen said it seems like a worthwhile permit. Ms. Lockhart agreed with Mr. Breen. No abutters made themselves known.

Ms. Lockhart moved to close, seconded by Mr. Breen and voted; Mr. Breen – yes, Ms. Lockhart – yes, and Ms. Platt – yes.

Mr. Breen moved to grant Robin Beck-Miller, 37 Southwick Rd, map 17, parcel 73 to run her business, a private counseling office, out of her home address in accordance with 200-42 of the zoning bylaws and the standard conditions; no more than 300 s.f. devoted to the business, no display of goods, remain invisible to the neighbors and the permit runs with the applicant, no clients to the house and the permit runs for 4 years. Ms. Lockhart seconded the motion, and it was voted; Ms. Lockhart – yes, Mr. Breen – yes, and Ms. Platt – yes.

3 Janice Ave – Special Permit for a Home Occupation

Lisa Neukuckatz, the applicant was present. She does medical billing from her home. She has no employees and gets her clients by word of mouth. No abutters made themselves known. Mr. Breen asked how long she has been doing her business. Ms. Neukuckatz said 30 years, she got the business from her former employer.

Ms. Platt moved to close the public hearing and seconded by Mr. Breen.

Mr. Breen moved to grant the applicant, Ms. Neukuckatz at 3 Janice a special permit home occupation to run her medical billing business out of her home address per article 200-42 of the zoning bylaws with the usual standard conditions, which he read aloud. Ms. Lockhart seconded the motion; and it was voted Mr. Breen – yes, Ms. Lockhart – yes, and Ms. Platt – yes.

158 Haverhill Street – Special Permit for a Home Occupation

Vice Chair opened the public hearing by reading the Public Hearing notice. Mr. Friedrich, the homeowner and petitioner, was present. Mr. Friedrich started a small business last year that includes cryptocurrency mining digital asset management with a little bit of trading involved. He is a sole proprietor and the work is all digital, everything is done on the internet. He works alone. No signage. No abutters made themselves known. Mr. Breen read a memo received from the Planning Commission, who asked whether the infrastructure is adequate with the impacts to the electrical and internet services and it could be substantial while the activity of data mining for crypto currency is taking place. Mr. Friedrich said he couldn't think of any disruption to the neighborhood. It does generate electricity and uses about the capacity of a couple of space heaters; so the amount that he is using is very reasonable and if more were required, he said he would have to find somewhere else off site. He said this is not a full time job for him. He said the bigger part of it is just software management of the digital tokens where security is a big part of it as well. It is an emerging technology.

Ms. Platt moved to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Ms. Lockhart.

Mr. Breen moved to grant the petition of Dennis Friedrich, 158 Haverhill St., map 54, parcel 20 for a special permit home occupation to run his cryptocurrency business out of said address per Article 200-42 of the zoning bylaws and in accordance with the standard conditions. Ms. Lockhart seconded the motion; and it was voted Mr. Breen – yes, Ms. Lockhart – yes, and Ms. Platt – yes.

172 Park Street – Variance from the Environmental Performance Regulations

Chair read the Public Hearing notice. Amanda Johnson from Gensler was present for the applicant along with Bill Sharkey from FleetBank. Bank of America would like to add additional lighting to the site. An assessment was done at the bank to see if they meet the adequate lighting for Ma ALM GL ch 167B, adding pole lighting in front, near the ATM, 4 new poles all together, a light near the ATM and some existing lighting to remain. Ms. Johnson showed plans of the landscaping and one that shows the full lighting site calculations. Ms. Platt noted what the bylaw for the variance outlines, *no direct or indirect lighting, causing a total illumination in excess of 1.0 foot candles when measured at any point vertically above the boundary of a residence district or a residential property right of way*. Ms. Platt asked for a comparison of what is existing to what is proposed. Ms. Johnson said there's an initiative to make the bank brighter. Mr. Sharkey said it's a safety program for the ATM's. The numbers on the chart near Park St. showed between 2 to 3. Mr. Sharkey said he didn't see allowable limits for commercial just residential. Mr. Noel said the Police have no issues, but he would like to make sure that the lighting isn't blinding or distracting to traffic going by. Mr. Breen said he can understand the area going up to the ATM being brighter, but most people drive up to the ATM in the evening. Members wanted a better understanding of how the lighting would look. Even though they agree with the safety concerns, they also don't want it so bright that it is a distraction. Members asked if triggers could be installed so that if someone approached the area it would then become brighter. Mr. Sharkey said he could provide other projects that members could view to see what the lighting was like at those locations. Mr. Sharkey said he is doing upgrades to 80 banks throughout Mass. He said he will provide similar jobs in the area for members to review.

The applicant requested a continuance to Thursday, May 12, 2022.

340 Main St. – Special Use Permit

Mr. Laws was not present for the hearing, but there were neighbors that were present. Most of the neighbors' concerns were based on environmental issues but they also wanted to know what was being proposed at the site. They were given the Conservation agent's email and phone number and for any information on what they are proposing for the Special Permit, they were told to email Kathy in the office and she would send documents.

Members continued the Public Hearing to May 12, 2022.

Minutes

Mr. Breen moved to approve the minutes of February 10, 2022, March 10, 2022, Executive Session Minutes of March 10, 2022, seconded by Ms. Lockhart; and voted Mr. Breen – yes, Ms. Lockhart – yes, and Ms. Platt – yes.

Mr. Breen moved to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Platt, and voted unanimously in favor

Approved  DocuSigned by:
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