

BLUE ASH BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

JUNE 9, 2008

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ITEM 1. – MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chairman Paul Collett called the regular meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals to order at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, June 9, 2008.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Collett, Jr., John Berry, Julie Brook, Mark Kirby and Marc Sirkin

ALSO PRESENT: Assistant Community Development Director Dan Johnson, Administrative Clerk Traci Smith and interested citizens

ITEM 2. – APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board waived the reading of the minutes of May 12, 2008.

DECISION: Marc Sirkin moved, John Berry seconded the motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of May 12, 2008. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

ITEM 3. – 9070 Plainfield Road – Frisch’s Restaurant

Appeal to allow wall signs that exceed the allowable square foot area, a wall sign that extends above a roofline, and a ground sign that exceeds the allowable height

Julie Brook and John Berry both noted that they know Mr. Horwitz; both felt that they could make an impartial decision. There were no objections.

PRESENT: Jim Horwitz, Appellant

Chairman Paul Collett swore in those wishing to testify and gave a brief overview of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Jim Horwitz said their request is for two variances; one for the size of the medallion signs and the other for the size of the monument sign. He believes that the proposed larger signs will ensure good visibility for the restaurant without varying too much from the Blue Ash Code.

Paul Collett explained that southbound Plainfield Road traffic at the traffic light could see the permitted signs and that visibility to traffic destined for eastbound Ronald Reagan Cross County Highway was not important, because those people would have already decided that they were not going further south on Plainfield Road. He wondered whether or not southbound traffic between Hunt Road and the bridge was even an issue since the sign could be seen from that traffic light. Mr. Horwitz said they are also trying to reach the people who are exiting the highway and explained that signage is key and they count on approximately one-third of their business being new customers. There was general discussion with the Board members regarding visibility issues.

Mr. Collett asked about services signage on the Highway off-ramps. Dan Johnson said he has inquired about the use of such signs on Ronald Regan Cross County Highway, but has not yet gotten a response.

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Julie Brook asked for clarification on the location of the proposed medallion signs. Mr. Horwitz answered on the north and west faces and said that, on the north elevation, a wall will be built behind it so that it does not technically extend above the roofline.

In response to a question about the ground sign height, Dan Johnson said that the maximum height from grade is 8-feet, regardless of any other considerations.

John Berry asked if the 8-foot medallion is a custom sign. Mr. Horwitz said that all Frisch's signs are custom built.

As there were no further comments, Chairman Paul Collett closed the public hearing portion of the meeting.

Mark Sirkin said he does not think the additional height of the ground size would help visibility any more at 10-feet than at 8-feet and does not want to set forth any expectation that other business may want to follow. Paul Collett noted that the Board has been very consistent in denying sign height variances.

DECISION: John Berry moved, Julie Brook seconded to grant a variance to Frisch's Restaurant located at 9070 Plainfield Road to allow the wall medallions to be 8-feet in diameter on the north façade and on the west façade as shown on the documents submitted and that the extension of the wall on the north façade encompass the entire medallion. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

DECISION: Marc Sirkin moved, Mark Kirby seconded to deny the ground sign height variance for Frisch's Restaurant at 9070 Plainfield Road. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

ITEM 4. – 5901 Pfeiffer Road – Crowne Plaza

Appeal to allow a second wall sign on a multiple story building above the first floor

PRESENT: Danny Hill, General Manager and Partner
Mac Trivedi, Partner

Chairman Paul Collett swore in those wishing to testify and gave a brief overview of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Danny Hill explained that the name of the hotel changed in 2007, three years after they purchased the hotel and the franchise agreement expired. The highway pole sign was removed when the hotel was renovated, which limited visibility from I-71. Also, the monument sign on Pfeiffer Road had to be moved back, which reduced its visibility since it now sits partially behind the Bob Evans retaining wall. The 2-story portion of the hotel was built in 1968 and the 6-story portion with a large interior space was added in 1980; it is the oldest hotel in Blue Ash and was a viable entity for many years. The hotel struggled through two bankruptcies during the 1990s. Since they purchased the building in 2004, they have put \$7.5 million into the hotel. Crowne Plaza is part of the strong Holiday Inn franchise system, but fewer rooms were sold in the first four months of 2008 than in same period in 2007, when the hotel was a run-down Clarion. Customers have said that they miss the I-71 exit for lack of signage and also miss the Pfeiffer Road entrance (eastbound) for the same reason.

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There was general discussion as to why the Pfeiffer Road ground sign was moved further from the road and behind the Bob Evans retaining wall. Dan Johnson explained that the Code requires a 10-foot setback from the right-of-way. He also noted that the highway pole sign was removed because it was nonconforming.

As there were no further comments, Chairman Paul Collett closed the public hearing portion of the meeting.

DECISION: Julie Brook moved, Marc Sirkin seconded to grant a variance for the proposed wall sign on the north façade of the Crowne Plaza hotel located at 5901 Pfeiffer Road as submitted. A roll call vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

ITEM 5. – Miscellaneous Business

Election of officers

The following slate was proposed:

Julie Brook, Chair
Marc Sirkin, Vice Chair
John Berry, Secretary

DECISION: John Berry moved, Marc Sirkin seconded to accept slate of officers presented. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

ITEM 6. – ADJOURNMENT

DECISION: There being no further business, John Berry moved, Marc Sirkin seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted aye. The meeting was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Paul Collett, Jr, Chairman

MINUTES RECORDED BY:

Traci Smith, Administrative Clerk