

MINUTES

MAINLAND PLANNING COMMISSION

MAY 1, 2012 - 6:00 P.M.

Historic Courthouse, 701 G Street

MEMBERS PRESENT: Bill Brunson, Chairman
Buddy Hutchinson, Vice-Chairman
Liane Brock
Terry Carter
Larissa Harris
Tim Murphy

ABSENT: Buck Crosby

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Forgey, Planning Manager
Janet Loving, Admin/Recording Secretary

Chairman Brunson called the meeting to order and the invocation was given, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES

April 3, 2012 - Regular Meeting

A motion was made by Mr. Buddy Hutchinson to approve the Minutes of the April 3rd Regular Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Terry Carter. Voting Aye: Mr. Bill Brunson, Ms. Liane Brock, Mr. Terry Carter, Mr. Buddy Hutchinson and Mr. Tim Murphy. Ms. Larissa Harris did not attend the April 3rd Meeting and therefore abstained from voting.

At this time, Chairman Brunson gave a brief recap of the rules, voting procedure and audience participation in discussing agenda items.

SUP2367 - First United Pentecostal Church

Consider a request for a special use permit for the erection of an electronic variable message sign under Section 809(e) (2) of the Zoning Ordinance. The property is located at 5608 New Jesup Highway. The purpose of the special use permit is to request an electronic variable message sign in an FA zoning district. Parcel ID: 03-05793. Shane Stutts, agent for United Pentecostal Church, owner.

Mr. Shane Stutts was present for discussion.

During the staff's presentation, Mr. Forgey explained that although there is a "light recommendation" included in this report, it has always been his personal practice to not submit a recommendation when presenting variances or special use permits where there is more discretion involved. It is his job to present both sides of the request with no personal feelings for or against the application and allow the Board members to use its own deciding factors in determining a recommendation. Given the requirements of the ordinance and the specific location of the proposed sign, there are considerations for either approval or denial of this request.

Mr. Forgey stated that this is a request for a special use permit to install an electronic variable message sign in an FA zoning district. The property consists of 30.72 acres. Electronic message signs are allowed by right only in commercial and industrial zones adjacent to highways, arterials or collector streets.

The proposed location is approximately one-half mile to the northwest of the intersection of Crispin Boulevard and New Jesup Highway. This intersection is zoned Highway Commercial to the north of Crispin and Freeway Commercial to the south. The closest commercially zoned parcel to the proposed sign is approximately 700 ft. to the south.

Electronic variable message signs are prohibited within 50 ft. of any dwelling or residentially zoned district without special use approval. While the parcel in question is bordered by R-9 to the north, the sign would be located more than 500 ft. from the nearest property line. An FA zoned residence sits directly across New Jesup Highway from the proposed sign location, although there are approximately 135 ft. from the proposed sign to the property line.

It was noted that there are three other churches within 600 ft. of the proposed sign location, none of which currently have electronic variable message signs. The following is a list of requirements for this type of sign:

- Message shall be fixed for not less than 15 seconds
- Transitions shall occur within 2 seconds
- Shall freeze sign in one position if malfunction occurs
- May not be so bright as to interfere with traffic safety
- In residential zones, maximum sign size is 50 sq. ft. if on arterial or collector road

Mr. Forgey stated that if the Planning Commission chooses to recommend approval of this request, staff would suggest that the approval be based on its proximity to commercially zoned property.

Mr. Tim Murphy expressed concerns about setting a precedent for electronic variable message signs. If approved, he feels that others in the area will follow suit. Mr. Hutchinson pointed out that electronic signs are already visible throughout the county.

Mr. Terry Carter noted that the proposed sign is actually half the size of what the applicant could install in terms of the display itself.

Chairman Brunson stated that there are no findings of fact for special use permits; however, he referred to **Section 904.3** of the Glynn County Zoning Ordinance as a point of clarification: *The County Commission and the Planning Commission in reviewing the application for a special use permit should consider the following:*

- a) The effect the proposed activity will have on traffic flow along adjoining streets;*
- b) The location of off-street parking facilities;*
- c) The number, size and types of signs proposed for the site;*
- d) The amount and location of open space;*
- e) Protective screening;*
- f) Hours and manner of operation;*
- g) Outdoor lighting;*
- h) Ingress and egress to the property; and*
- i) Compatibility with surrounding land use.*

Chairman Brunson further stated that electronic variable message signs shall only be permitted on sites which are adjacent to or visible from state highway right-of-ways consisting of Highways 341, 82, 17, 303, 32, 99, Spur 25. He feels that this application meets the criteria.

Ms. Liane Brock had questions about rezoning the property as opposed to requesting a special use permit. Mr. Forgey stated that staff initially suggested a rezoning to some type of commercial. However, the applicant would have to elaborate on the church's response.

During a brief presentation, Mr. Shane Stutts pointed out that he received several quotes from sign companies. He has reduced the size of the sign to 3'4" x 6'4". He is also willing to lower the height of the sign so that it is no larger than 50 sq. ft. (as noted in the list of requirements.) Regarding the rezoning issue, he explained that the pastor of the church questioned the possibility of a rezoning in the past but decided against it because he felt that it would be a more drawn-out extensive process than the special use permit. Chairman Brunson stated that a rezoning would enhance the value of the property, and it would basically solve a lot of the problems in the area. Mr. Stutts stated that he doesn't have the authority to make a rezoning decision for the church.

Mr. Hutchinson stated that he would not be in favor of rezoning the property because of the adjacent residential parcels. He would be more inclined to accepting the special use permit. However, Ms. Brock stressed that it is not a question of which option is better. The Planning Commission's choice is whether or not to open the door for more of the same, and she doesn't want to lose the image of the pastoral environment. She added that if it is against the rule she would encourage the members to not vote in favor of it. Mr. Murphy agreed and reiterated his concerns about setting a precedent. Mr. Carter stated that the only thing that is against the rule is the size of the sign and the applicant has already agreed to change the size. Ms. Brock stated that it is not only the size of the sign but the type of sign is against the rule. Mr. Carter pointed out that it is within the Planning Commission's power to grant a special use permit to allow the sign (with stipulations). Chairman Brunson concurred.

Discussion continued regarding the total size of the sign, the size of the electronic portion, and what the applicant is willing to agree to.

There was no one present from the public to oppose this request.

At the end of discussion, a motion was made by Mr. Terry Carter to recommend approval of application **SUP2367** to allow an electronic variable message sign in an FA zoning district based on its proximity to commercially zoned property. Also, the sign shall not be larger than 50 sq. ft. with the electronic portion of the sign being no larger than 3'4" x 6'4" and providing it meets all other requirements of the sign ordinance. The motion was seconded by Mr. Buddy Hutchinson. Voting Aye: Mr. Bill Brunson, Mr. Terry Carter, Ms. Larissa Harris and Mr. Buddy Hutchinson. Voting Nay: Ms. Liane Brock and Mr. Tim Murphy.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.