

**MINUTES
CITY OF DARIEN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
Wednesday, April 19, 2023**

PRESENT: Lou Mallers – Chairperson, Robert Erickson, Bryan Gay, Shari Gillespie, Hilda Gonzalez, Chris Green, Chris Jackson, Julie Kasprovicz, Ralph Stompanato

ABSENT: None

OTHERS: Jordan Yanke - City Planner; Dan Gombac – Director of Municipal Services

Chairperson Lou Mallers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Darien City Hall, Council Chambers, 1702 Plainfield Road, Darien, Illinois. Chairperson Mallers declared a quorum present and swore in the audience members wishing to present public testimony.

Regular Meeting – New Business

- a. **Public Hearing – PZC2023-02 – PAGE 5 7702 Cass Avenue – Variations**
Petitioner (City of Darien) seeks approval for variation requests from the City’s Sign Code. The petition specifically requests to allow for the construction/installation of electronic messaging displays (i.e., LED marquee signs) to be incorporated with a freestanding ground-mount sign. The displays will be utilized for showing messages for City of Darien organizations and advertising for all business tenants located within the Darien Professional Building. Property is located within the B-1 Neighborhood Convenience Shopping District and the variation requests are from the following standards in the Sign Code: - Section 4-3-7(A)(11) General Sign Regulations - Section 4-3-7(C)(4) Illumination of Signs - Section 4-3-7(E) Placement of Signs on Lots - Section 4-3-7(F) Placement of Signs on Corner Lots - Section 4-3-10(B) Permitted Signs in Business Districts - Section 4-3-10(B)(3) Area of Permitted Ground Sign.

Mr. Jordan Yanke, City Planner reported that the subject property is located at the southwest corner of Plainfield Road and Cass Avenue with a longstanding monument sign that served the property and was destroyed in 2022 due to an automobile accident.

Mr. Yanke reported that the City Council passed a motion directing City staff to negotiate sign, easement, landscape, and maintenance agreements with the property owner for a new marquee sign to replace the prior one and is part of additional enhancement efforts to the center of town. He reported that the new sign will maintain regular sign face advertising tenants within the office building while adding electronic messaging panels to the top of the sign. He further reported that the City will own and maintain the electronic panels and that the agreement between the property owner and City will allow for electronic messages for City of Darien organizations and advertising for all business tenants located within the Darien Professional Building at no additional cost.

Mr. Yanke reported that the display sequencing for all information will be based on a rotational basis and that the property owner shall have no entitlement to any revenue derived by the City by virtue of the advertising activities. He reported that the main objective behind the electronic panels is to provide motorists and residents information regarding City events, meetings, seasonal information, and urgent notifications. He further reported that the media content will be approved by the City of Darien for display through a third-party digital data management firm.

Mr. Yanke reported that given the proposed sign detail, location, and its electronic messaging component, a series of variations is required for the sign. He reported on the variation requests associated with the sign and each specific code section.

Mr. Dan Gombac, petitioner, City of Darien stated that this is a unique proposition allowing the City to advertise events, nonprofit organizations, and meetings as well as emergency alerts, etc. and for the businesses in the building to advertise. He stated that the City will have total control and that the City Council may consider Darien businesses in the future.

Mr. Gombac provided an overview of the sign dimensions and stated that there will be modular pillars 12 feet high and sized to optimal viewing with landscaping and a water feature and a designated shut off.

Mr. Gombac stated that they are proposing 30 seconds for the north bound and south bound traffic to see the message on Cass. He stated that they are not selling anything but providing information.

Mr. Yanke reported that previously approved signs have a 60 second messaging, but 30 seconds is proposed.

Commissioner Shari Gillespie stated that the sign has too much going on with the marquee at the top and the businesses at the bottom and that it is very distracting.

Mr. Gombac stated that the sign is at the directive of the City Council and that it is needed as most residents do not read Direct Connect and the newsletters.

Commissioner Julie Kasprovicz stated that the sign looks the same and questioned the brick color and landscaping.

Mr. Gombac stated that the landscaping will be enhanced and that the brick will be power washed.

Commissioner Gillespie questioned if the signage could be all white and not so many colors.

Commissioner Chris Jackson questioned the dimensions of the sign replacement. He stated that with the columns it is going to be 3 feet taller and that he is concerned with visibility. Commissioner Jackson also questioned the location and why not the Darien Historical Society which is center of town.

Mr. Gombac stated that the footprint is the same because of the existing base. He stated that there is a zero-foot setback to cover the wall and sign and the sign will be enclosed with a nice frame. He further stated that staff looked at other locations and that there were issues with private property, curb cuts, etc. Mr. Gombac stated that this was an opportunity and that the corner is becoming the center of town.

Commissioner Kasprovicz stated that she wished the center of town was more modern. She stated that the City is updating a sign that already looks old.

Mr. Gombac stated that the owners have a budget and that they are putting in some of their own funds. He stated that the tenants do not want to pay anything.

There was some discussion on the overall sign look. Some Commissioners expressed that the water feature was overkill.

Mr. Gombac stated that the goal is to blend it all and that it will be attractive.

Ms. Robin Kelly, stated that she was a business owner in the building. She stated that the businesses have been without a sign for a long time and that they are eagerly and anxiously waiting. Ms. Kelly stated that they are struggling because new clients cannot find them.

Mr. Gombac informed Ms. Kelly that temporary banners can be done until the sign is complete.

At 7:42 p.m. Chairperson Mallers closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Chris Green questioned the illumination of signs and if the City is considering an ordinance. He stated that he would like to see the light intensity, brightness and timing standardized.

Mr. Gombac stated that the City Council prefers to review each case separately and that the State has guidelines for lighting that need to be followed.

There was discussion regarding the sign messaging. Commissioner Kasprovicz suggested lower content during the off time with a message "Welcome to Darien" or "Drive Safely".

Commissioner Bryan Gay stated that this sign is not as negative as the last proposed sign and that he was in favor of the City controlling it. He stated that there is a lot happening on the lot line and that there needs to be some consistency with sign lettering and coloring and that he would like to see a lot of landscaping and a sign that Darien is proud of.

Commissioner Jackson stated that he is concerned over the variances and that he feels it is an incomplete idea and thought. He stated that he would prefer a bigger and wider sign elsewhere and that this location is not the best City center location.

Commissioner Hilda Gonzalez stated that Darien needs more signs and that the suggestions should be considered in the final decisions.

There was some discussion on eliminating the water feature. Mr. Gombac stated that the water feature would tie in with the other corner and that the feature is a minimal expense.

Chairperson Mallers stated that the sign is much better than what is there. He asked the Commission for recommendations and conditions.

Mr. Gombac stated that the list of conditions is related to aesthetics and is only a recommendation and that the City Council makes the final decision.

There was no one else in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Commissioner Green made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Stompanato to approve Public Hearing – PZC2023-02 – PAGE 5 7702 Cass Avenue – Variations Petitioner (City of Darien) seeks approval for variation requests from the City’s Sign Code. The petition specifically requests to allow for the construction/installation of electronic messaging displays (i.e., LED marquee signs) to be incorporated with a freestanding ground-mount sign. The displays will be utilized for showing messages for City of Darien organizations and advertising for all business tenants located within the Darien Professional Building. Property is located within the B-1 Neighborhood Convenience Shopping District and the variation requests are from the following standards in the Sign Code: - Section 4-3-7(A)(11) General Sign Regulations - Section 4-3-7(C)(4) Illumination of Signs - Section 4-3-7(E) Placement of Signs on Lots - Section 4-3-7(F) Placement of Signs on Corner Lots - Section 4-3-10(B) Permitted Signs in Business Districts - Section 4-3-10(B)(3) Area of Permitted Ground Sign with the following conditions:

- 1. Messages will be held for at least 30 seconds.**
- 2. Messages will change all at once for all sign faces.**
- 3. Messages may display multiple colors.**
- 4. Illumination will maintain a constant light intensity or brightness.**
- 5. Illumination brightness will comply with the Sign Code.**
- 6. The electronic message board portion of the sign is limited to 30.2 square feet per side.**
- 7. The encroachment into public right-of-way (Cass Avenue) shown by the site plan/easement detail will be removed during sign installation.**

Upon roll call vote the MOTION CARRIED 7-2. Commissioner Gay and Jackson voted nay.

Staff Updates & Correspondence

There were no staff updates or correspondence.

Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Erickson made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Gillespie to approve the March 15, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes.

Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED 9-0.

Next Meeting

Mr. Yanke announced that the next meeting is scheduled for May 3, 2023, at 7:00 p.m.

Public Comments (On any topic related to Planning and Zoning)

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Adjournment

With no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Gay made a motion, and it was seconded by Commissioner Kasprovicz.

Upon voice vote, THE MOTION CARRIED unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

**Elizabeth Lahey
Secretary**

APPROVED:

**Lou Mallers
Chairperson**