



City of Plymouth  
Zoning Board of Appeals  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, June 6, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

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City of Plymouth  
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**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Joe Elliott called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Elliott, Members Mike Devine, Robert Mengel, Mike Pappas, Rebecca Smith

Excused: Vice Chair Jim Burrows

Also present: City Commission Liaison Brock Minton, Planning and Community Development Director Greta Bolhuis

**2. CITIZENS COMMENTS**

There were no citizen comments.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MEETING MINUTES**

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Pappas, to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2024 meeting.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengel, Pappas, Smith, Elliott

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

**4. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Pappas, to approve the agenda for the June 6, 2024 meeting.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengel, Pappas, Smith, Elliott

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

**5. OLD BUSINESS**

a. Z 24-07, 0 Parking Lot – Arthur & Wil (008 04 0022 300) and 0 Parking Lot – Irvin Church (008 04 0063 300): non-use variance to construct a 4-foot-tall fence within a front yard setback

Elliott explained the front yard variance request.

Applicant Msgr. Todd Lajiness described his request for a height variance to build a 48" fence around the Our Lady of Good Counsel School parking lot. The ordinance prohibits fences over 30-inches in a front yard. He said the children's safety was a concern, and that the Department of Homeland Security

performed an assessment of the property and recommended a fence to protect the children. Principal Karen Irvin stated that there is currently unrestricted access to the children at recess, and pedestrians tend to walk through the lot among the children, and that a fence would provide better security.

***Citizen Comments***

Brian Stacey, 726 Kellogg, said a 30-inch fence could be stepped over, and a 48-inch fence would provide safety.

Liz Burr, 1432 Palmer, said a four-foot fence would provide a secure and controlled environment.

Jim Mulhern, 396 Arthur, said he was opposed to the fence for a variety of reasons, and that planters surrounding the property would be preferred.

Jay Robison, 334 Arthur, said chain link fences surround most schools, and that the requested fence would be preferable. He also said the ZBA couldn't ignore that this property is not a residence.

Jennifer Frey, 550 N. Evergreen, said the school could achieve security with a combination of fence, green space, and street trees.

***Board Member Discussion***

Board members confirmed that the fence would be wrought iron. They agreed that the school was a special land use that is not duplicated in any other area of the city. Elliott pointed out that a fence is allowed by ordinance – it's just the height that requires a variance.

***Motion***

Devine offered a motion, seconded by Mengel, to approve a 1.5-foot variance for the Irvin and Arthur front yard setbacks for a wrought iron fence and gate system.

***Findings of Fact***

Both Homeland Security and local law enforcement have recommended a stronger perimeter for the property, and the 4-foot height accommodates security and contains students during recess.

***Conditions***

The variance is eliminated if the property ever reverts to residential land use.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengel, Pappas, Elliott

NO: Smith

MOTION PASSED 4-1

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

a. Z 24-08, 500 S. Harvey: non-use variance to install a wall sign on a façade without separate means of public ingress and egress at a property that has a ground sign

Project manager for Community Financial Credit Union Dave Lapp reviewed his request for a wall sign to increase property identification on three sides of the building.

**Citizen Comments**

Jim Mulhern, 396 Arthur, asked about the size and illumination of the requested sign.

Alan Ardanowski, 1120 Maple, asked for clarification, then said he supported the variance.

**Board Member Discussion**

There was discussion about the brightness of the sign and whether it would be on all night.

**Motion**

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Pappas, to approve Z24-08 for a non-use variance to install a wall sign on a façade without separate means of public ingress and egress at the property that has a ground sign.

**Findings of Fact**

There are multiple frontages on the large building which creates a need for more property identification.

**Friendly Amendment**

Devine offered a friendly amendment to state the variance applies only to the sign location that has been presented, and to allow administrative action should the light levels become a problem in the neighborhood. Smith and Pappas accepted the friendly amendment.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Pappas, Smith

NO: Mengel, Elliott

MOTION PASSED 3-2

b. Z24-09, 701 Church: non-use variance to replace the existing ground sign with a digital, changeable sign

Devine disclosed he is a member of the church but feels he can be unbiased in the decision. The group agreed that church membership should not exclude Devine from participating in the discussion and decision.

Reverend Emily Campbell of the First Presbyterian Church explained that the requested sign would be in the same location as their current sign, but it would be able to display changeable messages and eliminate the need for sandwich boards and banners. She offered to decrease the lumens by 50% in the evening and to limit the number of message changes in a day.

**Citizen Comments**

Jim Mulhern, 396 Arthur, asked that the sign be conservatively illuminated.

Brian Stacey, 728 Kellogg, said he liked the angle of the sign.

Alan Ardanowski, 1120 Maple, voiced concern about the brightness.

**Board Discussion**

Board members and staff discussed the sign ordinance and illumination.

**Motion**

Devine offered a motion, seconded by Smith, to grant a variance to allow a digital changeable copy sign at 701 Church St.

**Findings of Fact**

The proposed sign will be oriented in such a way to minimize the impact on adjacent properties. The church hosts a multitude of activities so it is important to allow flexibility.

**Conditions**

No video may be shown on the sign.

Lumen levels are to be reduced by 50% at night, as offered by the applicant.

Message changes are restricted to eight per day.

Should light levels or messaging be an issue to surrounding properties, administration is to address.

**Friendly Amendment**

Smith asked for an amendment requiring a static message from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. Devine agreed to the friendly amendment.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengle, Pappas, Smith, Elliott

MOTION PASSED 5-0

c. Z24-10, 290 Fairground: non-use variance to create two parcels from the original parcel that are less than 60-feet wide and less than 7,200 square feet in area

Applicant Shelby Fulkerson distributed a rendering of the odd-shaped parcel and noted that the variance for width is only inches.

Architect Scott Kelly pointed out that there were unconventional property lines on the two lots.

**Citizen Comments**

Lauren Yagiela, 234 Maple, said the neighborhood comprises a patchwork of new residential homes, and that original homes are smaller. She requested a condition requiring more space between driveways.

Spencer Schroer, also a resident at 234 Maple, expressed concern about the property line as it relates to an existing chain link fence. He asked that the setback be based on the fence, not the property line.

Leslyn Rank, 313 Maple, asked why the homes would both be facing Maple.

Dave Lett, 753 Virginia, said he wanted a diversity of homes in the neighborhood, and that the developer was involved in litigation in Washtenaw County.

Rick Roman, 202 Maple, asked that the height of the buildings be limited to go with the neighborhood.

Brian Stacey, 726 Kellogg, said he supported the variance because the homes would be different and that the sizes were appropriate.

**Board Discussion**

Board members agreed that two homes would be preferable to one home on the parcel, and that the variance request was for only four inches. They also noted that the lower square footage would reduce the Floor Area Ratio.

**Motion**

Devine offered a motion, seconded by Smith, to approve a variance of .35-foot width for both parcel b and parcel c, and a lot area variance of 725 square feet for parcel b and 894 square feet for parcel c.

**Findings of Fact**

The relaxation of the ordinance is minimal, and the resulting lots are more appropriate for the surrounding neighborhood.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengel, Pappas, Smith, Elliott

MOTION PASSED 5-0

**7. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Two residents addressed the board and were asked to bring their concerns to the City Commission.

Devine welcomed Mengel to the board.

Elliott suggested the Planning Commission consider looking at lumens in the sign ordinance.

Smith asked whether the sign ordinance was comprehensive enough.

**8. REPORTS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

City Commission Liaison Brock Minton welcomed Rob Mengel and thanked all board members for serving on the ZBA.

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

Smith offered a motion, seconded by Mengel, to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

There was a roll call vote.

YES: Devine, Mengle, Pappas, Smith, Elliott

MOTION PASSED 5-0