



Meeting Minutes

North Hampton Planning Board

Tuesday, April 6, 2021 at 6:30pm

NO PHYSICAL LOCATION FOR MEETING

MEETING ACCESSED THROUGH ELECTRONIC MEANS ONLY

These minutes were prepared as a reasonable summary of the essential content of this meeting, not as a transcription.

In attendance: Tim Harned, Chair; Nancy Monaghan, Vice Chair; Members Phil Wilson, Lauri Etela, Shep Kroner, Valerie Gamache, and Jim Maggiore, Select Board Representative; Alternate Member John Sillay; Jennifer Rowden, RPC Circuit Rider; and Rick Milner, Recording Secretary.

Chair Harned called the meeting to order at 6:35pm. Mr. Harned noted that the meeting was being held by electronic means as authorized by State of NH Executive Orders associated with the current public health crisis. The public may participate during public comment periods using the posted email address or phone number.

I. New Business

1. Case #21:07 – Applicant, NH Signs and O'Reilly Auto Parts, 66 Gold Ledge Avenue, Auburn, NH 03032. The Applicant requests a Conditional Use Permit to allow a wall sign in excess of 24 square feet for auto parts retail sales business. Property Owner: The Stevens Realty Trust, Gary Stevens, Trustee, 69 Lafayette Road, North Hampton, NH 03862; Property Location: 69 Lafayette Road, North Hampton, NH 03862; M/L: 007-065-000; Zoning District: I-B/R, Industrial – Business/Residential District.

In attendance for this application:

Don Booth and Dan Hutchins, sign company representatives.

Mr. Hutchins addressed the Board. Mr. Hutchins presented a sign application which included a color depiction and location for a wall sign with non-internally illuminated lettering to be placed on the front of the proposed auto parts retail sales business building at 69 Lafayette Road. The application indicated the following sign specifications - 'O'Reilly Auto Parts' logo approximately 5.25 feet high by 43.71 feet wide.

Mr. Hutchins stated the following justification for the waiver request to allow a wall sign exceeding the allowed 24 square feet.

- a. The size of the sign is proportional to the building face which is approximately 79 feet wide.
- b. The building is set back 140 feet from the street. The plaza building has a width of 325 feet and a road frontage of 430 feet along US Route 1.
- c. There will not be a second sign on the existing ground sign near the road.
- d. A larger sign will improve sign visibility and safety issues for motorists looking for the business.
- e. The proposed sign would be in character with the surrounding area.

Mr. Harned asked for clarification regarding the lighting for the proposed sign.

Mr. Hutchins responded that the sign will be lit with downward facing gooseneck lighting fixtures. The sign will not be internally lit.

Mr. Wilson stated that the fact that the business will not have space on the existing ground sign is not a valid justification for a larger wall sign. In his opinion, the Board should allow a sign size no larger than the existing 90 square foot Autozone auto parts store sign that the Board approved in the past.

Mr. Maggiore asked if the auto parts retailer had other standard sign sizes for store fronts which the Board could review.

Mr. Hutchins did not have information regarding other standard sign sizes. Mr. Hutchins presented a smaller 134 square foot version of the wall sign for the Board's consideration.

Ms. Monaghan moved that the Planning Board find that the application is complete and take jurisdiction of the Conditional Use Permit application for Case #21:07 to allow a wall sign in excess of 24 square feet for auto parts retail sales business. Second by Mr. Etela. The roll call vote was 6-0-1 in favor of the motion. Mr. Harned, Ms. Monaghan, Mr. Etela, Mr. Kroner, Ms. Gamache, and Mr. Maggiore in favor. Mr. Wilson abstaining.

Mr. Kroner stated that he supported a smaller sign size. The state liquor store sign in the same shopping plaza seemed to be a good comparison to use when determining the maximum sign size for this case.

Ms. Monaghan stated that she did not support the sign size proposed in the O'Reilly Auto Parts application. The proposed sign is not in proportion to industry standards. The former Fresh Market supermarket sign at the same location was approved to be approximately 82 square feet in size. The Fresh Market approved sign size was a reduction from that applicant's proposed sign size.

Mr. Maggiore stated his opinion that a smaller sign would create less of a negative impact on traffic safety than a larger sign. Also, customers do not need a larger sign to find the store at such a prominent, visible location.

Mr. Wilson stated that a smaller size sign would be easily seen by motorists. The intersection adjacent to the store location has traffic control features which slow down and stop traffic in the area.

Ms. Monaghan stated her support for a sign no larger than 90 square feet in size.

Mr. Harned asked the applicant's representatives how they wished to proceed by either continuing to propose the sign size indicated in the application or proposing a different size sign at a future meeting.

Mr. Hutchins stated that the applicant wished to proceed with consideration of the sign application at this meeting and was willing to conform with the Board's recommended sign size.

Mr. Harned opened the public hearing at 7:01pm. No comments were made. Mr. Harned closed the public hearing at 7:04pm.

The Board came to a consensus without objection that the criteria to allow a waiver of the zoning ordinance sign regulations have been met as follows:

a. No evidence has been presented that the proposed sign will be a detriment to public health, safety, welfare, or interest or injurious to other property.

- b. The objectives of the ordinance have been met in that the proposed sign adequately represents the business' location to the public. The standards of the ordinance have been fairly applied in relation to other signs in the business district.
- c. The combination of the building's distance from the street and the size of the building present unique conditions which make adherence to the maximum 24 square foot wall sign size not practical in that the sign would be difficult to read.

Ms. Monaghan moved that the Planning Board approve the Conditional Use Permit application for signage to be installed on the O'Reilly Auto Parts retail sales building at 69 Lafayette Road subject to the following conditions:

- 1. The size of the sign shall not exceed 90 square feet.**
- 2. The sign shall conform to all other design features as presented in the application, including, but not limited to, color and lettering font style.**

Second by Mr. Etela. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor of the motion (7-0).

Mr. Sillay joined the meeting at 7:14pm.

II. Other Business.

1. Minutes.

Mr. Harned presented the minutes of the March 16, 2021 meeting.

Ms. Monaghan moved that the Planning Board accept the minutes of the March 16, 2021 meeting as written. Second by Mr. Wilson. The roll call vote was unanimous in favor of the motion (7-0).

2. Utility company tree cutting activities.

Mr. Kroner stated his concern with what seems to be an excessive amount of roadside tree cutting being performed by utility companies recently. He is concerned that there is a lack of proper supervision and local control over the cutting activities.

The Board discussed the competing interests and legal rights of local, private landowners and utility companies regarding tree cutting along roadways, near property lines, or on private property. Some Board members suggested that the Select Board investigate the situation to ensure that local rights with regards to roadside tree cutting are protected.

3. Phil Wilson, RPC Commissioner.

Mr. Harned and Ms. Monaghan recognized Mr. Wilson's 13 years of service as a Town of North Hampton representative on the Rockingham Planning Commission. During his time with the Commission, Mr. Wilson served as the Commission Chair and an Executive Committee member. Mr. Wilson contributed a substantial amount of volunteer time for the betterment of North Hampton and the Rockingham County region.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:36pm without objection.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Milner
Recording Secretary

Disclaimer – these minutes are prepared by the Recording Secretary within five (5) business days as required by NH RSA 91A:2, II. They will not be finalized until approved by majority vote of the Planning Board.