

STAFF REPORT ON PETITION FOR ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT

ZOTA 2015-2: AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE 17-7(b)(5) TO ALLOW A SECOND FREE-STANDING SIGN FOR CHURCHES & SCHOOLS ON CORNER LOTS

REQUESTED BY: Lexington Christian Academy

PROPOSED TEXT: Underlined text indicates an addition to the current Zoning Ordinance.

ARTICLE 17: SIGN REGULATIONS

17-7(b) LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONES (R-1 [A THROUGH E], R-1T, R-2) - Permitted signs within these zones shall be wall signs unless otherwise specified; signs shall be either non-illuminated or indirectly illuminated. Minimum setback for any free standing sign permitted under this section shall be one-half (½) the minimum front yard requirement for the zone in which the sign is to be located; and no less than ten (10) feet in any case.

- (5) One identification sign for a permitted church or school for academic instruction; free standing or wall mounted; not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area; not exceeding eight (8) feet in height if free standing; in addition, one bulletin board, free standing or wall mounted, not exceeding twelve (12) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height. If the property has five or more acres and has frontage on two or more streets, then a second sign and bulletin board meeting the same requirements as the first sign shall be permitted, one per street frontage.

STAFF REVIEW:

The Lexington Christian Academy (LCA) has requested a text amendment to modify the sign ordinance provisions for churches and schools in residential zones. Article 17-7(b) of the Zoning Ordinance currently limits all such facilities to the erection of only one free-standing sign, regardless of the size of the church or school. They have requested that larger facilities in residential zones, when also on a tract of five (5) acres or larger, be allowed a second free-standing sign. The staff met with the applicant late last year to discuss all the possibilities for the Zoning Ordinance text amendment which they desire.

The allowable regulations for churches and schools in our residential zones permit one free-standing sign of up to 32 square feet (such as 8' by 4') in size. Such a sign may be located 10'-15' setback from a street right-of-way (depending upon the residential zone involved), and may be as tall as 8' in height. In addition to the identification of the school or church, an additional bulletin board (with changeable letters and numbers) is permitted to accompany any such free-standing sign. A bulletin board is limited to a maximum of 12 square feet (4' by 3', for example) for churches and schools in residential zones.

LCA would like to add a second free-standing sign to their high school campus, which is located at the corner of West Reynolds Road and Keithshire Way, near the well-known roundabout in the Wellington neighborhood. A significant number of visitors to the school, whether participating in children's soccer games on the weekend or school events during the week, are utilizing the Keithshire access to the site, rather than the prominent West Reynolds Road entrance, which already has the one free-standing sign permitted by Article 17 for this land use. Their desire has prompted this application. The submitted justification is that large church and school properties (such as the 75-acre site that LCA occupies) often have multiple entrance and exit points, more often than not on separate streets. The additional signs would be desired to give prominence for those drivers who are less familiar with the internal driveways on very large sites.

The LCA proposal would have two important requirements for the placement of a second identification sign. The first is that a site must be a corner lot, having two or more street frontages. Their application would permit "one (sign) per street frontage," but only when an additional requirement was met: i.e. that the church or school must be on a lot that is five acres or larger in size. Thus, their provision would only affect the largest of churches and schools located here in our community.

Generally, the staff can understand the applicant's perceived need for this additional signage. On corner lots, large churches and schools have a real need to direct visitors to their sites, which can also be large campuses, as is LCA. The signage proposed by the applicant will not result in a regulation that is dissimilar to the remainder of the sign ordinance.

Over the past few weeks, the Division of Planning staff has reviewed the applicant's proposal in detail. Several alternatives have been considered by the staff, primarily as additive restrictions to the applicant's proposal, to ensure that visual clutter will not result from this amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. The staff also considered local properties where this additional sign *would* and *would not* be permitted. The result of this review is that the staff recommends that these signs, on five acre or larger properties, should be erected no closer than 250' from each other, even on different street frontages. This will ensure that the corners of these larger, residentially zoned lots will not see the clutter of new free-standing signs with message boards.

The staff recommends that their alternative text be recommended for adoption into the sign regulations by the Commission.

STAFF ALTERNATIVE TEXT:

(Note: bold text indicates an alteration to the text proposed by the applicant.)

17-7(b) LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONES (R-1 [A THROUGH E], R-1T, R-2) - Permitted signs within these zones shall be wall signs unless otherwise specified; signs shall be either non-illuminated or indirectly illuminated. Minimum setback for any free standing sign permitted under this section shall be one-half (½) the minimum front yard requirement for the zone in which the sign is to be located; and no less than ten (10) feet in any case.

- (5) One identification sign for a permitted church or school for academic instruction; free standing or wall mounted; not exceeding thirty-two (32) square feet in area; not exceeding eight (8) feet in height if free standing; in addition, one bulletin board, free standing or wall mounted, not exceeding twelve (12) square feet in area and eight (8) feet in height. If the property has five or more acres and has frontage on two or more streets, then a second **identification** sign and bulletin board, meeting the same requirements as the first sign shall be permitted, limited to one per street frontage; **provided these signs are located a minimum of two hundred fifty (250) feet from each other.**

The Staff Recommends: **Approval of the staff alternative text**, for the following reasons:

1. Schools and churches located on properties larger than five acres in size, such as that of this applicant, often have multiple entrances, a need to help identify these with additional free-standing signs and bulletin boards, and a desire to assist visitors in arriving at these facilities safely.
2. The staff alternative text will ensure that this addition to the sign regulations will not result in unintended sign clutter at the corners of large sites with churches and schools.

WLS/TLW/BJR

2/5/15

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